



THE ROLE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Women are gradually making their leadership presence felt in entrepreneurship, administration, education, engineering, health, etc. at regional, national, and global levels. Women are now resolved to break the traditional glass ceiling that barred them from entering leadership positions even if they possessed requisite skills and talent to occupy them. Women are constantly evolving and reaching new milestones across a wide spectrum of human activities in modern times. The world has witnessed the advent of women leaders such as Hillary Rodham Clinton, Indra Nooyi, Oprah Winfrey, Theresa May, Christine Lagarde, to name a few.

Key words : Women, Leadership, Organisation

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What is Leadership?

Every organization needs a leader, irrespective of its size and functions. A leaderless organization is a "muddle of men and machine"; a country without leadership is anarchy; a society without leadership is a violent and dangerous place to live. Then, what is the meaning of leadership? What constitutes leadership?

A leader is a person who influences and encourages a group of people to work towards the realization of goals. The hallmark of leadership is the capacity to influence others towards accomplishing goals and towards betterment. As Chester Barnard sums it up, "Leadership is the ability of a superior to influence the behavior of a subordinates or group and persuades them to follow a particular course of action."

Leadership is not gender-specific. It is a set of leadership qualities inherent or cultivated in person or persons who develop themselves into great leaders with mass following. Leaders can be either men or

women. Although leadership skills are acquired and shown by both men and women, there exists certain differences in the basic traits and qualities possessed by men and women leaders. Men and women mostly show distinctly different styles of leadership.

Characteristics of Women Leadership:

Transformational Leadership Style:

Women leaders are more transformational than men leaders. They function as a role model for their subordinates. They inspire their team and spend a lot of time coaching their team. They care a lot about their personal development. Women leaders emphasize teamwork and authentic communication as a key to success. For most women leaders, leadership is not meant only for accomplishing organizational goals but for transforming their followers into better people.

Task-Focused:

Women leaders are invariably focused on completion of tasks assigned within deadlines. From an operational point, completing day-to-day tasks are

necessary to ensure smooth functioning of the company.

Prefer to Work in Collegial Atmosphere:

Women leaders generally prefer leading and creating flat organizational structures that enables all to work in a collegial atmosphere interdependently. Flat organizational structure overlooks the experience and knowledge of seasoned employees and the manager. Women leaders usually are critical of hierarchical structure of organization.

Promote Cooperation and Collaboration:

To work in collaboration with others is a typical feminine characteristic. Women leaders always promote cooperation and collaboration amongst the team members. In this case, all the members of the team need to be clear of their roles and responsibilities, otherwise, it results in redundant work.

Communication Style:

Women leaders tend to be participatory and possess a democratic style of leading people. They seem to abhor ‘command and control style’ practiced by male leaders. Women often times indirectly communicate their expectations of a given task and allow more space in accomplishing a goal. It sometimes helps the team members use their skills and expertise to complete the task, however, at other times it can be a drawback if the assigned task requires a leader to have direct communication with the members.

Self-Branding:

Unlike their male counterparts, women leaders often appear to be modest or silent about their own accomplishments. They are seldom good at branding themselves. However, it is necessary that women leaders learn how to brand themselves by sharing their achievements and skills with others. Unless people know or notice what they are capable of, they cannot recognize the leadership qualities of a women leader.

Women in Leadership – Importance:

Any institution, whether it is society or organization, in the present century cannot function effectively without women’s equal participation in leadership activities. Women create a perspective that brings to competition and collaboration to organizations and teams.

In today’s world, organizations that are led by inclusive leadership teams make effective decisions that deliver better result. In the twenty-first century, the essential qualities required to lead include the ability to collaborate, connect, empathize and communicate. All these qualities are feminine in nature and can help build a more sustainable future.

Many statistics show that companies led by women have better financial results. Leadership by women is vital to increase the pace of societal transformation at home and in the workplace. Women leaders are likely to provide an integrated view of work and family, resulting in an engaged and promising personal and professional future.

Gender parity in leadership is important because true progress cannot happen without a diversity of perspective in leadership roles.

Representation of Women in Different Sectors:

Representation of women in different sectors refer to the percentage of women employees working in various sectors. In the past, women were grossly underrepresented in politics, businesses, education, manufacturing, science and technology, etc. However, this situation is changing steadily.

