

# Women Leadership in Indian Organizations

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## Abstract

In today's global economy, industries require a talented pool of candidates to create a comparative competitive advantage to address the global opportunities as well as to address these global trends and dynamic challenges. Factual and cognitive leadership is required to manage changes effectively. The nurturing and task-oriented style, managerial practices, organizational orientation, especially followed by women entrepreneurs/ leaders/ managers has carved a niche for women leadership in national as well as international platforms. The current financial crisis and long-term global trends are reshaping the corporate landscape, and there is an urgent need to accelerate some of the changes in corporations to seize the new opportunities that arise from time to time.

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**Index terms**— women leaders, glass-ceiling, leadership programs, gender diversity, stereotyping, perceptions, barriers, styles.

## 1 Introduction

Women constitute half of the world's population. Yet their representation in management has been significantly low in comparison to men. However, the recent trends suggest assuring a rise in the number in a managerial position. It's not surprising that the employment scenario itself is undergoing far-reaching transformation. There are few traditional (female-dominated) occupations, which were selected based on women as a percent of the total employed (including full-time, part-time, and self-employed). The report of the committee on the status of women in India highlighted women's position in a range of fields but also quite pointedly asserted the need to strengthen their political, social, and economic bases. In other words, it was essential to empower them and provide them with the means of gaining control over their lives. Bidding adieu to the traditional occupations like teachers, secretaries, lecturers, women are gradually making their presence felt in the managerial rungs in a variety of business establishments like banks, hospitality, multinational corporations, financial institutions, advertising agencies, etc. This paper presents how paradigm shifts have taken place regarding women's leadership roles and how women from their traditional role of a housewife have evolved into the dual and more self-fulfilling role of a working woman and a housewife. This paper also ascertains the impediments hindering women managers' advancement to leadership positions. This paper has also suggested policies and strategies, as well as some, suggested some leadership development programs to enhance the number of women's anticipation in leadership positions.

## 2 II.

## 3 Objectives

Following are some objectives considered-1) To study the leadership styles of women executives. 2) To discuss the paradigm shifts towards women's leadership from traditional stereotypes to modern. 3) To study the impediments hindering women managers' advancement to leadership positions.

### 4 III. Need for Effective Leadership in Women Executives in Indian Organizations

In spite of many initiatives taken by women and by government and women on a senior-most position in India still, gender stereotypes and gender discrimination exist in the society concerning to social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education. There are so many constitutional provisions for women empowerment such as Article-14, special may be made by the state in favor of women (article-15 (3), Equality of opportunity for all citizens relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state (Article 16), State policy to be directed to secure for women and men equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood 39(a), equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39 (d)).

IV.

## 5 Literature Reviewed

The subject of women in managerial leadership has dominated management research over the last 20 years. In a review of literature, ??Marshall, 1984) found that studies which revealed differences between men and women's leadership style were usually those in which women managers scored higher on supporting dimensions of leadership, this view has also been supported by the literature forwarded by various authors including ??Brenner and Vinacke, 1979). ??Davidson and Cooper, 1983) stated that women managers scored significantly higher on both people-oriented and taskoriented dimensions than did the male managers. The gender stereotypes and glass ceiling and perceptions about women in Indian organizations had a negative impression about working women in senior-most positions. And it's been considered that women are appropriate for working as certain pre-defined areas for them like PR, HR and, middle or lower-level positions or especially in the fashion or beauty world. And such a glass-ceiling and stereotyping against women don't let them work or to take up challenging jobs or top-level positions.

According to one study titled Women in Management in the new economic environment, it was analyzed that generally women work for their economic independence and attainment of their personal goals. Working women on lower or middle-level positions were working basically to fulfill their personal as well as financial needs still those women who were working on the higher-level position were found to be careeroriented and aspiring and moving up the organizational ladder and the women are challenged for not only performing their traditional role but also as a career oriented women.

