
ARE WOMEN ABLE TO TRANSCEND THEIR SOCIAL STATUS AS THE SECOND SEX AT THE WORKPLACE: EXPLORING TRENDS OF GLASS CEILING & ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN'S CAREER GRAPH

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to elucidate the nuances surrounding women's equality in the workplace with respect to their income, status, and position; by inspecting trends of the past and the present, and finding statistical data to understand their roles in society as the 'second' sex. The problems faced by them in their professional life, influenced by their personal responsibilities as women, is also a value that this research seeks to address.

Keywords: Second Sex, Glass Ceiling, Pink Collar Ghetto, Maternal Wall, Bamboo Ceiling, Concrete Ceiling, Feminism, Workforce, Formal, Informal Sector, Exceptions to the Norm.

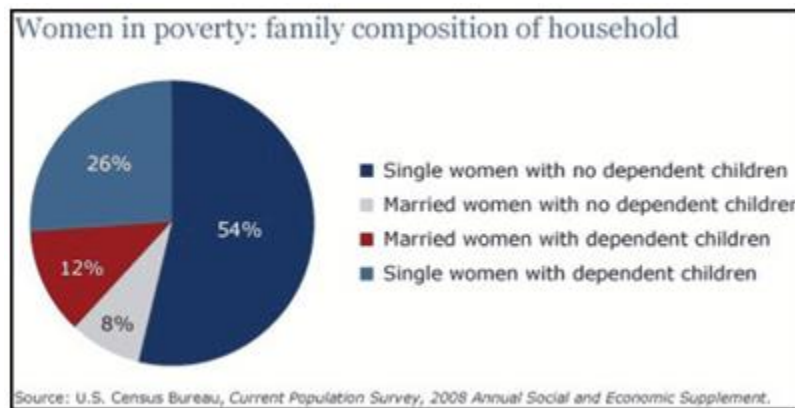
Introduction

The concept of second sex focuses on the question of equality between sexes. Despite the sexual difference, women's equality is argued. It was first articulated by Simone De Beauvoir in her book published in 1949, titled 'The Second Sex'. She argued of the status women have in society, as the 'secondary or inferior sex' and how it impacts their identity as a woman. The idea is the man or male sex is considered the default and any deviation from the default is but obvious, not given equal consideration i.e. women. Beauvoir further argues how prevalent beliefs of femininity favour male interests. She makes an effort to locate the root of these uneven gender roles, raising the question of how 'female humans' are given the submissive position in the society. She compares women and men, in their physiology, and argues that women's subordination to men in terms of reproduction, should only be limited to the same and that the facts of biology should not be translated into inferior positions in the social, economic and physiological aspects. In this paper, we move ahead with Simone's argument of titling women as the second sex in so far as it continues to aptly describe their status in social relation of present day and age.

Having taken this as our parameter for discussion, we further explore their status as the second sex and its impact on their career graph with particular reference to the concept of glass ceiling.

The concept of glass ceiling can be better understood with an understanding of the following terminologies:

- **Pink collar ghetto** - introduced in the 1970's, after the women's liberation movement as women's participation in the workforce increased, discussions rose about the pay discrepancies in men and women, for the same jobs and positions. This led to the coining of the term "pink collar ghetto" because white and blue collared jobs were typically paid more than the pink collared jobs which required less skill and educational background.
- **Maternal wall** - this term caters to pregnant women, women of childbearing age and even mothers that are working. It talked about the disadvantages that women faced in their careers due to certain stereotypes highlighting women's role as mothers and the need to take time after childbirth.
- **Bamboo ceiling** - coined in 2005 by Jane Hyun, this described Asian American women facing obstacles in achieving upper-level jobs and professional success in general in the United states.
- **Concrete ceiling**- Jasmine Babers coined this term in 2016 for women of colour who have to suffer through significantly tougher hindrances than women in general in achieving elevated success.
- **Glass escalator**- refers to men who accelerate into higher positions in female dominated professions, to attain stability, better benefits and financial security.



Further, we discuss the roots of these gaps created between the two genders, dating back to the medieval ages and the pre-modern times, to better understand the mentality behind certain stereotypes pertaining to women.

Changing roles of women in the workforce throughout time and the rise of feminism.

