

 **VOICES
OF MEN
2020**

**GENDER INCLUSION IN
CORPORATE INDIA**
FROM THE MAJORITY'S PERSPECTIVE



A REPORT BY AVTAR, INDIA'S PREMIER DIVERSITY & INCLUSION SOLUTIONS FIRM



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INTRODUCTION

India is 48.5% women – that is near-about one half of the country's population. The country has had a woman prime minister, a woman president and women helming the top legislative and judicial ranks in the country. We have had role-models in women artists, scientists, doctors, lawyers and engineers and several other women who continue to create impact in the professional walks they have taken. Much to the country's pride, global stats show that India has the highest proportion of female commercial pilots in the world at 12 percent.

In 2017, the national mandate on fully paid maternity leave (for biological, adoptive and commissioning mothers) in India was extended to 26 weeks, making India – a country with one of the most generous parental leaves. The country also has a national directive of including at least one woman in the Board of directors of listed companies. With 49% of enrolled University graduates in India being women (according to 2017-18 AISHE Report^[1]), the stage seems to be set for the Indian Woman Professional (IWP), to be an integral part of the Indian workplace. Indian workplace. The domino effect is also visible across the Indian workplace – over the past few decades, India has witnessed and experienced drastic demographic changes, specifically on the demographic constitution of the workplace. Indian women professionals are increasingly demonstrating their professional diversity and versatility, across industries and sectors. The India of today boasts of some exceptional women leaders who are at the highest echelons of corporate hierarchy. Young women at the threshold of their careers aspire to emulate these success sagas. According to data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey, 23%^[2] of urban India's workplaces are women.

Let us take a closer look at the labour force trends of women in India's workforce – trends are not very positive. The Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) has seen a decline since 2005^[3]. India is ranked at the 120th place out of 131 countries with regard to female labour force participation^[4]. According to World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report 2020^[5], India is ranked 112th globally in terms of gender gap across several sub indices like economic opportunity, education, health & survival and political participation. The average economic contribution by women in India is less than the global average with just 18 Percent^[6]. It is projected that, if 50 Per cent of women could join the workforce, India could boost its economic growth by 1.5 percentage points to 9 per cent per year^[4].

In a context where women's participation in the workforce, is crucial in determining the country's economic growth, it is important to understand how the corporate majority – men, view gender diversity at the workplace. It is important to understand how equipped they are to handle the change in workplace diversity dynamics like having more women in their teams. In a land where diversity is perhaps at its intrinsic best, it becomes inevitable that organizations that are on a growth path empower their managers to manage the increasing gender diversity and leverage it for better business outcomes.

The role of people managers in ensuring translation of organizational intent on gender inclusion to better management of diversity thus becomes critical. An organisation may have an excellent gender diversity strategy in place but, if the managers' buy in is absent or in other words if the managers do not believe in D&I the employee may not be able to enjoy the benefits their company offers in terms of D&I. Hence, managers act as the bridge between the organisation and the employees in communicating the D&I practice and determining its effectiveness. Against this backdrop, this paper presents the results of a research study conducted amongst the majority in India's workplaces – male managers on their views, concerns and



experiences of having more women in the workplace and having managed the resultant gender diverse teams.

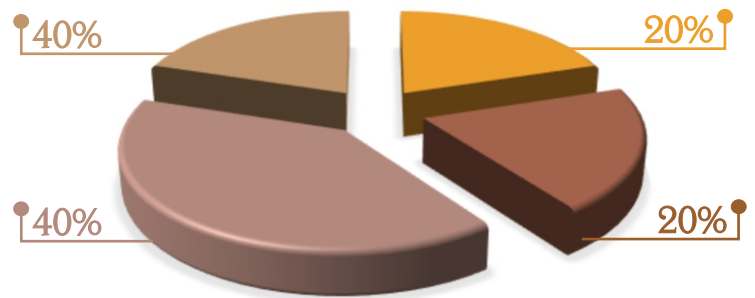
METHODOLOGY



Using purposive sampling method, 1067 managers representing different companies operating in different industries and sectors participated in this survey. With regard to the survey measure, the questions were developed internally. The reliability of the measure was also tested and the score was found to be acceptable. The questionnaire had 15 questions on male manager views on managing gender diverse teams and having more women on board.