Apart from that attitude and treatment of men towards female leaders is also one of the barriers as they often been treated differentially and stereotypical views about being very inferior and lesser to them still, now Indian organizations have realized that women are as equal as men and therefore, brining workforce diversity within the organization.

According to the Catalyst India Benchmarking report for 2010, only 17% of Indian companies offered target leadership development programs for women; another study for Women in Leadership Forum shows that Indian companies have a very lesser number of women in a senior position. Indian companies such as Tata Consultancies Ltd. Indian companies such as Tata Consultancies Ltd, Zensar Technologies, Tata Steel and JSW Steel have 5-6% women in a senior position, Multinational firms such as PepsiCo, KPMG, Citigroup, GE & Pfizer had 15-20% women at the same level in 2010, the will study shows.

The Catalyst study shows Fortune 500 companies with 3 to 4 % on board, had a significant performance advantage over those with fewer women on board, which includes up to 73% higher returns on sales, up to 83% higher return on equity and up to 112% higher return on investment (Source: Dr. Kulkarni N. and Dr. Bakhre R, 2011).

Few Indian organizations still lack sensitivity about women's sensitive issues and don't appreciate women's capabilities and talents.

According to one survey, Men and women tie on two of the three traits on the public ranking of leadership qualities such as hard work and ambition. Men prevail over women on decisiveness, with 44% of respondents saying that men are more decisive and 33% saying women are as far as women re concerned they got big leads over men on three traits on the public ranking out of eight items measured: being compassionate (80% say women; 5% say men, being outgoing (47% say women, 28% say men) and being creative (62% say women, and 11% say men).

The survey also assessed men and women on policy matters and job performance challenges. On the policy front, society widely judges the women to be better than men at dealing with social issues such as health care and education, whereas males are supposed to deal with crime, public safety, defense, and national security. On the job performance criteria, women get higher marks than men in all of the measures tested like standing up for one's principles in the face of political pressure, being able to work out compromises, keeping government honest but still there is a very lesser percentage of women working in boards and senior-most positions.

However, as per the nation's FORTUNE 500 companies still there are fewer women at the CEO level or board level, i.e., 2%, 17% of all members in political realm, 16% of all Indian Senator, 16% of all governors, and 24% of all state legislators. (Source: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/932/men-or-women-whose-the-better-leader>, last accessed on 21/03/2011) But as per the earlier research work, Indian women as leaders have strengths and these are the ability to network with colleagues, ability to perceive & understand situations, strong sense of

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dedication, loyalty and commitment to their organizations, multitasking, crisis management skills, willingness to share information, compassionate, empathetic. (Source: from Budhwar, P.S. Saini, D.

## 6 S. & Bhatnagar, J (2005, June)

There is a strong need to promote gender diversity in the workforce and also a need to change the mindset of the society as well as women themselves. Above all that family members (before marriage & after marriage) strong support plays a pivotal role to work on top-level positions and executive-level positions as these positions ask for more devotion and dedication.

According to one survey about half (51%) of respondents said a reason is that Indians simply are not ready to elect a woman to high office; more than four in ten (43%) told a reason is that women who are active in corporate are held back by men, and 38% said a big reason is that against all realms of the society women are discriminating. Corporate is no exception. Apart from that pressure from family and work-life balance is also the major cause that there is scarcity of women leaders at corporate world. Some 26% said that a big reason that women don't have the experience required for higher positions. The least common explanations are that round 16% and 14% of respondents respectively are that women don't make as good leaders as men and those are not tough enough for the corporate world.

There is the biggest hindrance for women to work in stores, factories and public sector, the informal sector is particularly significant for women. According to estimates around 90% working women are involved in the informal domains such as small trader, artisan or field laborer on a family farm, and most of these jobs are unskilled and low paying and do not provide benefits to worker. As per one estimate that over 90% working women are in informal sector and most of these jobs are unskilled and low paying. But in recent years the conditions of working women in India have improved considerably.

