**Call for papers** **for the 12th International Conference in Critical Management Studies**

*For the stream: Critical perspectives on Gender Equity in the Upper Echelons in management*

**Convenors:**

Payal Kumar, Professor & Chair HR/OB, and Associate Dean – International Relations, BML Munjal University, India

Sneh Bhardwaj, Academic Associate and PhD researcher, Federation University, Australia



**Submission timelines:**

* 25th March, 2021: 700 word extended abstract
* 31st August, 2021: Full paper submission for peer review

(6000 words, APA style, British English with ‘z’ spellings)

* 30 September, 2021: Final paper submission

Submit proposals to Sneh Bhardwaj: s.bhardwaj@federation.edu.au

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Critical perspectives on Gender Equity in the Upper Echelons in management**

While feminist and critical literature on gender diversity looks at many themes, the special case of equity in the upper echelons is less researched. Hence the need for this stream proposal is timely and relevant. This special track aims to advance research, theory and practice pertaining to the issues around gender equity on corporate boards. The focus is to further our understanding of issues impacting women’s numbers and working on the boards by highlighting the importance of the philosophical insights derived from scholarly research in the field.

Men and women are, in theory, equal in the eyes of the law in most law-abiding countries. However, at the workplace it is questionable whether all employees are treated in a manner considered equivalent in terms of their ‘rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities’ (ILO, 2000). One of the indicators of gender equity in the workplaces is the composition of the board of directors. In the male dominated spaces of boardrooms all over the globe, it appears thatwomen’s presence is neither missed nor required, considering the extent of gender imbalance (Catalyst, 2010; 2020).According to a report by Deloitte, in 2018, globally only 16.9% of board members were women, with only 5.3% women chairs of boards. In the Global South, in countries like India, only 13.8% of board seats are held by women (Kumar & Singh, 2020).Drawing on the socio-justice lens, ensuring an increase of the number of women on boards is seen as a means of recovering unjustly occupied places, as well as of positively influencing business performance and governance outcomes.

Evidence indicates that greater gender representation on boards can have several business outcomes. Companies with more women directors have been reported to outperform those with the least women directors on various financial metrics like Return on Equity (+53%), Return on Sales (+42%), and Return on Invested Capital (+66%) (Catalyst, 2007). In the same vein, boards with more women directors have been found to surpass male-only boards with respect to auditing and risk management (Stephenson, 2004). Hillman, Shropshire & Cannella (2007) state that organizations benefit from more women directors, because they can have wider access to advice and counsel, legitimacy, and more varied channels of communication and resources. Furthermore, this leads to an increase of social reputation (Byron & Post, 2016). In contrast, scholars such as Yang, Riepe, Moser & Terjesen (2019) have found that women’s presence on boards leaves a negative impact on firm performance. Yet another line of scholarly enquiry found no relationship between the two constructs (Kang, Chang & Gray, 2007).

Beyond business outcomes, better representation of women on company boards signals a breaking away from age-old stereotypes, creating a more inclusive workplace and granting entry to more talented women, thus creating a more varied talent pool for the organization as a whole. Stereotypes about women are associated with feminine qualities (e.g. compassion, care, affection, co-operation, non-competitiveness) which are considered far removed from leadership roles (Gupta, Turban, Wasti & Sikdar, 2009; Schein & Mueller, 1992; You, 2019). Thus, an awareness that women can attain directorship positions could lead to a change in perception among male directors in particular, and society in general, that women not only possess leadership attributes and qualifications to match their male counterparts, but can also effectively utilise them to break the glass ceiling (Cook & Glass, 2014; You, 2019). Such awareness can generate more positive outcomes for the institutional forces, advocating gender balance on boards (Dhir, 2015; Scott, 1987).

The root cause of the lack of diversity in boardrooms – gender and beyond – is prejudice. Patriarchy is predominant in almost all the societies – with prescribed gender roles, and harsh retribution for attempting to transcend these roles (Carrim, 2016; Yoder & Sinnett, 1985). This pervades to most areas of life. In the case of businesses, the particular problems that women face are lack of sponsorship and adequate feedback mechanisms, lack of access to informal networks, harassment, bias, token treatment and the like (Kanter, 1977; Huse, 2007; Nielsen & Huse, 2010; Sen & Ostlin, 2008).

