

# Impact of Negativity and Stereotype Threat on Female Managers - An Indian Perspective

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## Abstract

*Think manager think male' is a very common notion. Purpose-The main purpose of study is to study the impact of negativity and stereotype threat on female managers. Objectives of study-a) To find out the impact of negativity on work performance of female managers. b) To find out the impact of stereotype threat on work performance of female managers. Data collection-Data is collected from 200 respondents approximately having 3-5 years of experience through random sampling method. The data is collected through written questionnaire method. The questionnaire was divided into five parts. Data analysis-data is analyzed using SPSS. Cronbach Alpha score is calculated before further analysis. Managerial implications-The study is of great use to the employers in taking decisions regarding female managers.*

**Keywords:** *stereotype threat, female managers, respondents, work performance, employers.*

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## INTRODUCTION

“Think manager think male” is a very common notion. Managerial tasks seem to be a man’s work only. Even if women work they seem to be under performers with few exceptions. However, a lot of mindset has changed and management schools are providing equal opportunities to female candidates also but still the word goes around ‘Think manager think male’. Women working in the same managerial position as men often face this stereotype threat which undermines women’s performance. In some cases, it has been noticed that this stereotype is present to such an extent that it even results in resignation and losing the job. Stereotype threat is the experience or the anxiety or concern in a situation where a person has the potential to confirm to negative stereotypes

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about the social group. This concept was first introduced by Claude steel.

### **Meaning of Stereotype Threat**

According to Steel (1995), "Stereotype threat refers to being at risk of confirming, as a self characteristic, negative stereotype about one's social group"

Nadler and Clark (2011), "Stereotype threat is usually seen as a reduction in performance indicated by anxiety of conforming a pre-existing culturally known as negative stereotype.

### **Dangers Associated with Stereotype Threat**

Stereotype threat brings forth the following hazards:-

- Affecting the academic performance
- Decrease in the performance of the task related to non-academic domain.
- Increased use of self defeating strategies
- Alterations in professional activities and aspirations.

### **Situations leading to stereotype threat**

- In group behavior stereo type threat is highlighted.
- Solo status is in involved.
- Stereo type threat is invoked
- Evaluative scrutiny occurs.

### **Symptoms behind stereo type threat**

Various symptoms associated with stereotype threat are anxiety, negative cognitions, and loss of memory capacity, flexibility and speed.

### **Methods to reduce stereo type threat**

There are various methods for reducing stereo type threat which has been pointed out by various authors. Some of them include:

- Motivating individuals to think of them as complex and multifaceted personalities.
- Providing role models
- Bringing out the importance of effort and motivation in performance.

The present study aims to find out the impact of stereotype threat on female managers in the

Indian scenario. The study is sequenced as follows: it begins with a brief introduction, followed by literature review, setting the objective of study and hypothesis formulation data collection and analysis.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Few pieces of literature exist in the field of stereotype. Gonzales et al (2002) conducted a study and investigated the effect of stereo type threat and double minority status on the performance of Latino women. The experiment was conducted in a lab consisting of 120 males and females. It was found that gender of the Latino women did not sensitize to the negative stereotype about their ethnicity.

Bell et al (2003) conducted a study to find out how the presence of stereotype threat undermines women's performance in the exam. The experiment was conducted in which women were asked to undertake engineering exam. Results of the study show that in the presence of stereotype threat women's performance becomes worse when compared with men. However, when this stereotype threat is done away with they are equally at par with men.

Gupta and Bhave (2007), Stereotype threat reduces the performance efficiency but also affects major life decisions. It acts as a barrier in reaching their full performance to realize the aims. The study was conducted with the main objective to identify the role of proactive personalities in moderating the influence of stereotype about entrepreneurs. The results of the study show that women with more proactive stereotype have a tendency towards being exposed to stereo type threat about entrepreneurs.

Lesko and Corpus (2006) conducted research to find out how the presence of stereo type threat in a math's test undermines women performance. However, when this stereo type was not there they perform at par with men.

Foglaiti and Bussey (2013) conducted a study to find out that the presence of stereo type reduces motivation. The study found out that presence of stereo type reduces the performance of women in mathematics and reduces their motivation. The study concluded that stereo type threat affects the performance of women in a worse manner as compared to non-stereo type.

Leitner and Hehman (2013) performed two experiments under engagement regulation. Female participants were asked to complete a math's test for which they received a bogus feedback. It was however noticed that under stereotype threat positive feedback increased the performance whereas negative feedback lowered the self esteem and performance.