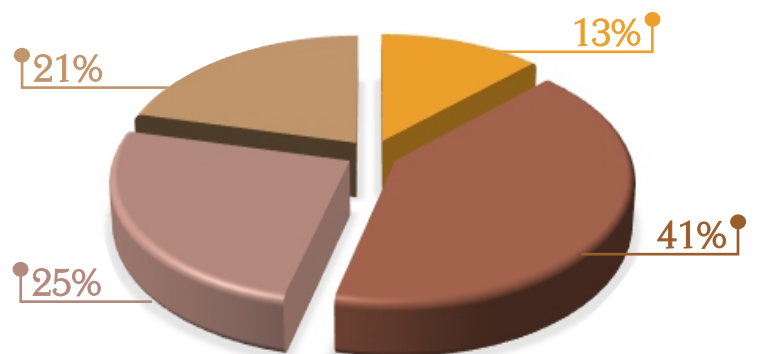
KEY OBSERVATIONS

INDUSTRY



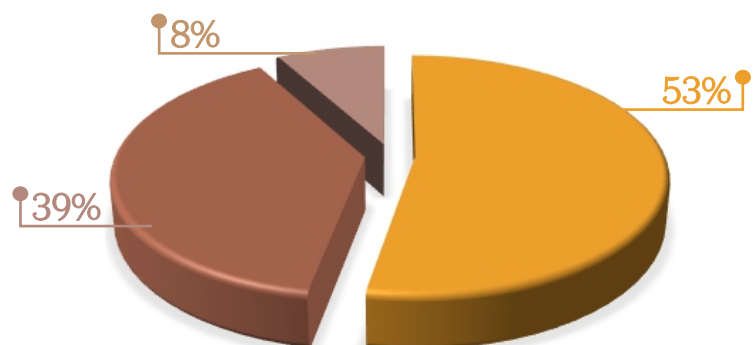
IT/ITES BFSI Retail Manufacturing

ZONE



North South East West

LEVELS



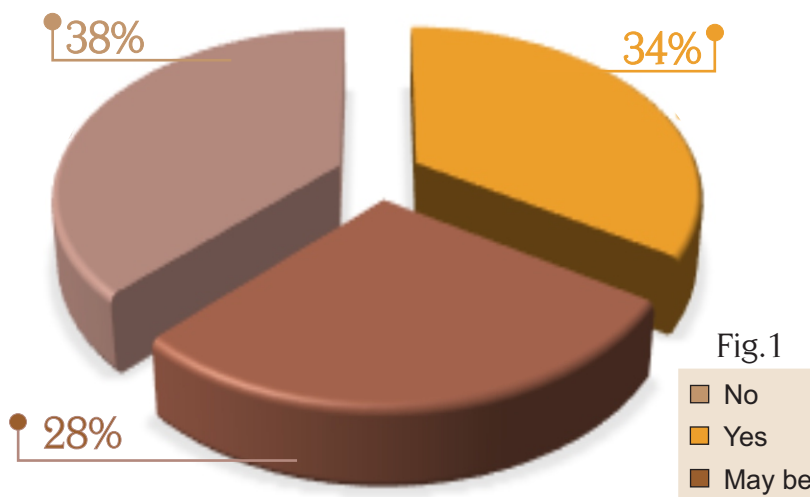
Mid Senior Junior

The demographic mix of the 1067 managers who responded to the survey is as shown.

What follows are critical observations on how managers correlate business performance and gender diversity and how they perceive organizational culture to be driving gender inclusion.

1

In a VUCA world, gender diverse teams can help organizations be successful.