Though women are making up a large chunk of the workforce, we see only a handful at the top. The participation of women in the workforce in India is on the rise. Further entrepreneurship has provided women in India the opportunity to enter into various fields and areas. It has been contended that there are three parts of character which have an impact on administrative achievement they are locus of control, self adequacy and requirement for accomplishment ??Porter and Lawler, 1968). An in-depth study of 48 successful British women managers (White et al., 1992) found that they had an internal locus of control, i.e., they had a strong belief in their own ability to control the direction of their careers, ??Bandura (1977) claims the self-efficacy influences the choice of behaviour. White et al. (1992) found that women managers possessed high self efficacy and the majority stated that tenacity and perseverance had been vital determinants of their success, these women managers also rated highly on the need of achievement often cited as an indicator of successful managers ??Cox and Cooper, 1988). According to ??Bass et al. (1971), there is a little evidence to suggest from men in various personal attributes, similarities have been found between potential managerial capability of men and women, cooperation and competitions (Lertzmaan & Wahba, 1972) and problem-solving ??Matthews, 1972). Reviews of the literature on comparisons of men and woman managers conclude that women possess the necessary qualifications and skills for management and professional positions (Herbert and Yost, 1979). The myths surrounding gender stereotypes and requisite managerial characteristics may disappear as more women enter executive positions.

According to (Putnam & Heinen) a leader is supposed to be aggressive, forceful, and competitive. Achievement oriented, self-confident but these traits tend to be more often associated with men than with women. Women are generally depicted as emotional, passive, and dependent and face a paradox that if plays the culturally defined traits of women she is unacceptable as an executive and if acts as a leader, she is called unfeminine.

Effective leadership in women executives is directly correlated with the empowerment of women by increasing their educational, social, spiritual, political, gender and economic strengths and in this regard government is coming up with several policies on national, state and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence and political participation. But still, the policy implementation process and actual practice are at slow pace. By uplifting the economic, social, and political status of women the leadership effectiveness in women executives can enhance as women are not being treated equally to men at several places. Gender stereotypes and discrimination are still found in India even today. H. Subramanyam (2011) compares women's education in India at present and past. According to him, there is a good progress in overall enrollment of girl students in schools. Reif, Newton, and Monezka said that an appropriate training program is only needed if women are different from men in capabilities and capacities. Besides, women have more abstract visualization than men. This states that there are to be more women in management at the top positions than men. Women at higher levels should help other women by encouraging and explain them the problems that will be encountered in attempting to move up the corporate ladder. Thus women managers could provide insights and share experiences which might help other aspiring female advancing her career for topmost positions in organizations.

Burrow in his studies also observed women managers are most dependable, more concerned and give better attention to detail than men. Generally, women are supposed to be very soft being feminine, acceptable, and valued; however, expressing other feelings is fully unacceptable, e. g., feeling of 'outrage' and 'anger' are considered 'unfeminine'. This all can create particular difficulty for women where their class position or culture encourages them to be strong or those women holding a powerful position. So these situations can place unusual pressure on such women of the wider society says. People expect women to be careful with people, and much of the progress

women have made into a formal leadership positions in an organization has been in caring roles such as personnel or public relations. Women are supposed to be too emotional, which is a part of a negative stereotypes about how women behave at work of one gets too psychological this poor judgment on their part as well as being difficult for everyone else.