- **Women in medieval ages:**

Most people in medieval Europe lived in small rural communities, making their living from the land. Peasant women had many domestic responsibilities, including caring for children, preparing food, and tending livestock. During the busiest times of the year, such as the harvest, women often joined their husbands in the field to bring in the crops. Women often participated in vital cottage industries, such as brewing, baking, and manufacturing textiles. The most common symbol of the peasant woman was the distaff – a tool used for spinning flax and wool. Eve is often shown with a distaff, illustrating her duty to perform manual labor after the fall from Paradise. An image often seen in medieval art is a woman waving her distaff at a fox with a goose in its jaws.

There were some women who exercised power, providing a challenge to the stereotypical image of medieval women as oppressed and subservient. In the church, women could hold positions of great responsibility as abbesses of convents. In some instances, such as monasteries that housed communities of men and women, the abbess had seniority over monks. Outside monastic walls, women could wield political power, especially as queens and regents who exercised royal authority on behalf of absent husbands or underage sons. A number of powerful queens can be noted in English history, of whom one of the most remarkable was Queen Isabella (1295–1358), who (in collaboration with her lover, Sir Robert Mortimer) brought about the end of the reign of her husband, Edward II (1284–1327), Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria can also be served as examples of women who reigned over the vast British empire.

- **Women during the Industrial revolution and pre-modern times-**

The Industrial Revolution changed the work situation for both men and women. Whereas the hearth and home had been the center of production and family life, industrialization changed the locus of work from home to factory. The role of women in the family workforce did not change overnight, however, for at first many families worked together in factories as teams.

Not until the mid-19th century did the role of the male as the “good provider” emerge, with women taking over the most household and domestic tasks. This transition may have stemmed from a growing humanitarian protest against the harsh treatment of women and children in the

early factory system. Legislation—most notably in Britain—raised the minimum age for child labor in factories, set limits on the working hours of women and children, and barred them from certain dangerous and heavy occupations. Thus, women engaged primarily in domestic tasks such as child care while the men went out to work. Being the sole wage earner in the family reinforced the man's traditional position as the head of the family.

The traditional role of the housewife (whose chief pursuits were motherhood and domesticity) persisted throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th. The advent of electric power near the close of the 19th century brought labor-saving devices such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners into the home. Although they freed the housewife from some drudgery, these innovations did little to lessen the amount of time she spent on household duties.

Social and economic developments were the critical agents that changed the nature of women's work. For example, the growth of public education increased the demand for more teachers, and growing industrial and commercial enterprises required more office workers and salespeople. Whereas men had previously performed teaching and clerical tasks, employers found they could hire women for these occupations—at lower salaries. Differences in pay between the sexes were based largely on the assumption that men had to be paid enough to support a family. Moreover, most women who entered the workforce in the United States before World War II were single and did not have families to support; hence, they could be paid lower wages. This inequality in men's and women's pay scales, even for equal work, still exists. Many working women performed tasks closely related to their traditional household work. When clothes were less often made at home but purchased ready-made at stores, for example, women were hired as seamstresses in the clothing industry. Even after national emergencies such as the World Wars, during which women were encouraged to take manufacturing jobs to replace the men who were in military service, women returned to housekeeping or to traditionally female occupations such as office work and nursing.

- **The first and second waves of feminism-**

What has come to be called the first wave of the feminist movement began in the mid 19th century and lasted until the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, which gave women the right to vote. White middle-class first-wave feminists in the 19th century to early 20th century, such as suffragist leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, primarily focused on women's suffrage (the right to vote), striking down coverture laws, and gaining access to education and employment. These goals are famously enshrined in the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, which is the resulting document of the first women's rights convention in the United States in 1848. Demanding women's enfranchisement, the abolition of coverture, and

access to employment and education were quite radical demands at the time. These demands confronted the ideology of the cult of true womanhood, summarized in four key tenets—piety, purity, submission, and domesticity—which held that white women were rightfully and naturally located in the private sphere of the household and not fit for the public, political participation or labor in the waged economy. However, this emphasis on confronting the ideology of the cult of true womanhood was shaped by the white middle-class standpoint of the leaders of the movement.