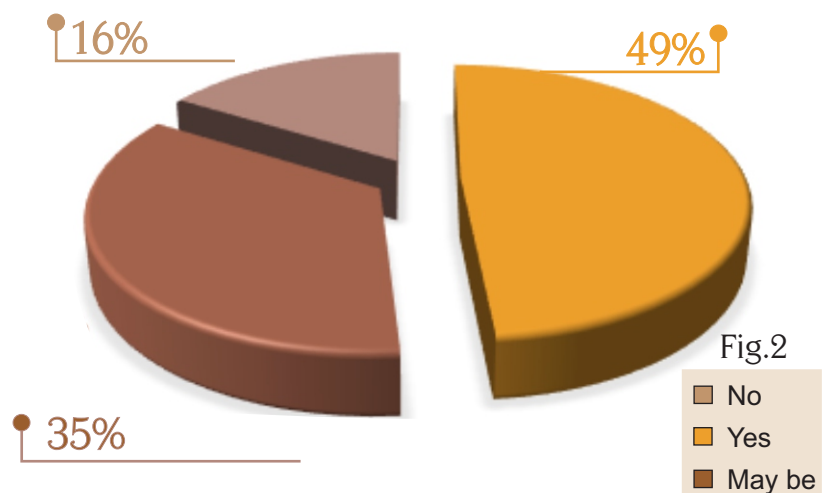


From Fig.1, it may be inferred that the 38% of managers do not feel that gender diverse teams (that have better men-women balance) can assure success in a VUCA world. 34% managers are apprehensive. 34% of managers agree to the proposition that having more women can help companies combat VUCA and be successful. The finding points to the fact that if organizations are to have greater awareness amongst managers to help them understand how gender diverse teams can help teams innovate and manage risks better, gender inclusion can become a success strategy in a VUCA world.

Managing teams with women is challenging - there is no guarantee on results.

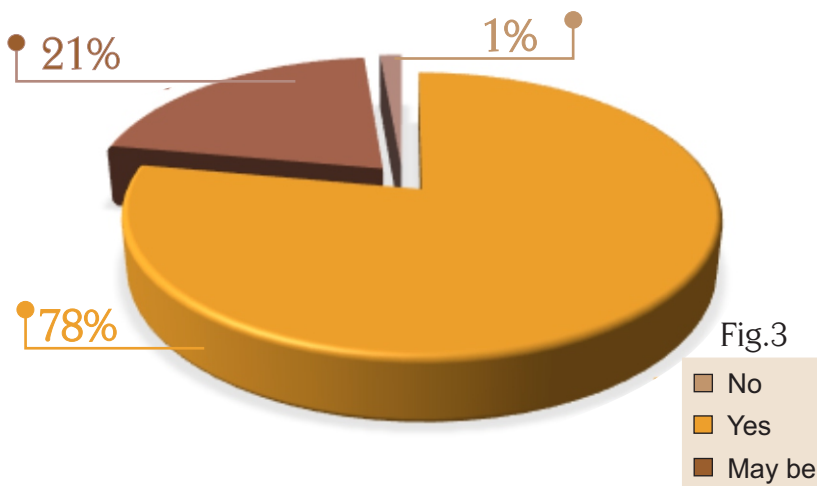
2

As Fig.2 shows, 49% of managers opined that managing teams with women comes with its own set of challenges and does not always deliver results. 35% respond with a 'Maybe' to this statement – it could be because they have had mixed experiences. Only 16% clearly respond in the negative, to mean that they are confident of managing teams with women and driving them to success. This shows that managers need greater clarity on what gender diversity can lead teams to, there are questions to be answered and inclusivity faculties to be built for them to become male allies championing gender inclusion.





Gender inclusion can help solve other organizational issues.

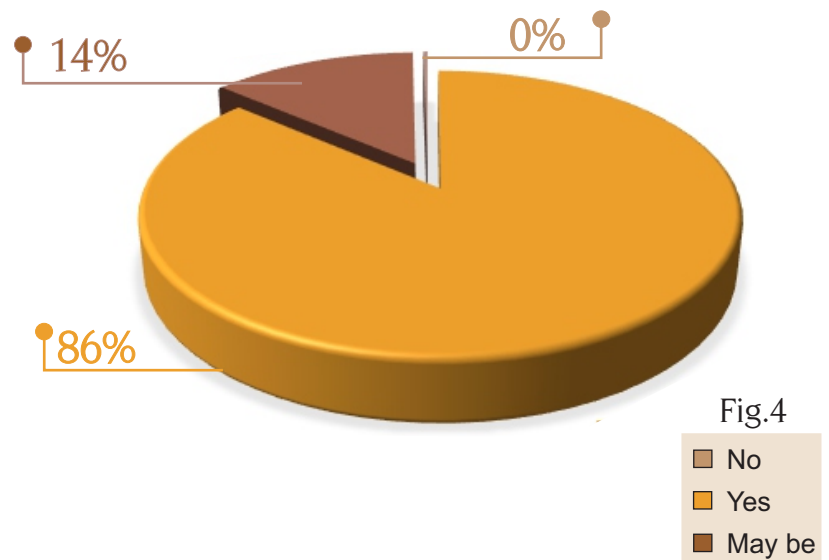


From Fig.3, it may be interpreted that majority of the managers feel that gender inclusion can help solve other organizational challenges. This points to the fact that managers believe that challenges, which could be business in nature, can be managed better when companies include women and have more inclusive work environments. Gaining new perspectives about a problem and being able to understand customer needs better could definitely help organisations overcome challenges more efficiently. This is a commendable trend and if India Inc. can build on this belief, it would be easier to extrapolate the benefits to better business outcomes.

