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Women Leaders in Corporate India

Meera Alagaraja, Denise M. Cumberland,
Mrudula Anne, and Vishal Arghode

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) of India, passed a regulation, Companies Act of 2013, mandating listed companies to hire women employees for their boards and executive positions (SEBI, 2015). A recent report (Institutional Investor Advisory Services, 2017) claimed that this push by the SEC has led to an increased number of women in leadership positions. Similar to the Fortune 500 companies reports published in the USA by Forbes magazine, the Economic Times in India captures information of top 500 companies in India through the Nifty 500 companies report. This report has stated that the number of women in leadership roles has gone up from 5% in 2012 to 13% as

M. Alagaraja (✉) • D. M. Cumberland
University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, USA
e-mail: m0alag01@louisville.edu

M. Anne
Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, USA

V. Arghode
Gannon University, Erie, PA, USA

of March 2017. However, only 3% of the boards have a woman leader as the chairperson, and only 7% are serving as executive directors. While there has been some progress in the number of women leaders in corporate India, the pace at which this change is happening is really slow. The Global Gender Gap report of 2016 ranks India at 136th in the economic participation and opportunity category, 113th in educational attainment, and 142nd in health and survival.

These numbers and the noticeable lack of women's representation in executive positions point to many barriers to the advancement of women with serious implications for sustaining long-term performance and change in organizations (Ghosh, 2016; Wang & McLean, 2016). Gupta and Saran (2013) suggested that, while economic reforms have liberalized and grown the Indian economy, Indian women have not benefitted as much as men with new employment opportunities in the workplace. Furthermore, Indian women in the workforce continue to grapple with the challenges of balancing family and career-related responsibilities (Munn & Chaudhuri, 2016); struggle to overcome cultural stereotypes about women's roles (Sims & Hirudayaraj, 2016); and deal with systematic bias that hinders career advancement (Batra & Reio, 2016; Chawla & Sharma, 2016; Gupta & Saran, 2013; Naqvi, 2011; Wang & McLean, 2016). As research has shown that women in India are loyal employees (Radhakrishnan, 2009), organizational investment in policies or programs that would help encourage and thereby increase the number of women employees advancing to leadership positions would make good business sense.

Gender issues in India are typically approached from historical, sociological, and cultural perspectives, but they are rarely studied with a human resource development (HRD) lens. The 2016 *Advances for Developing Human Resources* issue on HRD gender and diversity issues in India with the contributions of several HRD scholars (Batra & Reio, 2016; Collins & Abichandani, 2016; Ghosh, 2016; Haynes & Alagaraja, 2016; Munn & Chaudhuri, 2016; Sims & Hirudayaraj, 2016; Wang & McLean, 2016) highlights the noticeable gap in gender and diversity issues in India in both research and practice. Further, these scholars offered ways to address the gap using a comparative lens with the USA. Such cross-country comparisons offered value for evaluating and assessing the impact of government, corporate, and non-profit institutions in addressing gaps in the participation of women and other underrepresented minorities in the

workplace. However, research that focuses on women in corporate India is needed, and this chapter addresses this gap.

This chapter identifies challenges and issues that hinder participation and representation of women in leadership positions in the corporate workforce and highlights practices that can assist HRD and organizational leaders in nurturing women leaders in the corporate sector. By examining literature, we highlight key issues, challenges, and evidence of practices that can support and enhance the participation of women in leadership positions in the corporate world.

In spite of many favorable corporate initiatives to help women workers move up the corporate ladder, the pipeline for women executives is small and shrinking. This is evident from the fact that while 24% of managers in corporations are women, this number comes down to 20% for director-level positions, which further declines to 19% for senior managers, and, finally, to 13% for executive positions (Shyamsunder, Pollack, & Travis, 2015). This leaking pipeline makes it difficult for organizations to find the talent pool necessary to fill executive positions with women. There are many factors that contribute to the leaking pipeline. To make a difference in the numbers of women represented in leadership positions, it is critical to discuss and understand the factors contributing to the leakage of the talent pipeline. Hence, we identified how media and society have discussed the role of women and women leaders in corporate India. We accomplished this by reviewing tweets (from Twitter) discussing the role of women in corporate India over almost a two-year period (January 2015 to September 2016) and identifying themes that capture the focus and efforts of organizational and HRD leaders, as well as society in general. We surveyed Twitter messages from January 2015 to September 2016 as a way to highlight public conversations about the role of women's leadership in corporate India. We used "women leadership in corporate India" as a search query in the Twitter search box. This helped us identify temporally relevant messages revealing social discussions on the role of women in corporate India, which is the central focus of this chapter. We linked key themes from the literature review and the content analysis of Twitter messages. We also identified women chief executive officers (CEOs) from practitioner literature to offer evidence of their impact on organizations and society.

