

The Impact of Gender Stereotyping on Female Expatriates; A Conceptual Model of Research

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Abstract

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing amount of research on issues in expatriate performance management such as strategy and selection as a result of increasing assignments in international employees due to globalisation. Much of the literature dwells into male expatriates and the spouses of such expatriates, and not female expatriates sent for assignments abroad. While there are few comprehensive literature reviews about women expatriates in general, this paper attempts to gain a deeper understanding of the issue of gender stereotyping on female expatriates. This paper proposes a conceptual model to address new avenues for empirical and theoretical research on bridging the aspects of gender stereotyping and female expatriates.

Keywords: - Female Expatriates, Gender Stereotyping, Expatriate Assignments

Introduction

Over the past decade, a rising trend in female expatriates has caused organisations to re-think their perceptions with regard to women in international assignments [10,30]. Although female expatriates are bound to confront the phenomenon of “glass ceiling” initially to be able to pursue managerial positions abroad, Adler argued that low percentage of female expatriates is a result of lack of organisational confidence on the women’s abilities and due to discrimination against women in foreign culture [1]. Research on female expatriates has been dominated by issues in the genre of cross-cultural adjustment and adaption the issue of gender stereotyping being highly under researched [5,18,21]. In this context, evidence from Agars confirms the under examination of gender stereotypes that contribute to discrepancies in gender distribution [2]. Hence the purpose of this study is to develop a preliminary model of research to analyse the crucial factors and underlying implications of gender stereotyping on female expatriates. The findings from the review on existing studies

indicate that large scale of research samples is essential to attain more focus on the relationship between organisational and individual perspectives involved in gender stereotyping on female expatriates.

The paper begins by explaining the research design and methodology adopted for the study. In the following section, the primary question for research is addressed: How can future research attain more clarity and focus on the issue of gender stereotyping of female expatriates? This question is answered by critically reviewing the existing literature on Gender stereotyping, the aspect of glass ceiling and female expatriates. Such a review leads us to the key themes, theorisations and factors reviewed in the management literature. Based on a review of existing literature in the area, the paper proposes a conceptual model which binds organisational factors from these two key findings to put forward new avenues for empirical and theoretical research on bridging the aspects of gender stereotyping and female expatriates.

Research design and Methodology

In order to provide an accurate and focussed review of management literature, this paper reviews publications with implications of terminologies ‘Expatriate management’, ‘Female expatriates’ and ‘Gender stereotyping’. The searches were conducted using the databases Web of Science database, Psych INFO and ABI/INFORM to include all journals peer reviewed and published in the field of management. Moreover in an effort to apply more focus, these searches were also cross referenced using the EMERALD database of journals. The initial search with keywords ‘Expatriate management and ‘Female expatriates’ returned 878 results over the past 25 years. The search was further streamlined with an additional terminology of ‘Gender stereotyping’ and a total of 188 articles contributed to the analysis and review. Such a focus was necessary to analyse the

perceptions of expatriate gender on the job performance of male and female expatriates. The final list of articles also confirmed that the gender stereotyping of female expatriates has been a highly under-researched area in management literature.

Gender Stereotyping and Female expatriates in extant literature

On reviewing the existing literature on the Female expatriates, it is clear that although a variety of research questions are put forward due to the unique job situation of the expatriates, the topic itself remains severely under-researched. Hence it is highly imperative to demonstrate the need for more conceptual clarity on this matter by dwelling into existing literature on expatriates and gender in detail. In this regard, a primary question will help us justify our purpose:-

• How can future research attain clarity and focus on the issue of Gender stereotyping of female expatriates?

Black proposed that global organizations need to wider their selection process in terms of selecting best male and female candidates [6]. Adler had highlighted one of the reasons being discrimination against women in foreign culture [1]. Several studies yielded inconsistent results researching on gender and cultural stereotyping of women expatriates in foreign country cultures.

Gender stereotyping in the international context

Existing research suggest that various suggestions, practices and views that reinforce patriarchal systems and male operating systems are embedded in all cultures [23]. Adler found that expatriates were viewed as foreigners first than on the basis of their gender [1]. On Contrary, Harrison and Michailova suggested that western women expatriates in the UAE were perceived on the basis of gender first then as professionals [16]. Similarly, though the participants in the study conducted by Hutchings et al, suggested that expatriates were generally well regarded for their education, work experience and professionalism, they were required to work within the confines of what is acceptable behaviour for Emirati women in the cultural context of UAE [25]. The findings suggested that the female expatriates studied did not perceive gender and cultural stereotyping at work, but identified stereotyping as occurring in the non-work context, some of which resulted from the women engaging in auto-stereotyping. In this regard, Tzeng examined how female expatriates face gender stereotyping and discrimination in their home and host countries and how they reconcile their conflicts between homes and work [40]. Data were collected by conducting interviews with 21 female expatriates in Western multinational corporations with offices in Taiwan. The findings of the study suggested that gender discrimination might still exist towards female expatriates especially from males of the same ethnic background, for example, white female expatriates tend to be well received by Taiwanese because they are perceived as foreigners whereas ethnic Chinese female expatriates tend to be judged according to local standards for women despite of the fact that they might be different culturally. However, further research on ethnic differences in sex

discrimination among female expatriates was warranted as the study is limited in its explanation of the ethnic perspective.