For gender diverse teams to be productive, inclusion is a must.

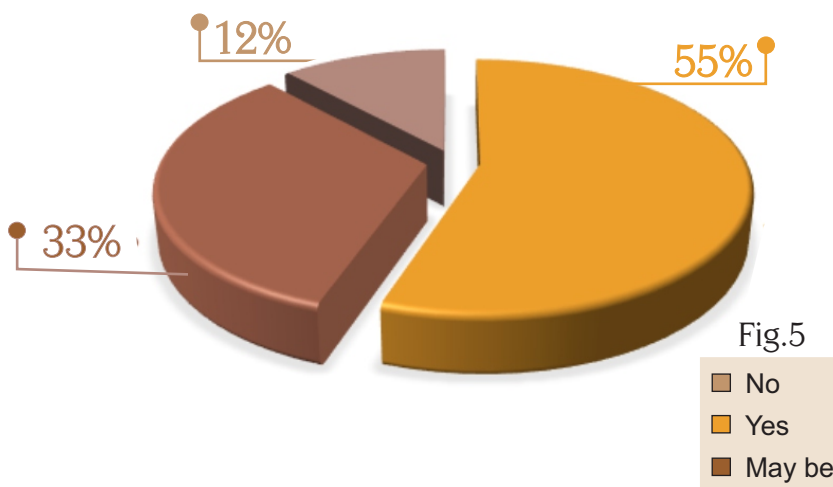


Fig.4 has an important communication to make, the dominant manager belief that inclusion precedes diversity and is critical to apportion women's workforce participation to business success – 86% managers felt so. This serves as a clear pointer to organizational leaders that their D&I agenda should focus on setting up inclusive work environments first and then move on to hiring, retaining and advancing more women





Increasing women in the workforce is important,
but not at the cost of results

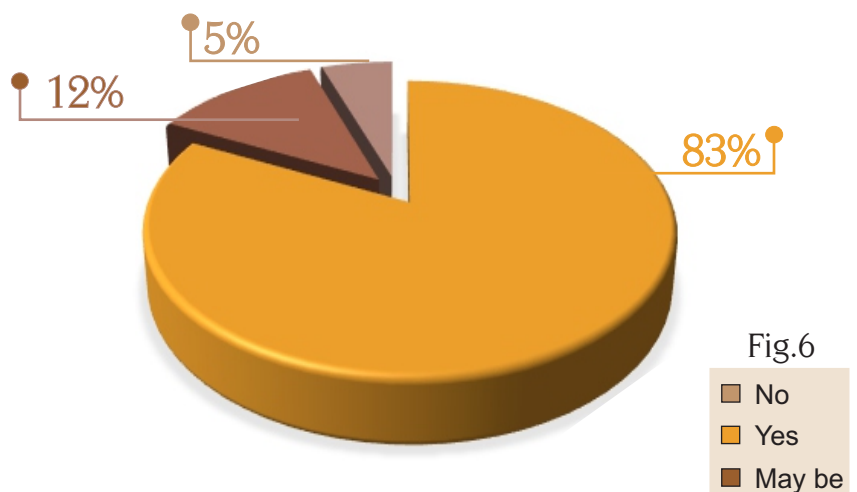


What Fig.5 tells us is that 55% managers prioritise performance over pursuing gender diversity. This could also be because of a unidimensional approach to diversity that many organisations follow, by only having diversity targets but not actually empowering managers to understand the business case. If managers are unable to see the interlinkage between the two, it would be difficult for them to actually own and run their employers' diversity agenda.



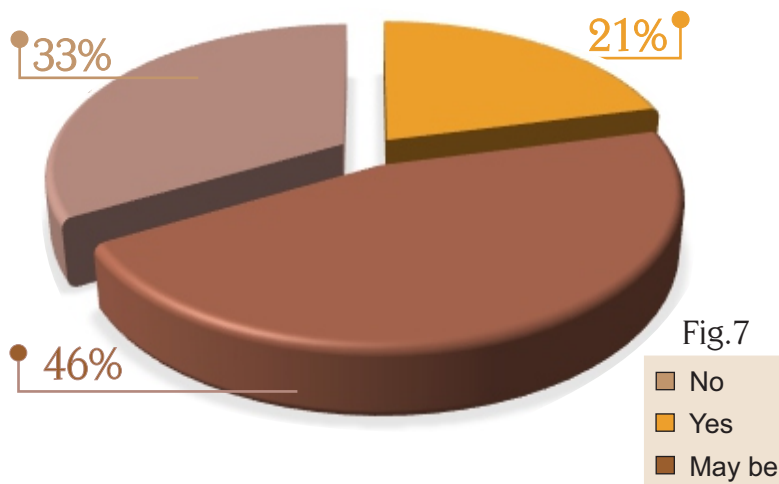
Providing women with additional support like flexible working can be done only if they are high-performers.