The women's movement of the 1960s and '70s, the so-called "second wave" of feminism, represented a seemingly abrupt break with the tranquil suburban life pictured in American popular culture. Yet the roots of the new rebellion were buried in the frustrations of college-educated mothers whose discontent impelled their daughters in a new direction. In 1961 Pres. John F. Kennedy created the President's Commission on the Status of Women and appointed Eleanor Roosevelt to lead it. Its report documented a national pattern of employment discrimination, unequal pay, legal inequality, and meager support services for working women that needed to be corrected through legislative guarantees of equal pay for equal work, equal job opportunities, and expanded child-care services. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 offered the first guarantee, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was amended to bar employers from discriminating on the basis of sex. Some deemed these measures insufficient in a country where classified advertisements still segregated job openings by sex, where state laws restricted women's access to contraception, and where incidences of rape and domestic violence remained undisclosed. In the late 1960s, then, the notion of a women's rights movement took root at the same time as the civil rights movement, and women of all ages and circumstances were swept up in debates about gender, discrimination, and the nature of equality

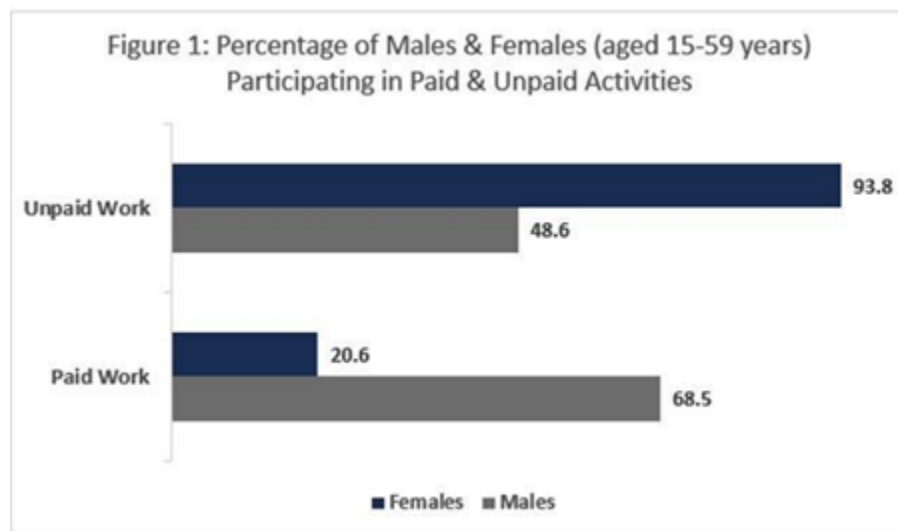
After finding a little about the concept of the mindsets of the past, we now look at how those have impacted our societies of the present- negatively or positively, with the help of a statistical analysis.

Women in the workforce- In 2019, 57.4% of all women took part in the labor force. This went up from the 57.1% statistics of 2018, but still making a margin of 2.6% from the 60% of 1999.

As of 2020, another 275,000 women have left the labor force, which brings the total number of women to have left the workforce since february 2020 to more than 2.3 million, also making their workforce participation rate at 57%, hitting a new low since 1988. Nearly 1.8 million men, in comparison, have left the labor force during the same time period, according to a National Women's Law Center analysis.

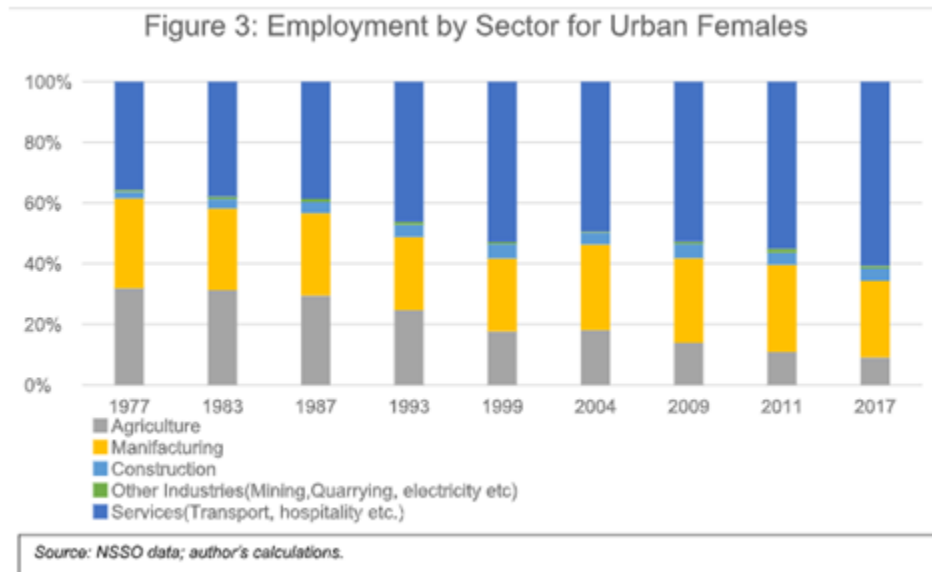
How many women in the:

Formal Sector - India slipped 28 places from 112 to 140 in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021. During the pandemic, India's gender gap closing window widened by 4.3%. As per the World Bank, female labor force participation rate [FLPR] decreased from 30.27% in 1990 to 20.8% in 2019. Only 20.6% of women aged between 15-59 years were engaged in paid work as compared to 70% men in the same age bracket. The greater variation comes in unpaid work. As compared to 94% of women, only 49% of all men aged 15-59 years participated in unpaid work.



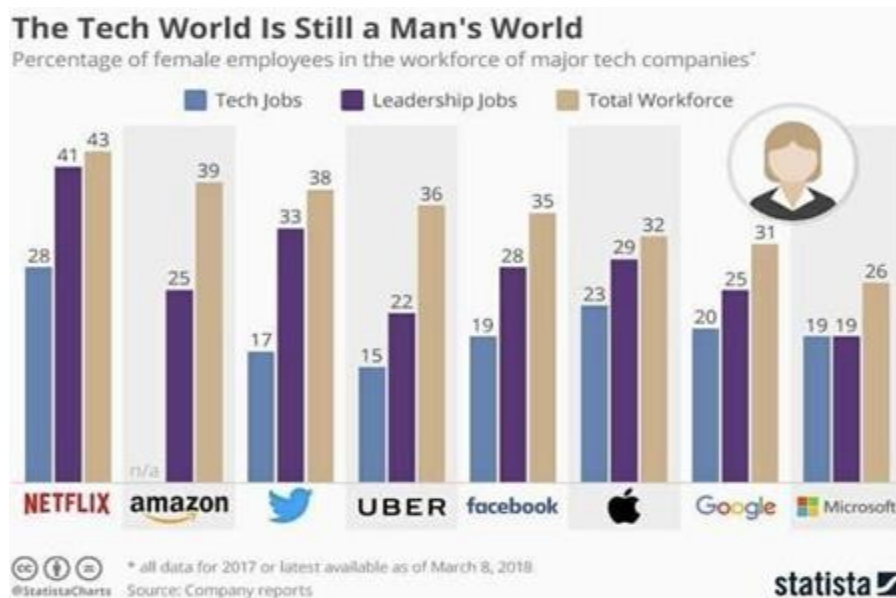
Informal Sector - in low-income countries, 92% of all employed women are in the informal sector, in comparison to 87% of men. The share of women in informal employment exceeds the share of men in the majority of countries (55%).

Only 20.3% of women above the age of 15 participate in the labor force as of 2020. For men the statistics show that 76% of men participate in the labor force.