Two key concepts from the review confirm the need for organisational researchers to explore more theoretical and empirical venues in this area of research. Firstly, evidence on the role of organisational factors such as Organisational justice and Organisational support in shaping up perceptions about female expatriates and secondly, evidence from Schein’s think manager-think male paradigm on the similarity of leader stereotypes to male and female stereotypes [4,12,14,31,41].

Key organisational factors shaping perceptions on female expatriates

Several key organisational factors have been identified and presented in the table1 as critical factors which help shape perceptions of female expatriates [Table 1].

Table 1: Key organisational factors from extant literature which shape perceptions on female expatriates

Organisational factors	Extant literature
Organisational context	Schein, 1973;1975;1994 ;Lee,2005; Jokinen, Brewster and Suutari,2008
Organisational commitment	Schein, 1973;1975;1994 ;Chen and Chiu,2009; Chen,2010; Thorn,2009
Organisational justice	Pate and Scullion,2009; Haslberger and Brewster,2009; Forstenlechner,2010;Biemann and Andresen,2010
Travel opportunities	Doherty, Dickmann and Mills,2011
Organisational support	Schein, 1973;1975;1994 Yijala, JasinskajaLahti, Likki and Stein,2012
Organisational capital	Al Ariss and Crowley Henry,2013
Organisational mobility	Doherty,2013; McNulty,2014
Organisational culture	Schein, 1973;1975;1994 ; Chen and Chiu,2009

The phenomenon of ‘glass ceiling’

Regarding understanding Glass ceiling, the aspect of Gender stereotyping is basic as it gives a knowledge into the desires individuals have about the sort of individual being reasonable for a given position in an organisation. The presence of the ‘glass ceiling’ isn’t constrained to the United States. Truth be told, scientists have contemplated this phenomenon in many parts of the world, for example, Germany, Austria, UK, Bangladesh, Taiwan, and so forth to build the mindfulness and to help expel the confusion of the conventional generalization that females

don't make great best level supervisors [28]. Glass ceiling "GC" is considered as one of the persuading analogies used to look at imbalances amongst men and ladies in the working environment [7,17]. "The discriminatory constraint alludes to an undetectable yet impermeable obstruction that confines the professional success of ladies. From that point forward, terms, for example, "sticky floors" and "concrete walls" have been utilized to allude to comparable and related snags – the challenges skilled ladies encounter in propelling their professions in medium and expansive associations" [7].

The global phenomenon of think manager- think male paradigm

Schien et al, suggests that leadership positions have been historically and traditionally believed to be as man's domain. "Think manager Think male" is considered a global phenomenon suggesting that leadership positions traditionally and historically believed as man's domain [35]. A research study has been conducted by Mirza and Jabeen in the South Asian countries contributing to the limited literature of the impact of gender stereotyping, specifically in banking Sector of the Pakistan to find the influence of gender stereotypes on women bankers in management positions and the findings suggested that stereotypes have a negative impact on perception of women in management [27].

The relationship between sex role stereotypes and successful managerial characteristics was investigated in Japan and the People's Republic of China [35]. A sample comprised of 123 female and 150 male undergraduate upper class students studying in a school of business in China and 105 females and 211 males enrolled in business courses at a university in Japan were

chosen for the purpose of the study. Schein's 92-item descriptive index questionnaires were administered on the participants and the data were analysed by computing intra class correlation coefficients (r') from two randomised groups of variance to determine the degree of resemblance between the descriptions of men and managers and women and managers. The two analyses were performed separately. The findings revealed that men and women in both countries viewed the successful managerial characteristics to be more of men's attributes than women's. Comparing this result to the findings of the previous study conducted in the US, United Kingdom and Germany, it was noticed that there was a significant degree of sex stereotyping among male management students and the managerial sex stereotyping was also confirmed among the females management students in all the countries except US [33]. Thus, the authors suggested that the Think Manager; Think Male is a global phenomenon.

Discussion and future research implications

The studies have proved that there are differences between organizations how they delegate their information sources and support among men and women. The failure of organizations to provide these elements for women decreases their possibility of success during the international assignment. Organizational support can be cross-cultural training of host country values and norms relating to women and possible problematic situations female expatriates may encounter during the assignment. This factor may be critical when predicting the success of female expatriates [8].The research of Linehan and Scullion indicate that the number of women in international management will remain a minority until organizations re-examine their IHRM practices [24]. Information about the specific requirements of women