From Fig.6, what can be inferred is that managers are on the look-out for return on investment on having more women on board - 83% managers feel they would champion career enablement for women employees only when they have proved themselves as high performers. This calls for greater awareness amongst the managers to help them understand that employee performance is often an outcome of enablement, empowerment and engagement.



7

Policies to recruit, retain and advance women are created without business performance in mind

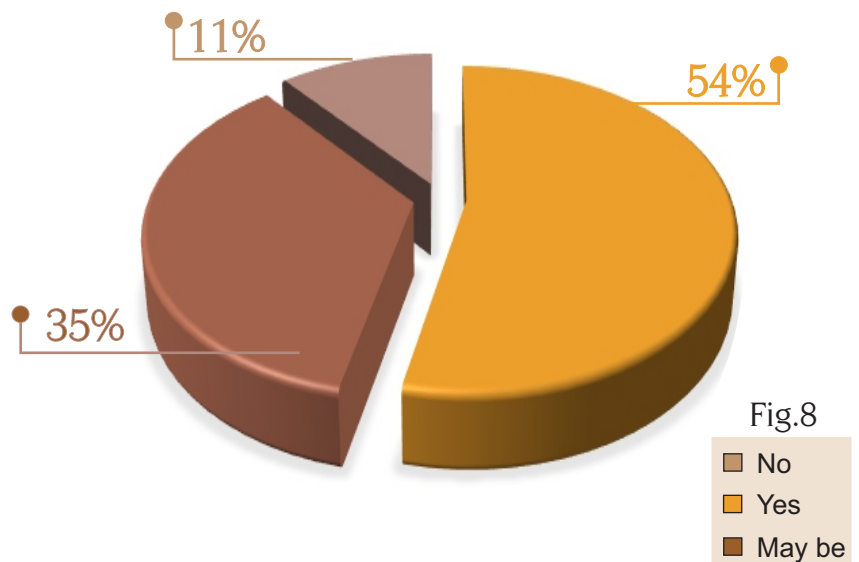


What Fig.7 tells us is that while 46% managers feel that policy making for gender diversity and business goals talk to each other as organizational processes, 21% of managers feel that this is not the case. This shows how organizations need to highlight their focus on having more women on board as a business agenda and not merely an HR prerogative.

8

It is better that women take a career break when work-life integration becomes challenging.

With 56% of managers actually feeling that women should choose home over career when things get challenging, what Fig.8 tells us is the gravity of unconscious biases amongst managers in corporate India. What this necessitates is the need for greater support to break the shackles of biases and stereotypical notions, to move into an inclusive world. Greater sensitisation amongst managers to become true allies of gender inclusion, is the need of the hour. This would in turn help them provide enablement like flexible working or child care support for women employees to tide over career break-points.



9

Choosing a male candidate over a female candidate when they are equally meritorious, is better for the company

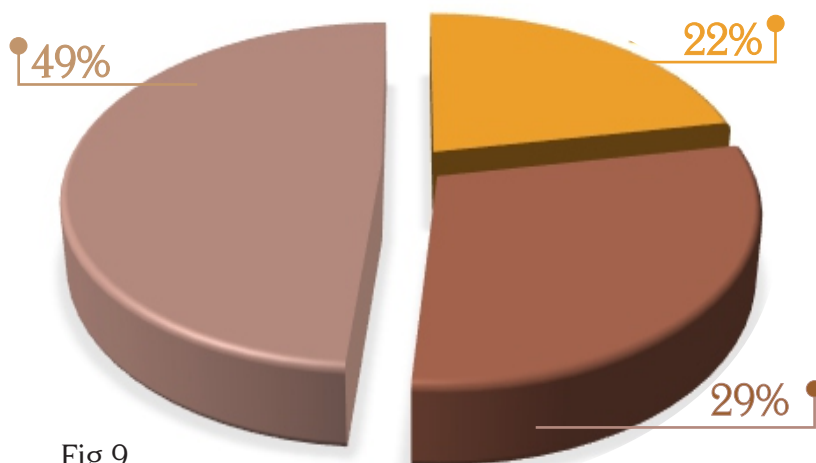


Fig.9



Fig.9 demonstrates a comparably, less prominent yet another manifestation of bias. However, with 49% of managers saying merit comes first and then gender, there is reason for hope as organizations pursue inclusion. What remains to be done is to help managers specifically hiring managers, help overcome scepticism and apprehension around hiring women.