According to Elliman, women are more concerned for friends and associates, the quality of supervision, while men are more concerned and interested in the benefits of the job, an opportunity for education, advancement, and pay. To remove the various myths existing in the society, there is a need to encourage the women to improve themselves as well as the attitude of the society towards them. Management's attitude towards women also needs to be changed. Promotional policies for women may also prove to be helping make them effective. With the globalization of the Indian business, more companies now realize the virtue of gender diversity in their human capital by bringing in more women managers in the companies. Taking a cue from the US companies, that boasts of high diversity, Indian businesses are now gearing up for bringing in diversity in their workforce and an urgent need to bring leadership effectiveness in women executives in business organizations by observing many managerial qualities in women. The Company should ensure that capable and talented women get promoted to appropriate positions frequently. Moreover, persons doing the same kind of job should have the same designation irrespective of gender bias. Meticulous care should be taken to ensure that deserving minorities and women get representation in the board of directors and senior management. Most importantly, women should not hold such positions where they are not likely to get promoted and remain there as if in a dead-end despite of being a good performer. The company should have an inbuilt organizational support system that promotes scheduling, flexibility, flexi-time, maternal and paternal leave policies, resources and referrals for child care, which reflect the degree of support towards minority and women. These supporting policies also become the source of motivation for women executives. Performance appraisals and consequent compensation packages should be so structured that there will be no room for discrimination. The companies must have the objective method of performance appraisal and nondiscriminatory compensation and incentive packages that should ensure and enhance the opportunity for the advancement of women. The performance measures should not be structured on the locus of gender or race but strictly based on actual outcomes achieved against the targets. This would help the organization identify good performers irrespective of gender or race and help the company to reward the talent and make the best use of such professionals. While recruitment and selection, it is very significant that a company should make sure that the process is not biased against women and minorities.

Usually, during recruitment and selection, companies tend to use an informal networking system rather than using data on the participation of employees in training special projects, committees, or other skill enhancing activities. Nonusage of these data will create an inbuilt bias towards generating glass-ceiling in a company. Thus the company would not be well off in tapping the right candidate. Monitoring access to training and development facilities is particularly important to prevent and break the intangible barrier. Various researches have proven time and again that the performance of women and minorities go up several times after attending training and development workshops. Mentoring is another process of internal development that assists individuals in their advancement. Mentoring relationships are invaluable in personal development as well as in the navigation of organizational policies. The presence of intangible barrier in an organization is a severe impediment in utilizing and retaining its talented employees. As the nature and composition of the labor force changes due to increasing globalization, retention of talented and qualified will become more of economic necessity and a cause of concern for the HR managers of tomorrow as well as senior management. Providing further insight into the subject, Kishor Gopal Krishnan writes in her column "Women in India: Breaking the stereotype" "Just like the family she adds, society and other fields the world of business too is dominated by men, women are few and far between. Even the developed countries are not untouched by this bias. To quote fortune, "female corporate power is still spread unevenly across the business world. Many cultural social and logistical issues conspire against women's development in business from stereotyping to maternity leave." Nonetheless, today's women managers are breaking several stereotypes and proving their mettle. Nainital Kidwai heads HSBC, the banking conglomerate (also featured in Fortune's list of 50 influential women managers in international business) followed by Sonal Dave, the CEO, HSBC securities a Capital market. Malini Thadani is head, public affairs, HSBC. At IDBI bank, Ragini Atal is the regional head, North Retail banking business, while the HR operations are headed by Shalaka Gadekar. At Infosys S Hema Ravichander is the vice president of its HR division. In the finance ministry, Vinita Rai is a revenue secretary. Even in family-run business, women managers now have greater say and power. At various departments, many women professionals have been promoted in the hierarchy chain. One such example is the ICFAI press, where the number of women employees has seen healthy growth in the last couple of years. This has forced the domestic companies to take a fresh look at their recruitment strategies and they have made their strategies very transparent and open to women. It is also true that women managers of today are more demanding and ambitious; they are willing to go that extra mile to pursue their career objectives. They are determined to create a niche of their own, and do not accept the commonly perceived job role for a woman. More and more organizations today have women managers in responsible positions. One major reason contributing to this is, a fact considered them more loyal, dedicated, honest, and sincere compared to their male counterparts. HR experts feel there is a great difference in the way men, and women respond to their jobs. Psychologists believe that women excel better in developing relationships, and working collectively, and India's blooming BPO sector is indicative of this hypothesis. Research indicates that women are more comfortable than