In the following sections, we note methods utilized for reviewing the limited literature on the role of women in corporate India and present a review of literature on the topic, integrating key findings with the thematic analysis of content from social media. Then, we identify key women leaders in corporate India and offer recommendations for research and practice. By doing so, we complement existing efforts in research and generate interest in furthering the role of women leaders in corporate India from an HRD perspective.

Literature Review

We initiated our literature review using combinations of several search terms, including women leadership, work-life balance for women in corporate India, and effects of workplace safety issues on Indian women's career. We limited our search to academic journals published in the last ten years (between 2005 and 2016). The search for "women leadership in corporate India" in the TAMU (Texas A&M University) libraries came up with only seven results—five peer-reviewed publications and two book reviews. Similarly, the search for "work life balance (e.g., family expectations, maternity) for women in corporate India" resulted in three peer-reviewed publications after excluding the overlapping results. For "safety at the workplace for women in India", there were eight search results. Of the eight, however, only two were relevant to the current topic.

Our literature review focused on the barriers that have prevented the advancement of women in corporate India, issues of work-life imbalance, and safety of women in the workplace. These themes were reflected on discussions in Twitter, where social discussions focused on challenges, biases, and barriers that prevent or stymie corporate career paths and progression of women. Further, both research and public conversations identified additional barriers, such as workplace harassment and the lack of family-friendly work policies that have impacted participation of women in the workplace. Work-life imbalance refers to the unfair societal expectations placed on women at work with limited support for how they manage conflicting demands of their families and work lives. Family-

friendly work policies offer some ways for companies to support employees of both genders to avail benefits in the workplace. However, work-life balance related issues tend to stress women in different ways that need to be addressed (Batra & Reio, 2016).

In addition, our search on Twitter yielded discussions focused on increasing gender diversity on corporate boards and in entry-level positions in organizations. We integrated the key themes from literature and social media in the following sections.

Barriers to Advancement

Women's participation in India's workforce is low in both rural (36%) and urban areas (21%) as compared to 81% and 76% participation rates of their male counterparts (MGI, 2015). Furthermore, the scant number of women workers in the workforce is likely to confront inequality at the workplace, evidenced by a wage gap, lower representation in leadership positions, and unfair work-life expectations, especially in the corporate sector.

Culturally, homemaking is considered to be the primary responsibility of married women in India (Wesley, Muthuswamy, & Darling, 2009). This is also evident from some of the tweets identified in the Twitter feed about how pregnancy is still a barrier for advancement of well-performing women. VOFN India @vofnindia tweeted the following on December 9, 2015

Is Corporate India Still Insensitive Towards Pregnancy?

Along with VOFN India, many others tweeted their support addressing the bias against pregnant women in the corporate world. According to Rajadhyakasha and Smitha, "most of the dual earner wives continue to view themselves primarily as homemakers, and their work status did little to alter their sex role orientation" (p. 1677). This results in the assumption and expectation that women should always choose their family over job responsibilities in case of a conflict. This creates an unconscious bias toward women's career thus contributing to the hindrance or slowing down their advancement. Women returning to the workforce after maternity leave

deal with increased challenges of getting back on their career track (Collins & Abhichandani, 2016). Twitter posts like the one by Maternity Madam tweeted on November 5, 2015, further discuss the issues women face while re-entering the workforce after a maternity break.

Women in corporate India complain of another bump: get(ting) back on track after maternity leave.