10

Inclusion warrants upgrades in personal belief systems, policies alone cannot ensure having more women in the workplace

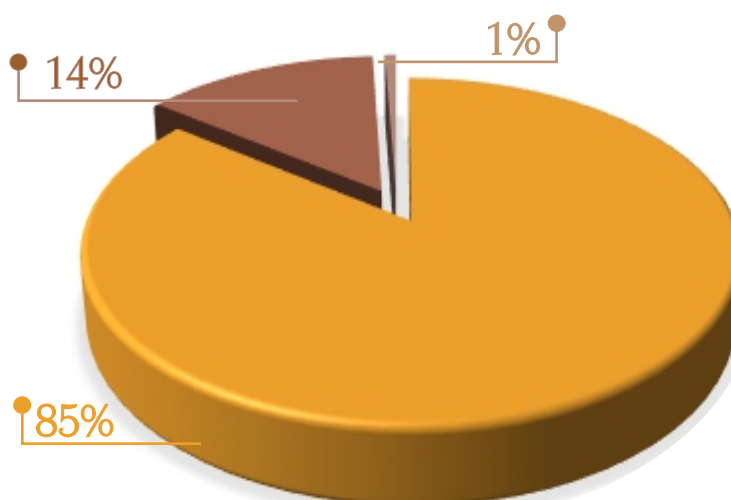
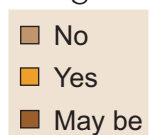


Fig.10



11

Only when teams learn to include women, gender diversity policies deliver impact.

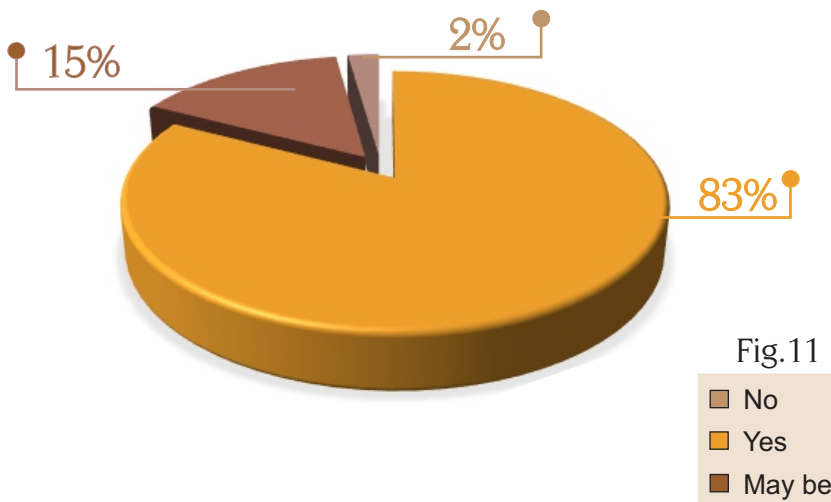
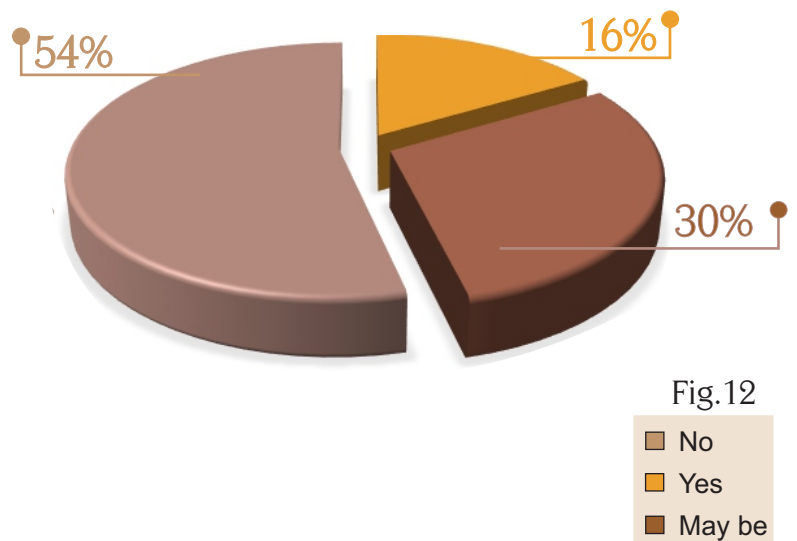