Nelson and Ricks (2006) made a study on the comparison of men and women in the field of math's and science which was termed as stereotype threat. The study revealed that men are smarter than women and women feel demotivated by stereotype threat.

## RESEARCH GAP

There is lack of research in this field in the Indian scenario.

### Objectives of study

The study was done with the following objectives:

- To find out the impact of negativity on work performance of female managers.
- To find out the impact of stereotype threat on work performance of female managers

### Data collection

Data is collected from 200 female managers who are employed in various managerial positions and have 3-5 years of managerial experience. The respondents are selected from database of various alumni from five different b-schools of Mumbai through random sampling method. The data is collected through written questionnaire method. The questionnaire was divided into various parts: assessment of work performance, negativity, domain identification, stereotype

threat. The description of various parts is given below:

**Sex role identification-** The respondents were asked to complete 60-item Bem sex role inventory which consisted of 20 masculine, 20 feminine and 20 neutral characteristics. On the basis of that their score was calculated.

**Assessment of work performance-** Another variable which was taken was assessment of work performance. There were 13 close ended questions. Respondents were asked to rate questions on a scale of 1-5 (1- strongly disagree and 5- strongly agree).

**Negativity-** To measure the negativity the sub scale from Kanfer, Ackerman, Murtha Dugdale was taken with slight modifications. There were four items in it on a rating scale of 1-5 (1-strongly disagree and 5-strongly agree).

**Domain identification** The scale consisted of steele and Aronson's (1995) with few modifications. There were four items in it on a rating scale of 1-5 .1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree.

**Stereotype threat-** Again the items were selected from Steele and Anson (1995). This section consisted of 13 questions in all on a rating scale of 1-5. (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree.)

### Hypothesis formulation

**H1-Presence of negativity at the work place negatively affects the performance of the female managers.**

**H2-Stereotype threat among female managers negatively affects the performance of female managers.**

## DATA ANALYSIS

Data is analyzed using SPSS. Cronbach Alpha score of the various variables are found out which are tabulated as follows:

**Table 1.0: Cronbach Alpha score of various parameters**

Variables	Cronbach Alpha
Assessment of work performance	.820
Negativity	.609
Domain identification	.622
Stereotype threat	.838

All the variables had a score exceeding .5 hence, the data is capable of further analysis.

First of all the respondents were asked to complete the sex role identification by completing 60-item Bem sex role inventory. Out of 200 respondents it was found out that there were 13 respondents who had masculine score greater than feminine score hence, they were excluded from the survey.

**H1-Presence of negativity at the work place negatively affects the performance of female managers.**

In order to test this hypothesis linear regression model is used. The dependent variable was taken as Assessment of work performance whereas negativity was taken as an independent variable. For this linear regression analysis was done. The results of the analysis are as follows:

**Table 1.1: linear regression analysis results**

R-SQUARE	B	t-test	.Sig value
.133	1.255	5.305	.000

*Note: level of significance @5%*

From the above table it can be seen that R-square is .133 which shows that the strength of association is quite low. However, the sig value is less than .05 hence, the results support the hypothesis that Presence of negativity at the work place negatively affects the performance of female managers.

**H2-Stereotype threat among female managers affects the performance of female managers.**

In order to test this hypothesis linear regression analysis was done the results of the analysis are as follows: The independent variable was stereotype threat whereas dependent variable is assessment of work performance.

**Table 1.2: Linear regression analysis results**

R-SQUARE	B	t-test	Sig value
.044	.179	.859	.403

*Note: level of significance @5%*

From the above table it can be seen that r-square is .044 which shows that the strength of association is quite low and the sig value is .403. Which is greater than .05.hence the hypothesis that stereotype threat affects the performance of female managers is not supported. This shows that female managers have broken the glass ceiling. Another reason for this is due to continuous exposure to the corporate world and tireless efforts they have proved that they are not only at par with men but also they are better performers. This also throws light on the fact that 'think manager think male' is becoming a wrong notion.

**MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The study is of great use to the employers in increasing the ratio of female managers as they are gradually doing away with the stereotype belief .Treating them at par with men will also help them to get rid of negativity which exist s at the workplace.

**Limitations and scope for future study**

The main limitation of the study is its sample size which is drawn from only a specific area.

Similarly; the respondents chosen have only limited years of experience. Another important limitation is limited tools used for analysis. The study brings about lot of scope for future research by drawing a comparative study

between male and female managers. Another interesting area of research is an inter country comparison of how stereo type threat affects female managers performance across countries.

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