

ANALYSING THE ROLE OF WOMEN REPRESENTATIONS IN CORPORATE BOARDS; CONTRIBUTIONS AND ENABLERS

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ABSTRACT

The Companies Act, 2013, introduced a significant reform in corporate governance by mandating gender diversity on company boards. This paper explores the evolution of women's participation in leadership roles before and after the enactment of the Act in selected Indian companies. It examines the gender diversity initiatives, transparency measures, accountability of the selected companies in India's corporate sector. Theoretically and empirically, studies have increasingly argued for the between women corporate board membership and empowerment. The role of women directors in corporate boards has been a subject of increasing academic and industry interest. One of the key components of effective corporate governance is board diversity, particularly the inclusion of women in leadership roles. The presence of women on corporate boards has been linked to improved governance practices, enhanced financial performance, and better risk management. However, despite these benefits, women remain underrepresented in boardrooms across various industries and regions. This study seeks to analyse the role of women directors in corporate boards, highlighting their contributions, the enablers that facilitate their participation, and the challenges they encounter. By examining existing literature, corporate policies, and industry trends, the research aims to provide insights into strategies for enhancing gender diversity in corporate leadership.

Keywords: Gender Diversity; Women Directors; Corporate Governance; Companies act; Initiatives; Transparency measures.

INTRODUCTION

Research on gender diversity on corporate boards is a topical subject that continues to attract considerable research attention. The first chapter gives an introduction about the background of corporate governance, women representations, contributions, enablers on corporate performance. Furthermore, it discusses the research objective, contribution and the research gaps, Review of literature and Data collection. At the end of the chapter, a short overview of the structure of the study will be presented. This research aims to critically analyse the role of women directors in corporate governance, focusing on evaluating gender diversity initiatives and exploring their contribution on governance outcomes. The inclusion of women in boardrooms has been associated with enhanced corporate governance, improved financial performance, and better risk management. Despite benefits, women remain underrepresented in corporate leadership roles worldwide. Research suggests that gender diversity in boardrooms contributes to improved decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives, fostering innovation, and enhancing ethical considerations. Additionally, various enablers, such as regulatory frameworks, organizational policies, and societal attitudes, have played a role in facilitating women's participation in corporate governance.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the pre and post Role of women representation in selected companies from the year 2015 onwards.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of existing gender diversity initiatives in increasing women's representation on corporate boards in selected companies.
- To explore the relationship between women's board representation and corporate governance outcomes, including transparency and accountability in selected companies.

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Creating this research project's design involves defining the research problems. The selected companies from the year 2015 were chosen to gather data. A Corporate reports publications, Content Analysis tools are used. A variety of data collection techniques are employed for the investigation. There are two types of data: primary and secondary. This is the one of the collections of secondary data. Secondary data for this study are gathered by a corporate governance report, financial report, using a carefully thought-out many reports and journals, and the Internet are the sources of data. A list of companies are selected based on different sector of industries which has a examined a various gender diversity, transparency measures, accountability.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Koutoupis et al. (2022): This study systematically scrutinises 140 board diversity studies published from 2015 to 2021, determining that this topic has primarily been empirically investigated in developed countries. The research analysed predominantly concentrates on the effect of board diversity on firms' (financial and sustainability) performance; however, no conclusive results have emerged regarding the extent to which diversity facilitates firms' operations.

Amin et al. (2021): This study indicate that female board presence significantly reduces agency costs (defined as the sum of monitoring expenditures by the principal, bonding expenditures by the agent, and residual losses), hence reduces the principal–agent conflict, particularly when a critical mass of women is achieved.

Dang et al. (2020): This study explores the findings that companies should consider a larger share of women on board as long as their presence may positively influence firm performance. Further, increased diversity may enhance productivity, creativity, and innovation. Similarly, governments and market regulators should impose gender quotas for women on board like in European nations. Gender diversity should be enlarged, compulsory laws being a crucial aspect in this vein.

SELECTED COMPANIES

- RELIANCE INDUSTRIES LTD.
- TATA STEELS LTD.
- INFOSYS LTD.
- APPOLLO HOSPITAL ENTERPRISES LTD.
- INDIAN OIL CORPORATIONS (IOC).
- ASIAN PAINTS LTD.
- HDFC BANK LTD.
- GODREJ CONSUMER PRODUCTS LTD (GCPL).

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1.1. Reliance Industries Ltd.

Industry: Conglomerate (Oil, Retail, Telecom)

RIL's Board Composition Pre-2013: No women directors.