Fig.10 & Fig 11 put across a very important discovery – that managers in corporate India feel that inclusion is personal and it requires behavioural changes at an individual level to become inclusive. While policies can steer conversations forward, managers acknowledge the need to address inclusion at a personal level. This supports the 70:20:10 learning model developed by Morgan McCall, Michael M. Lombardo and Robert A. Eichinger which suggests that majority (70%) of the learning takes place to experience while only 10% of the learning takes place through textbooks or formal learning^[7]

12

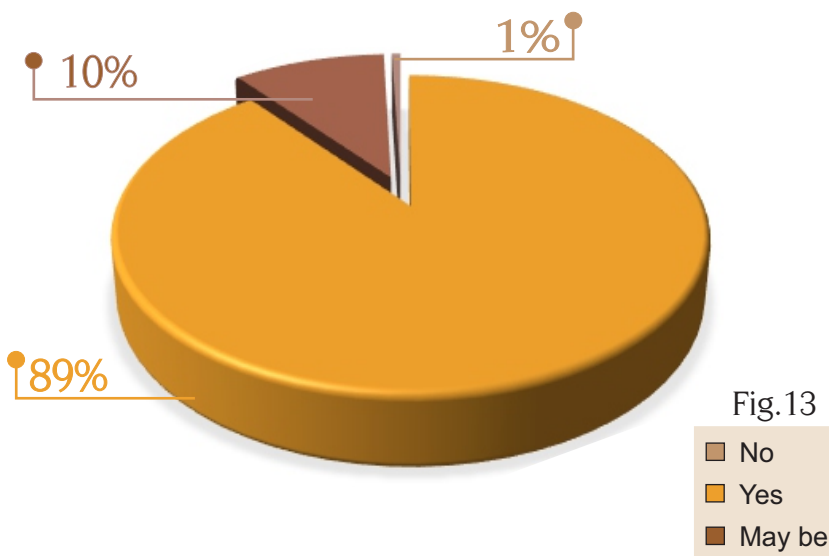
It is not a manager's responsibility to help team-mates be inclusive of women.

Fig.12 speaks about greater ownership amongst managers in corporate India. 54% managers are in disagreement. The fact that 54% managers are ready to anchor the responsibility of upgrading their team's attitude towards including women, can be viewed as a positive trend.



13

Organizations play a critical role in helping women be successful in their careers.

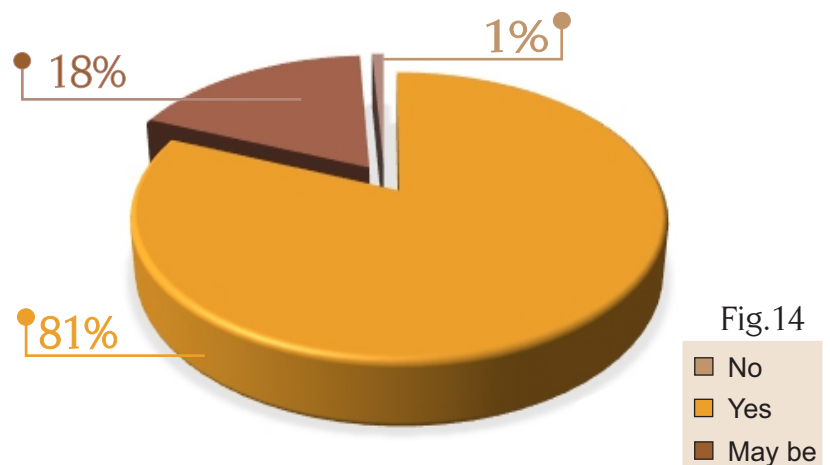


What Fig.13 tells us is that a vast majority of the managers (89%) felt that organizations play a critical role in enabling and supporting success of women role-models. This is indicative of how they believe organizational culture with inclusion embedded can give rise to many more success stories of women.

When men focus on being inclusive of women outside work, they become better allies at work.