Women in leadership positions not only work towards creating an equitable world but also bring a different perspective to the system. India has witnessed strong women who have been in leadership positions. We hear about freedom fighters like Maharani Lakshmi Bai, educators like Savitribai Phule, and political



leaders like Indira Gandhi. All these women have inspired the Indian population in many ways.

Today, when we talk about women's empowerment, it is important to observe women participation in Indian politics. According to World Bank Data, the percentage of women in the Indian population was 48.4% in 2021. This was less than neighbouring countries like Afghanistan and Bangladesh. However, on the other hand, the fifth National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) found that India had more women than men for the first time in history.

Irrespective of this data, we can safely say that India has a huge population of women as the country is likely to surpass China and become the most populated country in the world. Therefore, the political representation of women in India is extremely crucial. When women or girls are about 50% of the population, there should also be an equal representation of women in politics.

Importance of Women Empowerment in India in Political Leadership:

When we talk about women in politics, India has been witnessing an increase in representation. While in 1957, the total number of women candidates in the Lok Sabha elections was only 45, it went up to 716 in the last Lok Sabha elections of 2019. This was also a significant growth as compared to the 2014 elections when 668 women had placed their candidature for Lok Sabha elections.

Almost all the major parties in the country have been fielding more women candidates for the elections. In the 2019 Lok Sabha, India had the highest-ever number of women leaders.

However, at 78, women still made up only 14% of the total leadership. The percentage in Rajya Sabha in 2020 also stood at around 10.2.

So, we can see that women's participation in political leadership is increasing. However, there is still a long way to go. But the importance of this increase cannot

be ignored. This is a strong marker of the empowerment of women in India. Today, we have strong women leaders in the Indian government's cabinet.

Importance of Women Empowerment in India: More Than Leadership:

The importance of women empowerment in India is also related to their participation in the overall election process. Not just in leadership positions, women also need to be active participants in selecting leaders. The country is also performing positively in this area.

In 2019, close to 67% of women voted in Lok Sabha elections, the highest in the country's history. All these are good signs for India and its women. What we need to achieve is an even greater increase in the percentage of women in the Indian parliament in the coming years.

Women Leading the Way in Other Areas:

Another important aspect of women's empowerment is their representation in corporate leadership. More women in leadership positions in the business world can have a stronger impact on the overall society. It helps in breaking stereotypes and creating role models for future generations. The entertainment industry in India has already created many female role models. Now, the corporate world is also picking up pace.

Women held 17.1% of the board seats in India, according to the seventh edition of Deloitte Global's Women in the boardroom report. From the 2014 report, when the Companies Act of 2013 required that each board have one woman member, this number grew by 9.4%. While this is impressive growth, there is still a huge scope for improvement in this area.

The report also stated that only 3.6% of board chairs in corporations were occupied by women in 2022. However, on the brighter side, more women are seen in CEO positions as their share went up to 4.7% in 2022 as compared to 3.4% in 2018. So,

we can see that the representation of women is increasing but we must strive towards a bigger transformation to achieve parity.

Perhaps, the new-age startups can bring that transformation or at least spearhead it. Reports suggest that women make up 34% of the total workforce in Indian startups and hold around 20% of leadership roles. This is slightly better in comparison to traditional organisations. However, people are looking at entrepreneurs like Vineeta Singh and Ghazal Alagh on popular shows like Shark Tank. This is another positive sign for women in leadership positions in India.

Women Making A Mark Everywhere:

Another area in which women are growing their presence constantly is sports. The women's cricket team has managed to grab the eyeballs of Indian fans in the last few years. This year, the under-19 women's cricket team also won the world cup and made the country proud. Women athletes like PV Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Vinesh Phogat, and many others are an inspiration for millions of girls in the country.

Therefore, it can be easily said that the increase of women in leadership positions in the country is a positive sign. India has been working towards women's empowerment and what we have achieved so far is motivating. This should push us to continue on the same path and create more women leaders in the years to come.

Smile Foundation and Women Empowerment Through Leadership:

Smile Foundation imagines the world with an increasingly number of women leaders in it. To achieve that dream, our livelihood initiative, STeP or the Smile Twin e-Learning programme training the youth with a special focus on women to make them employment ready and become a force to reckon with in the near full.

Objective:

- The programs aimed at providing a setting where women in senior leadership positions could explore the influence of the organization on their role and could evaluate the environment in which organizations operate.
- The programs also aimed to provide an opportunity for women managers to explore their leadership roles in the organizational context, to discover their inner life space and in turn to discover wholesome ways of managing personal dreams and career paths.