The issue at hand – the equitable treatment of women – is not just limited to the boardroom or the business world, or indeed to any specific part of the World. That it is a societal problem, even in this day and age, is evident from the fact that it took the United States of America more than 200 years to elect its first woman Vice President, or the fact that women in Saudi Arabia were allowed to drive only in 2018, while the activist who enabled this change is still imprisoned. Moreover, the gender debate seems to be perennially stuck in a binary loop, with no visible discussion about the challenges faced by people who identify themselves as genderfluid or non-binary (Zheng, 2020). Therefore, there is need for more research and research-driven solutions to solve this conundrum.

A particularly under researched area is the effects of boards’ internal functioning such as processes, culture and dynamics on *making women’s numbers count*, which has been labelled a black box in scholarly literature (Forbes & Milliken, 1999). This can help reveal the critical management issues pertaining to *doing* gender diversity through adopting multi-demographic and context-specific approaches. A basis can thus be prepared for generating theory and new knowledge in the field of gender equity on the boards.

Debates on gender diversity have contributed significantly to social and economic change around the globe. For instance, several nations have implemented quotas which can be attributed to institutional forces. Despite positive discrimination policies and quota laws, the progress made in achieving women’s increased presence and contribution on boards has been unequal across nations and regions (Catalyst, 2020).

A discernible divide is emerging among feminist scholars in the Global North and South. Those researching in the Global South have argued that the experiences and situations confronting women in this part of the world are distinct from those of women of the Global North (Mohanty, 2013). This means that research evidence gathered from experiences and issues of white women in the Western world cannot be relied upon to frame arguments and policy making for the women of the Eastern world. Thus most of the research that has taken place in the developed world of the Global North cannot help understand the issues that women face in the Global South, both before and after reaching the boardrooms.

We seek empirical research and theory (qualitative as well as quantitative) from different contexts and settings analysing the causes and struggles that characterize gender equity in contemporary boardrooms and their ensuing dynamics. In so doing, we believe, a radicalisation of thought at the grassroot level in society can be initiated to bring equity between both genders, as the women on boards become champions of women’s cause. Also, in line with the activist and feminist thinking among board scholars, we maintain that examining, analysing, protesting and debating can keep the issues that women face in firstly, accessing the directorship positions, and secondly making impactful board contributions under surveillance, will eventually result in promoting equity between men and women on boards in the real sense.

**Indicative themes for paper submissions:**

Researchers and practitioners engaged in governance research from a range of different perspectives, fields and methodological traditions are encouraged to submit papers, videos, case studies or workshop proposals. These include methodological, epistemological, paradigmatic, and conceptual contributions that employ qualitative and quantitative research methods, different concepts and theories to investigate issues around gender equity and diversity on corporate boards.

Contributions that pursue affirmative change through collectively embodied practices and formations are welcome too. Contributors could explore strategies for promoting women-friendly policies at the political level or describe action research projects that attempt to foster accountability for confronting implicit, intersectional gender bias in recruitment practices at the board level. It is, however, important that the manner of participation expected should align with the track idea and intent.

We encourage contributors to engage with a variety of problems, questions and themes, which include but are not limited to the following:

1. Gender equity and critical management studies
2. Theorising gender diversity on boards
3. Successful women gatekeeping on boards
4. Challenges of women directors on corporate boards
5. Representation of women directors in management literature
6. Adding women numbers or deriving meaning from these numbers - what do boards do?
7. Attributes of women directors – do they articulate masculinity? Searching for identities
8. Doing gender on corporate boards
9. What prevents women from reaching boardrooms?
10. Positive discrimination for pushing women’s numbers on boards - Does it help?
11. Women directors’ impact on firm competitiveness, market performance, CSR
12. Do men isolate women on boards? The issue of tokenism
13. Welfare state, quota, women reservation
14. Board recruitments - is there a selection bias against women?
15. Board representation of women in the Global North and Global South

**Key words:** gender, inequality, oppression, dominance, diversity, struggle, patriarchal, inclusion, exclusion, neo-liberalism, quota, reservation, glass ceiling, normative, mimetic, coercive, director, board, recruitment.