In spite of a rising number of women in the corporate world, the percentage of women in leadership roles remains low. Globally, only 10% of the managers in Fortune 500 companies are women, and this number comes down to 4% when looking at positions like CEO, chief operating officer (COO), and executive board president. Even in the uppermost ranks of the corporate hierarchy, only 3% earn as much as men counterparts (Chauhan, 2010). This global issue is exacerbated when there are dominant cultural and societal expectations about woman's role as is the case in India (Collins & Abhichandani, 2016). The preconceived notions and assumptions about an Indian woman's abilities, priorities, and prime responsibilities become key contributors to the glass ceiling that hinders their career growth (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Child rearing responsibilities for women is another major contributor in delaying the rapid growth in careers of working women (Broadbridge, 2009). While Indian corporations are working toward creating fairer work environments for pregnant women and working mothers, these organizations have not been able to address the issue completely, particularly at leadership levels (Kannan, 2009; Naithani, 2010). Maternity leave policies in the private sector are not favorable and more often than not do not adhere to legal provisions. Chauhan (2010) found that 80% of working women agreed that parenthood adds considerable stress and is a more major roadblock for women than for men counterparts.

Women in managerial positions in the corporate sector experience high levels of role dissonance. As the leader of an organization, she is expected to be assertive and lead. But, as a mother, wife, and a family member, she is expected to adhere to traditional values, defer to her spouse or in-laws, and be nurturing (McNay, 2009; Uppalury & Racherla, 2014). The dissonance in the different roles played by a woman leads her to question her identity and the role expectations. Challenging the

unquestioned roles and boundaries comes at a social cost posing risk to social and familial life, thus forcing women to pick sides and compromise (Uppalury & Racherla, 2014). Hence, it is not uncommon for women to sacrifice their ambition and career advancement to fulfill their roles as a wife, mother, and daughter.

In November of 2015, SEGUE Sessions (India's first large format skill building and networking program for women seeking transition in their careers) conducted a graduation ceremony for their Women on Corporate Boards Mentorship Program. In response to this, many responded commending and advocating the need for support programs like these.

Supporting women is neither corporate social responsibility (CSR) nor philanthropy but a moral responsibility.—Nita Ambani, India

In a recent study published by McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), it is noted that increasing the participation of women in corporate India would boost the Indian economy by potentially increasing annual gross domestic product (GDP) to \$28 trillion by 2025, which is 26% more than the predicted value (MGI, 2015). The study further argued that to increase gender equality in the work place, it is critical to break the misconceptions about a woman's career and to achieve gender equality in society, thus implying that the former is not possible without the latter (Batra & Reio, 2016). Given social attitudes in India about the rigid gender roles embedded in strongly patriarchal narratives in the community, working women tend to over-exhaust themselves trying to balance both social and professional responsibilities. Hence, a change in social attitude about women's careers and their responsibilities is critical and should be the starting point to work toward overcoming the barriers they face in workplaces. Lack of proper support from the leadership in corporations, absence of gender-sensitive policies, and demands of managing a family force many women to settle for less-demanding jobs in corporations (Buddhapriya, 2009; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). This is often interpreted as women not being committed to their careers, thus inducing more stress for them successfully to manage their careers and homes without much institutional help (Uppalury & Racherla, 2014). In what follows, we identify general workforce-related challenges that hinder the advancement of women in leadership in corporate workplace.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance was first introduced in the UK in the late 1970s (Jawahar, 2010). The phrase is used to describe the balance between the time an individual spends on work-related activities and non-work-related activities. This concept has become increasingly important in conversations related to women in the corporate world due to the increasing numbers of women in the workforce (Jawahar, 2010). While necessity has been the most important driving force for women in India to take up professional careers, other factors, such as changing socio-cultural values, better education, and globalization, have also contributed to this push (Sharma, 2015).

The outsourcing industry has created many jobs in India. Call center jobs and jobs in the information technology (IT) sector are the major industries for outsourced jobs. Both of these industries demand long and odd working hours, thus making it difficult for women with families to balance responsibilities at home and at work (Sundari & Sathyanarayana, 2012). While this is in part due to work expectations and long hours, societal expectations and cultural norms are to be equally blamed for contributing to the stress of women in corporate India.