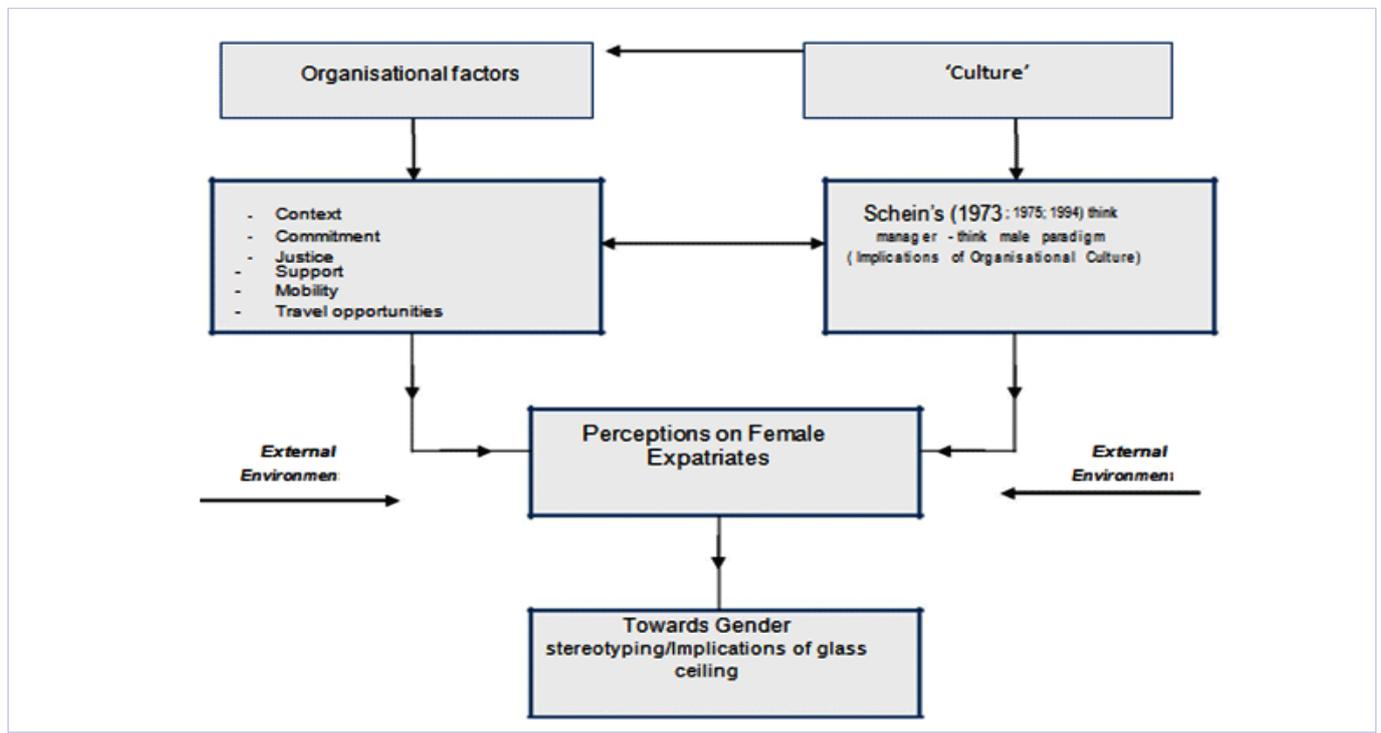


Figure 1: A conceptual framework for future research implications

who might be interested in a career abroad should be collected by organizations. Also organizations should understand what motivates women and drives their career aspirations. In the future the challenge for companies is to create a pool of female expatriates who could act as mentors and role models for females who wish to break through the glass ceiling and into careers abroad [24].

Figure 1 represents a framework for future research implications [Figure 1]. The framework is based on previous research on the organisational factors which shape up perceptions on female expatriates and Schein's think manager-think male paradigm on the similarity of leader stereotypes to male and female stereotypes [11,19,22,31,41].

As Figure 1 represents, this paper confirms that from reviewing the existing studies, organisational factors and the impact of 'culture' in terms of Schein's studies clearly play a crucial role in the formulation of perceptions of stereotyping of female expatriates in international assignments [31,32,34]. With this research paper, along with analysing the under researched area of gender stereotyping of female expatriates and the current perspectives in literature, we address the crucial shortcomings and propose a research framework for future avenues in the area. One can argue that host countries equipped with more traditional ideologies will be in fact more challenging for female expatriates. Although there are significant reasons to believe that our research model is applicable to pursue further research on bridging gender and expatriation due to the key mechanisms which are considered for analysis, more work to examine the potential differences in the impact of gender on female expatriate assignments is necessary. Finally, research has often addressed the performance of expatriate employees in general as being dependant on a large variety of factors [12,39]. From the perspective of gender stereotyping of female expatriates in the current literature, we have singled out the primary organisational drivers of stereotyping. Nevertheless, future research could pursue this matter and examine the impact of other relevant factors in the genre of Individual and Societal drivers. It is only rational to propose that the next step would be to test our research model. Hence the conceptual model addresses crucial shortcomings in this new area and contributes to the theory development of gender issues and the real impact of lives of employees and their experience within organisations. From a practical perspective, the study opens a window for HRD practitioners and global organisations with useful insights on providing equal opportunities to male and female candidates in overseas assignments.

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