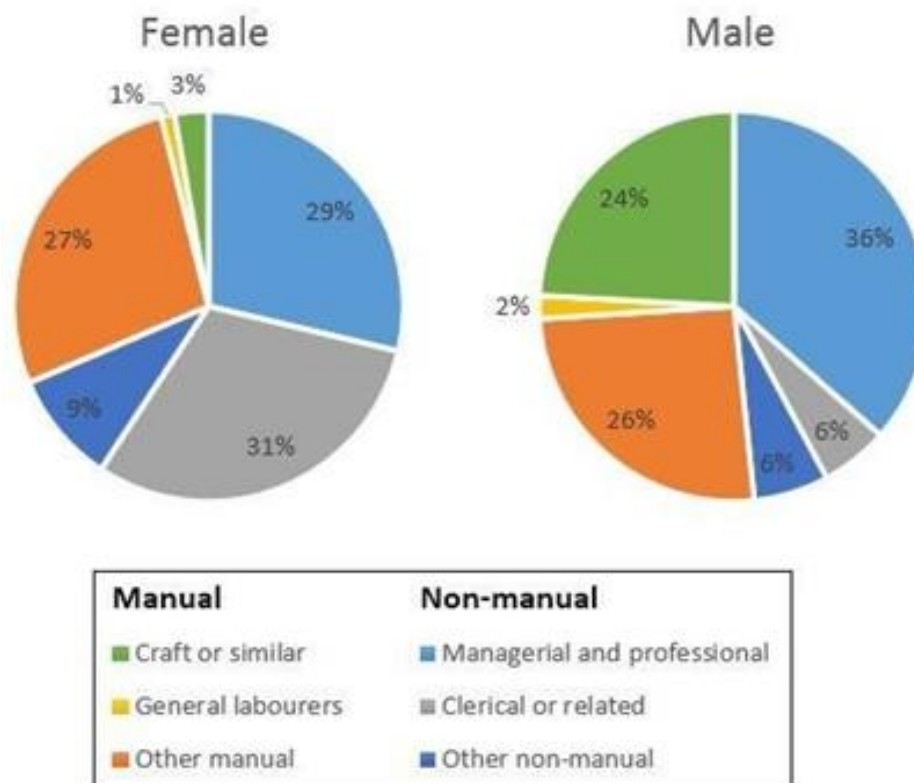


Women in the Technological Sector - A 2020 study by the AnitaB.org institute found that women comprise only 28.8% of the tech industry, which shows an increase from the 25.9% of 2018 and 26.2% of 2019. In the US, the percentage of employed women across all sectors has shot up to 47%, but the five largest companies of the world - Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google and Microsoft only have 34.4% of women comprising their workforce.

Women are underrepresented in tech leadership. They hold less than 28% of the top positions in the tech field, despite them making almost half (47%) of the US workforce.



Women in the Industrial Sector - women employment in areas like healthcare, private education, leisure account for more than four in ten women's jobs (43.2%) but only one in four men's jobs (24.8%). Construction industry- 1.3% women, 11.1% men, manufacturing industry- 6.6% women to 14.4% men, transportation and communications- 3% women and 7.8% of men - these account for the jobs held by one in nine employed women but one third of those held by employed men. Industries in which men and women work affect their economic status. The Great Recession of 2007 to 2009 marked very high job losses in the manufacturing and construction sector, meanwhile health and education sectors grew which resulted in difference in size and timing of job losses and gains experienced by the workforce. In 2009, as the recession came to an end, women benefited immensely by growth in the healthcare and educational sectors, as job opportunities grew by almost 2 million and jobs in construction grew only by 7,000, affecting only men.



According to the above presented information, the statistics prove that the condition of women in the workplace is not at par with that of men. But, that leads us to the question of why and how the difference was created, and is the status of women the sole reason for the difference? Further exploring various factors for the setback of women.

Discussion

Does Women's Status Affect Their Growth

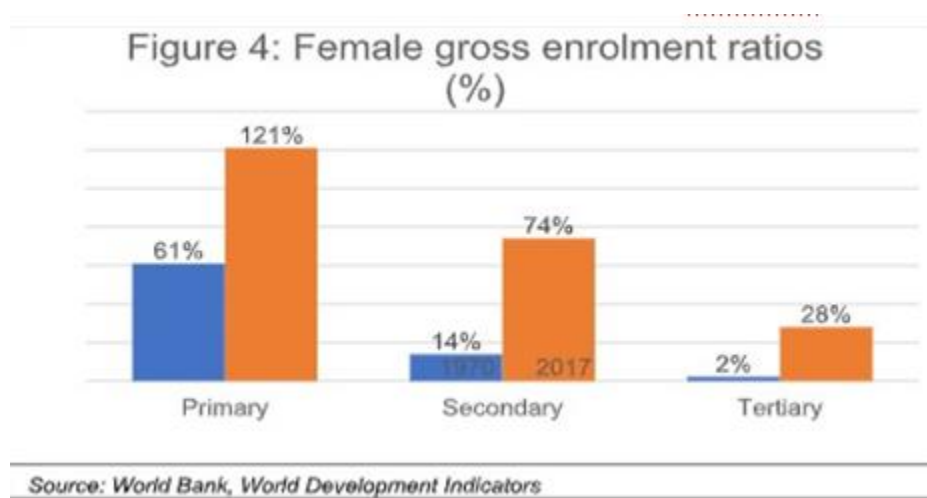
Unfortunately, women's status has affected their growth. There are multiple factors that have posed an obstacle in women's professional success.

1. Education, developing skills and training
2. Access to equal paid work and its quality
3. Unpaid care and work burdens (insert source)
4. Access to assets: properties and finance
5. Leadership roles and collective movement
6. Social protection: harassment at workplace
7. Fiscal policy
8. Labor market
9. Legal framework
10. Gender stereotypes and discrimination

Glass Ceiling - Exceptions To The Norm:

Women make up for 45% of the entire employment at the largest U.S. firms but only 20% of them hold the board seats and about 5% make it to the CEO jobs according to a report by nonprofit catalyst. Similar are the statistics for Europe, according to a 2016 fact sheet from the European Union.