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men with team-based evaluations and associated rewards. Gender scientists say, "this is more due to women's tendency to value relationships based on communication and understanding, while men define their relationships more on lines of their roles and status. Various researchers pointed out that men, when exposed to team conflicts and stresses, prefer to work independently. In contrast, women are more likely to seek improved communication in the face of conflict. Management has also realized it worth undertaking looking at the larger gains that one could reap from diversity

## 7 a) Hindrances of Women Empowerment

The chief problems faced by women in the past and still today up to some extent are Gender discrimination in some areas, Lack of Education, Female Infanticide, Financial Constraints, Family dual role responsibility, Low Mobility, Low ability to bear achievement, Low need for attainment. Nonattendance of aspiration for the increasing, Social status, Dowry, Marriage in same caste and child marriage (still existing), Atrocities on Women (Raped, Kicked, Killed, subdued, humiliated almost daily).

V.

## 8 Discussion

Based on the study, it was found that the representation of women in management has been significantly low in comparison to men. However, the recent trends and researches have shown the assuring rise in the number in a managerial position. Differences found between men and women's leadership styles, where women managers scored higher on supporting dimensions of leadership, people-oriented, and taskoriented dimensions than did the male managers.

Women managers possessed high self-efficacy and the majority stated that tenacity and perseverance had been major determinants of their success. Women are generally depicted as emotional, passive, dependent, and she is faced with a paradox that if plays the culturally defined traits of women, she is unacceptable as an executive and if acts as a leader, she is called unfeminine. Besides that, women have more abstract visualization than men. This states that there are to be more women in management at the top positions than men. Women at higher level should help other women by encouraging and explain to them the problems that will be encountered in attempting to move up the corporate ladder. Thus, women managers could provide insights and share experiences which might help other aspiring female advancing-her career for topmost positions in organizations. The company should have the inbuilt organizational support system that promotes scheduling, flexibility, flexi-time, maternal and paternal leave policies, resources and referrals for child care, which reflect the degree of support towards minority and women. These supporting policies also become the source of motivation for women executives. Women are more concerned for friends and associates, and in supervision, while men are more concerned and interested in the benefits of the job, the opportunity for education, advancement, and pay. So, the management should always encourage the women to improve themselves as well as the attitude of the society towards them. Psychologists believe that women excel better in developing relationships and working collectively. Promotional policies for women may also prove to be helpful for making them effective. Management's attitude towards women also needs to be changed. It's not surprising that the employment scenario itself is undergoing far-reaching transformation. According to the expert's, women also have innate desire to build up things, be it business relationships, collective approaches, or cooperative initiatives. Previous studies have shown that women excelled in interpersonal skills and greater capabilities in the areas of solving problems, controlling functionaries, leading teams, managing clients, exploring business opportunities, and formulating business plans. Indeed women have enormous potential as leaders, and to become effective leaders, women need to make most of their feminine values that they need to express rather than suppress. While studying the various leadership styles of women managers, they found to be using nurturing styles and task-oriented style predominantly. Bureaucratic and authoritarian style signifies low involvement of the leader contrary to women manager's style that is found to be very much personal in approach. Women in leadership find it difficult to exhibit their authority for task accomplishment. Being women, they are expected to be relationship oriented and not use their power to get work done by subordinates. It is found women managers use both the human relationship approach as well as the task orientation approach. It was found that women are facing lesser and lesser problems in dealing with their male superiors and colleagues and male subordinates as most of the women are equally qualified and equally remunerated and are slowly growing assertive too. Also, the same corporate world, wherein a few years ago, women specialists like a chartered accountant, company secretaries, and engineers were scarce, is now teaming with an increasing number of women professionals. The psyche of male subordinates has evolved into a state of accepting leadership and guidance of qualified women managers. The company should have an inbuilt organizational support system that promotes scheduling, flexibility, flexi-time, maternal and paternal leave policies, resources and referrals for child care, which reflect the degree of support towards minority and women. These supporting policies also become the source of motivation for women executives. Women are more concerned for friends and associates, and in supervision, while men are more concerned and interested in the benefits of the job, the opportunity for education, advancement and pay. So the management should always encourage to women to improve herself as well as the attitude of the society towards her.