RIL's Board Composition Post-2013: Appointed **Nita Ambani** as the first woman director in 2014.

Current Turnover: ₹ 9,30,529 crores (approximately).

4.2.1. Reliance Industries Ltd.

Gender Diversity Initiatives: Annual Report & Corporate Governance Report: Reliance Industries publishes its Integrated Annual Report and Corporate Governance Report, detailing board composition and diversity initiatives like **1. R-Aadya – Lean in Circle**, **2. Maternity Benefit Initiatives**, **3. Her Circle – Digital Platform for Women**, **4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Initiatives**.

4.3.1 Corporate Governance Outcomes:

1. Financial Performance Indicators:

- **Gross Revenue:**

FY 2023–2024: ₹10,00,122 crore.

- **EBITDA:**

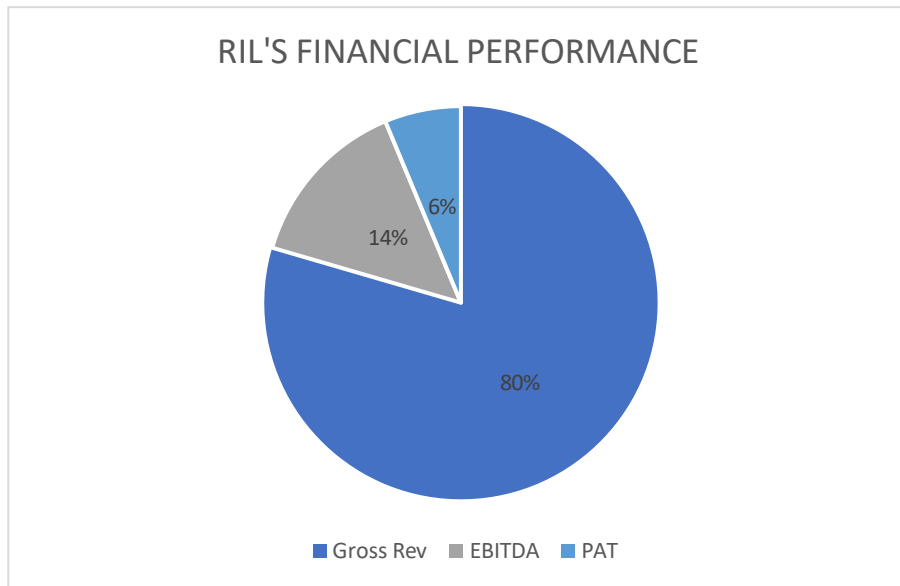
EBITDA = Net profit + Interest + Tax + Depreciation + Amortization.

FY 2023–2024: ₹1,78,677 crore.

- **Profit After Tax (PAT):**

PAT = EBIT - Interest - Tax.

FY 2023–2024: ₹79,020 crore. 5% growth.



INTERPRETATION: The company has demonstrated strong financial performance with high revenue, solid operational earnings, and a growing net profit. However, further analysis is needed to understand the impact of factors like market conditions, cost structures, and investments. The steady growth in PAT suggests financial stability and potential for further expansion.

2. Transparency Measures:

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) demonstrates transparency through various measures, including a robust Vigil Mechanism and Whistle-blower Policy, an Ethics and Compliance Task Force (ECTF), mandatory e-learning courses on ethical business practices, and an Anti-Bribery Management System (ABMS).

3. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives:

Reliance Industries' CSR activities, channelled through the Reliance Foundation, focus on rural transformation, healthcare, education, environmental sustainability, and disaster response, with a particular emphasis on empowering communities and promoting sustainable development.

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of women directors in corporate governance, focusing on their representation on boards, the effectiveness of gender diversity initiatives, and their corporate governance outcomes as well. The finding's part indicates that while gender diversity on the board has improved, especially after regulatory mandates such as the **Companies Act 2013**, initiatives for the equitable representation.

Through the analysis of the selected companies, it was observed that organizations with greater gender diversity on boards tend to exhibit improved transparency, accountability, and financial performance. The study also highlights the importance of strong policy implementation, leadership commitment, and organizational culture in fostering meaningful change. While regulatory interventions have been effective in increasing female board representation, sustained efforts are required to ensure long-term inclusivity and equal leadership opportunities for women in corporate governance. While some companies have embraced diversity as a value-driven initiatives, others exhibit more compliance without ensuring meaningful participation.

Future research can further explore the qualitative impacts of women directors on board decision-making and the extent to which their presence influences corporate sustainability and ethical governance using primary data and related tools for it. However, tokenism, challenges like lack of mentorship, cultural biases persist.

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