The stress of juggling home and work responsibilities is a real challenge that forces most Indian women to choose between career and home (Munn & Chaudhuri, 2016; Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). In order to be successful at moving up the ladder in corporate India, women need to balance responsibilities at home, societal demands around behavioral norms, and work expectations. Lakshmi @Phandom_Delight tweeted on Jun 15, 2016

What do some women have to do to race in Corporate India? Take calls at 11pm & agree to share a drink?

Women who choose career over family are accused of being career-oriented, selfish, and too independent women choosing to be home-makers are accused of not working hard enough or not having enough aspiration. It is unfortunate that many academics and researchers side with this kind of thinking, which is evident from statements like “It also

happens that many women lose focus on career continuity because of ‘aspiration deficit’ as they have a choice of leaving the career in India (unlike men who have to work whether they like their work or not)” (Sundari & Sathyanarayana, 2012, p. 75). Work expectations and guilt over missing family responsibilities force women into questioning their self and professional identities (Uppalury & Racherla, 2014).

Tang and Cousins (2005) argued that values and culture of a society define how work and life intertwine. As organizations exist within the confines of a society, the wider conceptions and traditions influence the attitudes and policies within a workplace. Within the confines of a collectivist society, most women place family over career. Furthermore, in collectivist cultures, men also expect women to handle the daily chores along with their careers, thus making it even more difficult for women in managerial positions in corporate organizations to balance their work and life (Uppalury & Racherla, 2014).

Safety and Health Concerns at Work

According to Oxfam India and Social and Rural Research Institute (Biswas, 2012), 93% of working women reported that they were involved or knew someone who has been sexually harassed in the workplace. However, only 17% reported taking formal action against the perpetrator. In spite of legislations protecting women against workplace violence, most often incidents like these go unreported due to the fear or societal and professional repercussions. The study further reported that women who are the sole earners in the family are more susceptible to these incidents given their financial dependency on the job. In response to a particular harassment case that was exposed in early 2016, Twitter poured its support and expressed its support against harassment of women in corporate India. A tweet by Performative Woke Bro @AList Rap is as shown below

This boils down to corporate India's male sense of entitlement. We treat women in the workplace as objects 'coz we can get away with it.

The business process outsourcing (BPO) and the call center industry have had an exponential growth in India in the past decade. However, jobs in this sector come with many challenges, including late-night shifts and lack of proper safety measures for employees working these shifts. Many measures taken by BPOs to improve security and tighten safety policies, such as company-sponsored drop-off and pick-up vehicles, have decreased the number of attacks and incidents against women employees but have not been able to prevent them completely. The other major safety concern for women working multiple shifts is their health. It becomes extremely difficult for women to manage shifts at odd times and handle the responsibilities at home as well (Indradevi & Kamalapriya, 2006). Sharma (2015) focused on health and wellbeing of women working in call centers and identified physical and psychological concerns that hindered their performance in the workplace. This creates an urgent need for corporate leaders in India to advocate for more inclusive HRD policies to improve overall performance outcomes for the organization. HRD practices and policies can go a long way in addressing existing barriers in the workplace for aspiring women leaders.

Profiles of Current Women Leaders in Corporate India

Although gender inequity and women under-representation in the Indian corporate sector are widely acknowledged and discussed, some notable exceptions are at the forefront of corporate leadership. The leaders that follow are supporting other women leaders in navigating the corporate terrain. These leaders were identified from the popular business literature in India.

Ambiga Dhiraj

Ambiga Dhiraj, chief executive of Mu Sigma (2017), has been a key influencer in the company since its inception in 2004. On February 3, 2016, she was appointed the CEO. She however stepped down on

October 5, 2016. Under her auspices Mu Sigma grew from a fledgling company to a key player in the corporate sector (About us Board of Directors, 2016).