## 9 Conclusion

This paper attempts to look at the implications for management, government, women managers as well as the society at large. The conclusion of the analysis aid that irrespective of gender differences and biological disparities, women have displayed, at crucial times, an array of abilities like tolerance, patience, forbearance, concentration, team-spirit, and determination. Effective leadership in women executives can be done by providing education to them, and by changing the mentality towards women and encouraging them to develop in their fields; they are good at and make a career. Due to globalization, liberalization, now the organization's management is realizing the worth of talented women and their inclusion in the workforce. There ought to be an adjustment in the mentality of the individuals of India towards ladies and treat them with equity.

## 10 VII.

## 11 Recommendations

The outcome of the study is to make an organization as well as society aware of the challenges and obstructions women experience in their career and aspiring for a higher position. This paper also reinforces that how workforce diversity, and advancement of women is an opportunity for any organization and it is the responsibility of the organization to provide adequate training for appropriate career planning of women managers where they can rise to the needs of the job and excel through competence.

? To reduce the conflict between family and professional life and maintain a work-life balance, organizations should follow specific strategies and make some amendments in their organizations regarding flexible time arrangements; crèche facility, extended maternity leave, paternity leave, etc. could be arranged by the organizations. ? Organizations could also conduct specialized training programs for women aspiring for a higher position as well as already to higher position to make them more competing and developing their skills as well as coping strategies. These training programmes help women managers at the entry level to enable them to cope with their nontraditional roles. These programs could aim at providing the participants with insight into their various parts and equipping them with the necessary skills to effectively perform these parts. ? Apart from this organizations should facilitate career development of women managers and ensure that women managers get their due in regard to promotion. ? HRD interventions could be aimed at improving this integration, so that the self concept of the executives is raised and their growth as well as their self actualization needs is satisfied. They could be given equal importance as their male colleagues and responsibilities could be shared with them. ? Role clarity exercise should be undertaken, so that the roles are clearly defined both for managers and other significant persons. Role clarity exercises should be undertaken, so that the roles are clearly defined both for managers and other significant persons. ? Detailed job description also has relevance in performance appraisal to make the role expectations clear both for the assessors and assessee. HRD interventions in this area would certainly help the individuals in fulfilling the demand of the different roles, he occupies. For example, a module on stress management will help them to discuss and analyze organizational stress in detail. ? Organizations should refrain themselves from discriminatory promotional practices. ? Crèche facility should be provided by the organizations so that working mothers can also work without anxiety. Other supportive systems need to be developed properly. ? As regard sexual harassment, nowhere in these organizations there is any policy to keep it in check.

In the absence of any specific law to this effect, victims are left to seek recourse to existing laws depending on the circumstances of the case. There should also be government apathy in this regard. It is the responsibility of the government as well as the organizations frames certain formal grievance mechanisms against sexual harassment, so that their dignity will be protected. ? Organization should also include in their training programmes for employees a module on gender issues in management. This could make them more aware of their own biases and cope with the gender stereotyping at work. It may be useful to include a module on "gender issues in man promotion of diverse management practices, formulating human resource policies and programs to support and promote women in management is also a way for Indian organizations to expand their talent pool and bringing them into leadership positions. A good education, family strong support, mentoring, and lifelong learning are essential for Indian women managers to be on higher positions agreement". ? A woman manager is also supposed to have a positive emotion at workplace as it leads to better productivity, and for this purpose organizations should always provide emotional intelligence training programme involving four stages such as preparation, training, application, and evaluation. <sup>1 2</sup>

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