14

81% of managers agree to the fact that men can become better allies at work, when they become more inclusive of women in lives outside of work. It could be because then they are able to appreciate unique challenges faced by women (with close quarter observations), become more equal participants of their homes and lives, they tend to become better allies at work.



15

Working in gender diverse teams makes one a more effective professional.

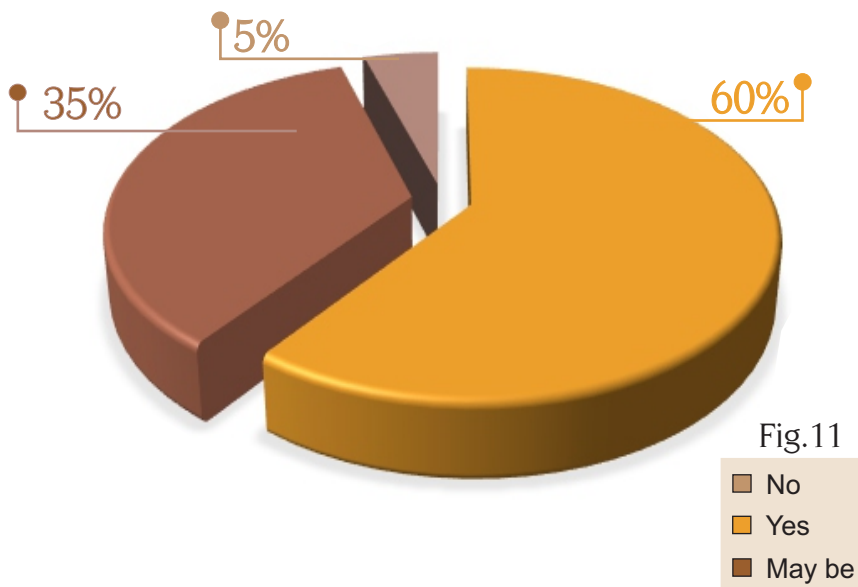


Fig.11

From Fig. 15, it may be inferred that majority of the male managers surveyed felt that working in teams that had more women, helped them improve their own professional qualities and helped them become more effective at work. It is important to note that 35% men were not sure how this would help them become more effective, also indicating the need for male leaders who have successfully championed gender inclusion to come forth and share their stories of growth.



WAY FORWARD

The goal that most organisations pursue is that of performing better. Research has time and again established that organizational culture is a clear driver of business performance. Hence to pursue the goal of better performance systematically and strategically, it is important that organizations focus on culture building, specifically from an inclusion stand-point. What this research has helped reveal are the perceptions (status quo) of the current corporate majority – men on increasing the number of women at their workplaces. Study results show that male managers in India Inc. are receptive of gender diversity as a concept but to get on to the field and implement organizational strategy, they need to be empowered through sensitization and awareness. There are apprehensions that male managers have, specifically in the context of gender diversity and its impact on business performance. To move the needle and help men become allies to gender inclusion, it is pertinent for organizations to run initiatives to encourage male allyship. Such programs will not only involve sharing of best practices from organizations who have cracked the code but also help men understand why becoming allies is critical to their path to leadership. And if organizations can shine the spot-light on male leaders who have relentlessly championed the cause of gender inclusion and how their journeys to success helped their companies become more inclusive, it will help deepen the intent. With more men across levels becoming gender diversity ambassadors and role-models, the stage is set for an organization to move further up the curve of D&I maturity and achieve inclusive growth.

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ABOUT AVTAR

Avtar set up in 2000, is India's first diversity advocate & workplace inclusion expert. Renowned for its extensive work in the space of Diversity & Inclusion and more specifically, women's workforce participation, it is the country's largest provider of second career opportunities for women and is also the earliest to begin working on diversity audits and measurement. Lead by the visionary Dr. Saundarya Rajesh, Avtar has ventured into areas of women's empowerment and career creation, which are firsts to India, such as – 1) Creating a marketplace for second career women to meet potential employers, 2) Developing a comprehensive set of career enablers which companies can implement in their workspaces, 3) Spearheading original research that has provided cutting edge insights to organizations 4) Re-Skilling, Up-skilling and Counselling of women to pursue sustainable career paths and 5) Building career intentionality amongst under privileged girl children. Over its 18 years of existence, Avtar has helped charter Diversity & Inclusion plans for several organizations in the IT, FMCG and Financial sectors in the country. Avtar in association with Working Mother Media (a celebrated gender parity champion of the US) conducts India's largest gender analytics exercise – Best Companies for Women in India (BCWI), which is in its fifth edition in 2020

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