Anu Aga

Anu Aga served as a board member of Thermax Limited (2017), the \$800 million Indian energy and environment management company since 1996. She is credited with facilitating four major turnaround initiatives: reconstitution of the board, shedding of non-core activities, right-sizing of operations, and increased focus on the customer. At senior levels, she fostered a high-performance culture (Anu Aga, Director, Thermax Limited, 2016). She cofounded Teach for India in 2008, a non-profit engaged in hiring young people for teaching in schools for poor kids.

Arundhati Bhattacharya

Arundhati Bhattacharya, the first woman chairperson of the State Bank of India (SBI), was listed as the 30th most powerful woman in the world in 2015, according to *Forbes* magazine (Arundhati Bhattacharya, 2016). She is associated with SBI since 1977 and is *Foreign Policy's* Top 100 Global Thinkers and identified as one of the most powerful women in Asia Pacific by *Fortune* magazine (Arundhati Bhattacharya, 2016). Her noteworthy achievements include the expansion of SBI into general insurance, custodial services, and the Macquarie Infrastructure Fund. She has also introduced a two-year sabbatical policy for women employees for child or elder care (Arundhati Bhattacharya, 2016). Mr. Rajnish Kumar succeeded her as the SBI chairperson on October 8, 2017.

Chanda Kochhar

Chanda Kochhar (2017) has served as a board member of ICICI (Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India) for the past 16 years. Recently, she was appointed the managing director and CEO. Her efforts

in modeling the retail-banking sector in India and her leadership of the ICICI Group have led to many changes in the financial sector. She was conferred with the Padma Bhushan, one of India's highest civilian honors, in 2011 (Chanda Kochhar, 2016).

Dipali Goenka

As the managing director of Welspun Global Brands Limited and executive director of Welspun India Ltd., Dipali Goenka (2017) has successfully led the development of two of the most recognized brands in India, known as SPACES Home & Beyond and WelHome (Seek Innovative Solutions, 2013). Dipali's astute leadership propelled Welspun India Ltd. to be the biggest exporter of home fashion products and a global leader in the terry towel business (Forbes in Asia, 2016).

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw

Biocon, Asia's leading bio-pharmaceuticals enterprise, is spearheaded by Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (2017), a pioneering biotech entrepreneur, the chairperson and managing director since 1978. She is at the forefront of the biotechnology industry and has received numerous awards for her achievements. *Time* magazine listed her as among the 100 most influential people in the world. She is also the recipient of India's two highest civilian honors, namely, the Padma Shri (1989) and the Padma Bhushan (2005) (Kiran, 2016).

Shikha Sharma

Since 2009, Shikha Sharma has been Axis Bank's managing director and CEO (2017). Her transformational leadership enhanced the bank's strengths in multiple areas ranging from corporate to retail and banking products. Her accomplishments are widely recognized. Among her many notable awards are: Banker of the Year for 2014–2015 by Business Standard, AIMA—JRD (All India Management Association Jehangir

Ratanji Dadabhoy) Tata Corporate Leadership Award for the Year 2014, India's Most Valuable CEOs by *Businessworld* 2013, India's Best Woman CEO by *Business Today* 2013, and many more (Shikha Sharma, Managing Director—Axis Bank, 2016). Harvard Business School has also published a case study on managing change at Axis Bank in 2013, recognizing her organizational change efforts (Shikha Sharma, Managing Director—Axis Bank, 2016).

Usha Ananthasubramanian

Usha Ananthasubramanian was the managing director and CEO of PNB (Punjab National Bank) between August 2015 and 2017. Since May 2017, she is the managing director, CEO, and director of Allahabad Bank (Punjab National Bank (PNB:Natl India), 2017). She is also instrumental in setting up the first women-focused Bank BMB (Bhartiya Mahila Bank) (Usha Ananthasubramanian Joins as MD & CEO of PNB, 2015).

Vandana Luthra

VLCC Health Care Limited, a major name in India's wellness field, was founded and is owned by Vandana Luthra (Founder and mentor of VLCC Group, 2016, January 4). Since 1989 VLCC has served over 10 million customers. Vandana Luthra was awarded the Padma Shri (2013) for contributing to trade and industry. Fortune India listed her as the 33rd most powerful woman in business in India in 2015. Vandana (2016) is also appointed as Chairperson of the Beauty & Wellness Sector Skill Council by the Indian government.

