

# The Importance of Promoting the Role of Women in Higher Level Managing Positions

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## Opinion

Presently, women are scarcely represented in managerial positions in both private and public sectors. Over time there has been a considerable increment in the number of women that participate in the workforce (i.e. in lower and medium level positions [1], However they are still under-represented at the higher managerial levels. In the European Union (UE), the percentages of women in higher-level leadership positions have reached historic levels, however there is still considerable work to be done in this respect. This inequality does not only translate into difficulty in women's access to higher-ranking positions, known as the "glass ceiling" or even the "cement ceiling." This difference in terms of gender extends to the "wage gap", it is, therefore, in salaries, where we also find this difference worldwide.

Gender inequality in organizations manifests the need to comply with the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which is "to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (Achieving Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Goals [2]). Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is an integral part of each of the 17 SDGs. Ensuring respect for the rights of women and girls through all of these goals is the only way to achieve justice, achieve inclusion, achieve economies that benefit all people and care for our environment, now and for generations to come. Women and girls represent half of the world population, therefore, half of its potential, that is, they should have balanced representation at all levels of society.

More than eight years have passed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we know that gender equality is fundamental to fulfilling the promises of sustainability, peace, and human progress. Gender equality is essential to mitigate unsustainability, since the inclusion of women in climate debates leads to an improvement in the results of projects and policies related to climate change. And this statement is applicable to other fields of study. Moreover, the inclusion of women in corporate leadership position has shown to lead to a series of benefits at organizational level such as a leadership type that is more inclusive as well as the obtention of tangible benefits such as those of reputation and legitimacy [3], as well as those of improved government governance and corporate performance [4].

Presently, there are a number of elements that obstacle and hinder the professional progression of women such as being able to accommodate one's personal and professional commitments, and the point that a considerable number of companies is still male-biased,

thereby making women's professional advancement difficult [5]. Many women still face considerable pressure to comply and conform with the organizations' way of leadership.

There are specific sectors such as that of the logistics sector in Spain, where the presence of women in managerial positions is not common. Therefore, the top management in this sector is largely male-dominated. According to a recent article from the Spanish online newspaper "El Mercantil" dated from March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020, in a recent report, only 8.4% of managers in the logistics industry are women. Considering this figure, it is essential to continue working towards the development of policies that ensure that organizations from different sectors to promote gender equality in the workplace. This will undoubtedly help to assure that a more sustainable type of leadership is implemented in organizations.

The European Commission (EC) has developed over the years a database on the participation of women in decision-making bodies, to be able to analyse the evolution of the role of women in different industrial sectors [6]. In Spain, the percentage of women in management positions reached 20% in 2016 (European Commission [7]), which is still below the European average of 23%. The companies on which this information is based are part of the Spanish stock market, the Ibex 35 [6]. In Spain in 2007 the Organic Law 3/2007 was approved by which the role of women in board of directors needed to be increased to assure a balance of men and women. More than a year has passed since the approval of this law and today gender equality is not yet a reality in many companies. A global perspective - 6<sup>th</sup> edition by the consulting firm Deloitte [8], which shows the presence of women in management positions in private companies worldwide. The data from 2018 showed that only 16.9% of positions on boards of directors worldwide were filled by women, showing an increase in only 1.9% compared to 2016 (15%).

Women often find themselves with considerable limitations that often prevent them from reaching higher level positions even though they are sufficiently qualified for the jobs being offered. The theory of the Glass Ceiling (Glass Ceiling) was developed by Hymowitz & Schelhardt [9] to refer to artificial and invisible barriers that prevent qualified people from advancing in organizations to higher positions [10]. This is often caused by a number of both artificial and invisible barriers that do not permit qualified individuals from progressing professionally in the organizations where they

work [10], that are often due to practices of discrimination and inequalities. It is also important to highlight that the Glass Ceiling effect is one that can be observed in any sector (i.e. even in those companies that where there is considerable gender equality). The number of women decreases as we move towards the higher level of the organizations and often, they are scarcely represented at the higher organizational levels.

There is still a long way to go with regard to achieving equality between men and women in the workplace. What is clear is that greater knowledge is necessary regarding gender inequalities in organizations such as lower pay and labour discrimination to be able to resolve the problem more effectively. This type of inequalities are present at work through unemployment, salary, the hiring process, job offer, schedule and reconciliation of family and work life among other elements of the workplace [11].

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