According to uchicago news, chicago booth's Marianne Bertrand wrote that the glass ceiling in the U.S. briefed is: 25% of women with a graduation working full-time have earnings above the median of similarly educated men working full-time. Only 6% of these women earn enough to match the top 20% of male earners. Bertrand suggests that this situation is inefficient because many skilled women aren't being recognised for top-paying jobs.



We now look into a few examples of the exceptions to the norm, who have successfully made it to the top by overcoming all hurdles presented before them. We find out what those hurdles were, and how they managed to surpass them without giving up.

CASE STUDIES

WOMEN AT THE TOP INDIRA NOOYI

Indian-born American Businesswoman, the CEO of PepsiCo, Inc.'s brands (2006-18). She served a vital role in the reshaping and diversification of the company. Under her service, the company's revenues went from \$35 billion in 2006 to \$63.5 billion in 2017.

Her journey to the top, however, wasn't so smooth. Before leaving for America to pursue higher education at the Yale School of Management, her parents opposed the idea of her leaving unmarried, because according to the cultural mindset of a lot of people of India, she won't be "marriageable", if she were to leave without a spouse. A typical orthodox minded family believes that becoming a good wife and a mother are considered very important responsibilities. Nooyi knew she was going anyway.

After finishing her education, she decided to settle down and became a mother to two daughters. Despite achieving success in her professional life, Nooyi feels unsatisfied because she thinks she remained incomplete in her duties as a mother. According to BusinessToday.In's report, she says that maintaining a work-life balance for a woman is difficult and that she does not believe women can have it all. She doubts that her daughters think she was a good mother, as she was unable to attend to their needs, or be there for them during their personal achievements. Regularly ranked among the most powerful women in the world by Forbes and other remarkable

publications, Nooyi says she has died with guilt several times and that it is something she will just have to cope with at every point in her life. Thus, we see how even after achieving it all, it is tough for a woman to be able to fill all the gaps in her life as she bears a load of responsibilities other than becoming successful.

We now look at another example of an exception to the norm, who's difficulties as a woman were very different from those of Indira Nooyi's.

Kiran Mazumdar

Executive Chairperson and the Founder of Biocon, she is a first generation entrepreneur and global business leader with over 4 decades of experience in biotechnology. She made Biocon the first Indian company to gain the approval of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the manufacture of a cholesterol-lowering molecule. She became the richest woman in India with a 40% stake in the company. She has won several awards, including the Businesswoman of the year by the Economic Times in 2004, the World Economic Forum honoured her with the "Technology Pioneer" in 2000, along with a Padma Bhushan award for her work in industrial biotechnology.

Again, her journey has been far from smooth. According to Outlook Business, Mazumdar started with a brewing career, where companies were reluctant to take a bet on her, because brewing is considered a male dominated job. Eventually, she had to give up. She gives an example of when she approached the Karnataka State Financial Corporation for a loan, and she was told that loans for female entrepreneurs were clubbed with the physically challenged and other oppressed classes of the society. Thus, she could only apply for a loan under that category. Agitated by the same, she argued that she fit under neither of those categories, and that her loan should be processed under the general category.

Apart from this, recruiting people posed a big obstacle in her career. She says that initially when she started out, nobody wanted to work with a woman, let alone a woman operating out of a garage. Her first two employees were tractor mechanists, both about to retire, but that hardly made her want to quit. She preaches never giving up, which has led to her huge success as a businesswoman.

Conclusion

To conclude this research, women's potentials are yet to be fully explored. Exploring various countries and women's status in them, one thing all of them have in common are the generalised stereotypes relating to women that have been prevalent for ages, and now play a role in the lack

of opportunities professionally. It is definitely tougher for women to reach and then also succeed in the top-paying jobs because of their social status and social responsibilities. The ratio of women to men in the list of the top 50 CEOs of the world is also incredibly low. Thus, putting one gender above would not only be unfair and create disparities in the society, but would also detriment the economic growth of the world. To make the world we're living in a truly progressive place, stronger laws for women should be introduced with ensured enforcement in the workplace. The responsibilities between men and women should be equally divided so that women don't have to take all the burden of the household, which would also help them unleash their full potential in the workplace and contribute to the economic growth of the same.

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