Vinita Gupta

Vinita Gupta, chief executive of Lupin, heads India's third-largest pharmaceutical company, with \$2 billion in revenue since 2013. Lupin is the only Asian company in the top ten largest rapidly growing companies (by prescriptions) in the USA, according to IMS Health, which tracks drug

sales globally (Jayakumar, 2015). Vinita has been the Chairman and CEO of Lupin Pharmaceuticals Inc., the US wholly owned subsidiary of Lupin since 2003. She also has been its managing director since October 11, 2003 (Lupin Ltd., 2017). She was awarded Entrepreneur of the Year award by Forbes India and was named 2015 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year.

These professional achievers have increased the representation of women in upper management and on corporate boards. The representation of women on corporate boards was a trending topic on Twitter. However, we found limited research on the impact of women in upper echelons on organizational performance. We have identified this trend as an important topic for future research. While we do not have personalized stories of how the above women leaders overcame barriers, we situated their success within the context of societal and cultural barriers to highlight the importance of celebrating the successes of these women. Women are expected to perform their roles and responsibilities at home even when they climb the corporate ladder. This is reflected in practitioner literature where many women leaders have emphasized that, despite being at the helm of affairs in leading multinationals, they are still perceived as homemakers first at home. The stereotypes attached to women's roles often act as a barrier impeding women's progress in leadership roles. Women often have to fit into society's mold. For example, although this may not be true always, parents and well-wishers are keen to get them married as soon as they reach marriageable age. As a result, women may end up sacrificing their career aspirations to fulfill parents' wishes. If they are fortunate, they may find a husband who is supportive of their career interests and propel them forward. However, in most cases, women leaders have experienced this major barrier. We noted that these barriers identified from the personal experiences of women leaders reinforce the themes presented in our review of the literature.

Some women leaders from our selected profiles highlighted that, while selecting/appointing corporate leaders, the selectors may be looking for certain qualities that sadly may be stereotypical masculine traits, for example, toughness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and independence. As women may not be perceived as possessing these highly sought-after masculine traits, they may be rejected in favor of men candidates. These

women leaders stressed that biologically men and women are different, and roles such as childbirth and some claim rearing newborns and toddlers can be performed only by women. As a result, women are expected to put their careers on the sideline to meet family roles and obligations.

Because of under-representation in corporate C-suites, women leaders still have to fight to break the glass ceiling. Indra Nooyi, PepsiCo CEO, stressed that, for women, the biological and career clocks are not in alignment. Women have to make way to attend to both at the same time with equal dedication and devotion, which is not only difficult but in some cases impossible. Sometimes, taking a break puts women in a backseat for their careers as their peers get ahead, their skills become outdated, and they lose the competitive advantage. In addition, aspiring women leaders have very few women leaders who can be their role models.

Recommendations for Research

An organization's level of gender consciousness determines how well it will be able to confront patriarchal dynamics and facilitate permanent change (Bierema, 2016). Within the context of challenges facing women leaders in India, research is still at the nascent stage. Numerous research avenues would provide illumination of the issue and encourage discourse on the challenges Indian women leaders face, specifically in the corporate sector. One area of study that has surfaced recently in emerging countries is the presence of women on boards. In their study of board gender diversity in emerging markets, Saeed, Belghitar, and Yousaf (2016) used institutional theory to contextualize the organizational factors that determine women's representation on boards. In India, these scholars found that gender diversity decreased when the state is the main shareholder. This finding was in direct contrast to de Jonge's (2014) finding that women were more likely to be included in Indian state-owned firms. Further research could shed light on the issue and resolve the discrepant findings. Studies involving women's presence on boards might also examine whether gender diversity on boards has any impact on policies in the organization to encourage the talent and development of women employees.

As some sectors of the Indian economy, including banking and aviation (Pande & Moore, 2015), have done better with respect to gender equality, more in-depth understanding of the organizational policies employed in these industries to generate greater representation of women would be beneficial. While prior research has shown that having a substantial number of women in higher ranking managerial positions benefits women at lower level jobs through hiring and promotions (Cohen, Broschak, & Haveman, 1998), would this hold true in Indian corporations? This question provides another fruitful area to explore, as efforts to build women's leadership within senior ranks may be a fast way to have reverberating effects on gender equality further downstream in the organization.