**References**

* Byron, K., & Post, C. (2016). Women on boards of directors and corporate social performance: A meta‐analysis. Corporate Governance: An International Review, 24(4), 428-442.
* Carrim, NMH (2016). Gender and Cultural Identity Work of Unmarried Indian Breadwinner Daughters in South Africa. Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 47 (4) 441–462.
* Catalyst. (2007). The bottom line: corporate performance and women’s representation on boards, viewed online January 8, 2021 at https://www.catalyst.org/research/the-bottom-line-corporate-performance-and-womens-representation-on-boards/
* Catalyst (2010). Catalyst Census: Fortune 500 Women Boards Directors, viewed online January 6, 2020 at https://www.catalyst.org/research/2010-catalyst-census-fortune-500-women-board-directors/
* Catalyst (2020). Women on Boards, A Quick Take, viewed online September 12, 2020, at https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-on-corporate-boards/
* Cook, A & Glass, C (2014) Above the glass ceiling: When are women and racial/ethnic minorities promoted to CEO? Strategic Management Journal. 35,1080–1089.
* Deloitte (2019) Data-driven change, Women in the boardroom, global perspective, 6th edition. Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/risk/articles/women -in-the-boardroom-a-global-perspective.html
* Dhir, A. A. (2015). “Norway’s Socio-Legal Journey: A Qualitative Study of Boardroom Diversity Quotas,” Challenging Boardroom Homogeneity: Corporate Law, Governance, and Diversity, Cambridge University Press.
* Forbes, D. P., & Milliken, F. J. (1999). Cognition and corporate governance: Understanding boards of directors as strategic decision-making groups, Academy of Management Review, 24, 489–505.
* Gupta, V. K., Turban, D. B., Wasti, S. A., & Sikdar, A. (2009). The Role of Gender Stereotypes in Perceptions of Entrepreneurs and Intentions to Become an Entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 33(2), 397–417. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00296.x
* Hillman, A. J., Shropshire, C., & Cannella Jr, A. A. (2007). Organizational predictors of women on corporate boards. Academy of Management Journal, 50(4), 941-952.
* Huse, M. (2007). Boards, Governance and Value Creation: The Human Side of Corporate Governance. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511611070
* International Labour Office. (2000). ABC of women worker’s rights and gender equality. Geneva: ILO.
* Kang, H., Cheng, M. & Gray, S.J. (2007), Corporate Governance and Board Composition: diversity and independence of Australian boards. Corporate Governance: An International Review, 15: 194-207. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8683.2007.00554.x
* Kanter, R. M. (1977). Some effects of proportions on group life: Skewed sex ratios and responses to token women. American journal of Sociology, 82(5), 965-990.
* Kumar, P., & Singh, G. (2020). Gender Equity in the Boardroom: The Case of India. Emerald Group Publishing.
* Mohanty, C (2003) Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
* Nielsen, S., & Huse, M. (2010). The contribution of women on boards of directors: Going beyond the surface, Corporate Governance: An International Review, 18, 136–148.
* Schein, VE, Mueller, R (1992). Sex role stereotyping and requisite management characteristics: A cross cultural look. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13, 439–447.
* Scott, W. R. 1987. The adolescence of institutional theory. Administrative Science Quarterly, inequity. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 8: 207-221. 32: 493-511.
* Sen G. & Ostlin, P. (2008). Gender inequity in health: why it exists and how we can change it, Global Public Health, 3, 1-12.
* Stephenson, C. (2004). Leveraging diversity to maximum advantage: The business case for appointing more women to boards. Ivey Business Journal, 69(1), 1-5.
* Yang, P. Riepe, J. Moser, K. & Terjesen, Siri (2019). Women directors, firm performance, and firm risk: A causal perspective, The Leadership Quarterly, 30, 5.
* Yoder, J. D., & Sinnett, L. M. (1985). Is it all in the numbers? A case study of tokenism. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 9, 413–418.
* You J. (2019). Beyond “twokenism”: Organizational factors enabling female directors to affect the appointment of a female CEO. Strategic Organization.
* Zheng, L. (2020). Transgender, Gender-Fluid, Nonbinary, and Gender-Nonconforming Employees Deserve Better Policies, Harvard Business Review. Viewed 07/01/2021 at

https://hbr.org/2020/11/transgender-gender-fluid-nonbinary-and-gender-nonconforming-employees-deserve-better-policies?ab=hero-main-text