Hypotheses:

- H0: women progress are not increased with the help of leadership.
- H1: women progress are increased with the help of leadership.

Methodology:

The programs was divided into two parts (i) a conceptual module and (ii) an experiential module. The conceptual module constituted the first part of the programs. Participants were provided with an overview of transformations occurring in the environment and indifferent organizations, in terms of structure, management practices etc. Issues related to policies and strategies; diversity of tasks and people, authority and leadership; and organization processes undergoing change were discussed. The module also explored issues of commitment, managerial role taking, attitudes, excellence, creativity in the organizational context and approaches to problem solving.

The second part of the program focussed on the experiential module where the exploration was around life spaces, processes of socialization in both family and work settings and crystallization of women's leadership roles and identity. The exploration was around how women could take

charge of their life space and systems and give shape and meaning to their own lives.

Problems Faced by Women In Leadership Roles:

Globalization. Worldwide Globalization introduces both opportunities and obstacles to women. This extends higher responsibility and more expectations from senior level managers and top executives. Due to the pressures of relocation and timeline, the top managers have to move to new towns, cities and countries continuously. This acts as one of the prime barriers to women with families and a working spouse or significant other [3]. In fact, the larger problem is to adapt to new cultures and social norms than family issues. Many women were not able to accept the culture shock and mostly find it difficult in their new

environments despite women being perceived to have the natural ability to adapt. Likewise, women can also face opposition to female leadership in other cultures. “Many countries will simply not deal with a women executive because of their beliefs and perceptions that women are incapable of doing business effectively” [4].

Internal Motivation: Many senior executive and top management executives who are male simply claim that women do not have any aspiration to excel in their current job positions. But an interesting study indicated that 55% of women who are not in management positions desire to be in the higher levels of their organizations. Annis has described that many women lose their interest to go up in career ladder due to the many barriers met along the path of becoming a manager[5]. These obstacles include discrimination, stereotyping, prejudice, family demands, and lack of opportunities [6].

Life-style Conflicts: They remain the primary caretakers for their families for so many women [7]. Promotion causes many women to choose between personal and professional goals as time restrictions

and demands of a job become more significant. As per a survey very few women CEOs and women executives have children because of the impact on their career that they will have. By comparison, many women have left their work willingly because of family choices [8]. Although a declining number of women take leaves of pregnancy or childcare, 32 per cent of women still leave their job after having babies. Often, once a woman has children, she becomes much more hesitant to travel and work long hours because of her duties at home.

Right to Education: In spite of government policies there are still 960 million people in the world who are illiterate out of which two thirds are women. More government policies and legislation should be directed towards skill based learning, development of entrepreneurship among women and free support in the form of loans for women empowerment. Only when these barriers are removed we can have an overall development of the society.

Better working conditions: In some of the countries like France women are provided with a number of leaves and incentives during maternity and various other benefits like vacation to support women. Such rules need to implement in various developing countries in all private and public sectors to help women in adjusting to various aspects of their life. These activities can boost their performance and can result in the overall development of the nation.

Conclusion:

The above literature and findings indicate that women in today world can excel in any profession. The positive nature of the society and the environment can help women to achieve work – life balance and give a wider chance for women to achieve higher goals in their life. With the advantages of technology, higher education and good support from the family women can prove that they are no

longer inferior to men and they require the same incentives and perks, courage and support to have a better gender equality.

Suggestions:

- Inspire
- Culture
- Top team
- Governance
- Values
- Social Responsibility
- Financial parameters
- Invest
- Co-opertition!
- Instinct
- Buy-in
- Human
- Supporters/members/customers
- Lead-be bold
- Embrace risk
- Opportunism
- Belief
- Listen
- Relationships
- Authenticity

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Authors: Bkp Pranathi VIT University ,Remya Lathabhavan.

ISSN(Online) : 2456-8910 International Journal of Innovative Research in Applied Sciences and Engineering (IJIRASE)
Volume 4, Issue 12, \ DOI:10.29027/IJIRASE.v4.i12.2021.940-943,June 2021 Vol. 4 (12), June 2021,

www.ijirase.com

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Cite This Article:

Dr. Gholap S.M. (2023). THE ROLE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. In Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal: Vol. XII (Number VI, pp. 166–171). AMIERJ. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10518078>