Transformations of culture are slow and take many routes. Scholars, in an attempt to understand different contexts, postulate how these routes emerge and why. Radhakrishnan's (2009) qualitative examination of 60 professional software women in urban India, for example, found that these women believe that family comes before their career, that it is unseemly to be overtly materialistic, and they want to avoid becoming "too Western" (p. 206). IT management in India accommodates what Radhakrishnan terms "respectable femininity", by providing special treatment to women with families. These women are granted the ability to go home earlier when working on tight deadlines and are provided escorts to help them arrive at home safely after working late. Gupta and Saran's (2013) work offers a somewhat divergent finding. These scholars suggested that the Indian woman's support system has "become more understanding of the independent career minded woman making it easier to live and sustain both professional and personal lives" (p. 11). Interviewing 90 corporate Indian women across multiple industries who were born after 1970, Gupta and Saran (2013) concluded that the trendsetter woman sees a professional career as a given. Furthermore, this second generation of women leaders expresses confidence about reaching the top of their fields and indicates their willingness to change jobs more often and even change cities, if necessary (Gupta & Saran, 2013). Future research might reconcile these findings on whether and how cultural values impact career ambition by using more varied methodological data collection with larger sample sizes. Quantitative data would allow for a

multitude of factors to be both controlled for, as well as examined. Further, efforts to reduce gender bias from supervisors, other organizational decision-makers, and men colleagues who do not want to work for or with a woman need to be researched and documented.

Recommendations for Practice

Because organizations need a workforce that can meet the demands of a growing economy, inclusion of best practices such as flexible job hours, job-sharing, telecommuting or part-time options, onsite daycare facilities, and avoidance of overtime requirements (Buddhapriya, 2009; Collins & Abichandani, 2016; Desai, Majumdar, Chakraborty, & Ghosh, 2011; Naqvi, 2011) is needed to improve work-life balance of working women in India. Other types of enlightened organizational support for women could include formal mentoring programs designed specifically for women to enhance career outcomes as leaders and networking programs that encourage women talent to connect across levels and functions in the company (Rashid, 2010).

To thwart culturally pervasive tendencies in organizations, especially among supervisors and managers, that handicap women, HRD practitioners must play a critical role. Bierema (2016) argued that organizations can target implicit bias through training and development to build awareness of women's leadership skills. HRD practitioners can use the "where are the women?" question when personnel decisions are being made to create more balanced gender diversity among leadership ranks (p. 131). Furthermore, when HRD professionals are cognizant of the difficulties women in India face in the corporation, they can develop interventions that bolster the self-confidence of women workers to help eliminate or reduce barriers to success (Collins & Abichandani, 2016).

In addition to progressive organizational initiatives that can help women's leadership in India emerge, societal change is also needed. Emerging markets struggle with institutional codes that are highly gendered. For example, women in India remain responsible for the bulk of the household chores and childcare, adding additional stress to those women who opt to work outside the home (Chawla & Sharma, 2016;

Desai et al., 2011). In their case study of eight women in senior leadership positions in India, Chawla and Sharma (2016) reported that these senior women leaders, working in a variety of manufacturing and service industries across multiple functions (HR, finance, marketing, communications), indicated that spouse, parent, and in-law encouragement served as key enablers to their career progress. Macro elements that can influence both women and their support systems are education and the media. Education for women enhances their resumes, allowing for more career options to be pursued. Furthermore, education potentially delays marriage, which has been linked to higher levels of stress for women who opt to work outside the home (Akhani, Rathi, & Misha, 1999). The media can also send messages about acceptable behaviors of men by portraying husbands taking an active role in both homecare and childcare. Finally, policy changes at the government level could also be enacted to bolster the women labor force. As gender quotas, used by India in the 1980s, resulted in an influx of women into the teaching profession, this policy could be deployed in other sectors to spur women's labor participation (Pande & Moore, 2015).

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