

## A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF TODAY'S GENERATION'S OUTLOOK ON WOMEN AS LEADERS

*Dr. Swasti Dhar*

*Assistant Professor*

*MES's Pillai College of Education & Research,Chembur*

*Leaders wield a lot of power. Traditionally, it has always been men who held leadership posts in the corporate world. This may have been due to the fact that women in India, as well as all over the world, did not receive education at the same level as men. Today this barrier of accepting girls into schools/ colleges has been crossed physically. But psychologically, this concept has still to be accepted in the Indian society. The government of India statistics show female literacy at 58.9% as compared to the male literacy of 75.8%.*

*The situation in the five metros of India, however, does show equal literacy rates among girls and boys and the school dropout rates too are comparatively low. The girls from these cities are the torch-bearers for today's corporate leaders. However, one does not see too many women at top positions in Corporate India. The World Economic Forum places women at 21% and less in the middle level and above.*

*This research-based paper expresses the views of young working adults across the five metros of India on Women as Leaders in their chosen field of work. The youth today forms the backbone of the country tomorrow and it is imperative that their views about women holding key-positions is known and analysed.*

*The research focuses on the factual data of the women in Leadership positions in the industry and also the expectations and views of the respondents about women as leaders. A positive view about women in key positions augurs well for the coming generation and would fulfil the*

**Keywords:** *Women as leaders, leadership roles, gender equality*

### Introduction

Leaders wield a lot of power. Traditionally, it has always been men who held leadership posts in the corporate world. This may have been due to the fact that women in India, as well as all over the world, did not receive education at the same level as men. Today this barrier of accepting girls into schools/ colleges has been crossed physically. But psychologically, this concept has still to be accepted in the Indian society. The government of India statistics show female literacy at 58.9% as compared to the male literacy of 75.8%.

The situation in the five metros of India, however, does show equal literacy rates among girls and boys and the school dropout rates too are comparatively low. The girls from these cities are the torch-bearers for today's corporate leaders. However, one does not see too many women at top positions in Corporate India.

A study of the data about women at leadership position at the global level, shows only 4.9 per cent of Fortune 500 companies having women at leadership positions. India has one of the lowest labour force participation by women, when compared to countries across the globe. In 2018, the figures stood at just under 18 per cent for women compared to 82 per cent for men (ILO, India Labour Market Update, July 2018). A global study by Deloitte identified Indian women as holding 12.4 per cent of board seats and just 3.2 per cent of board chairs in 2018. This study surveyed large Indian public listed organisations that had a turnover of ₹3 billion or more.

According to a global survey by Grant Thornton - Women in business: New perspectives on risk and reward, India ranked third lowest in having women in leadership roles for the third consecutive year after Japan where only 7 per cent of senior-level executives are women.

The survey also noted that only 7 per cent of the senior management (CEO/ Managing Director) roles were held by women in India. The most common roles held by women in India are Human Resources Director (25 per cent)

and Corporate Controller (18 per cent).

**The Research Questions**

Keeping the above scenarios in mind, it becomes of prime importance, to understand the perspectives of the young generation towards women as leaders. The author conducted a social media based research across the five metros in India gathering the views of young Indians on how they perceive women in Leadership roles. The presumption being that if today’s youth is comfortable with women holding key positions then India can see a change in the number of key top positions held by women within a decade’s time.

The tool used was a questionnaire consisting of ten questions, five of which were demographic in nature while the other five sought their views on

- The actual percentage of women in the organization in which they work
- Their views on whether they are comfortable working under a woman leader
- Whether women face a glass ceiling
- Their views on whether women make better leaders

**Data Analysis and Interpretations**

*Age-wise distribution of the respondents*

76.39 % of the respondents were in the age-group of 35 and above. Thus, one can be confident that the responses have been given by people who hold middle or senior level positions in their respective organisations with more than 10 years of experience. Their views can be considered to be a voice for the generation.

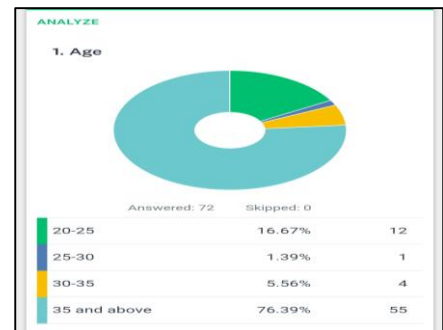
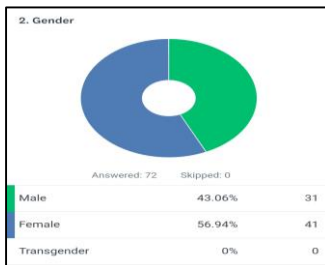


Fig 1.1 Age distribution of respondents



*Gender-wise distribution*

There were 72 respondents of which 31 or (43.06%) were men. This shows a fairly equal distribution of the population ensuring that there are less chances of a gender bias being expressed in the results.

Fig 1.2 Gender distribution of respondents

*City-wise distribution*

The respondents are fairly representative of the big metros of India. Except for Chennai which has a very low representation in this survey. The respondents from New Delhi (16%), Mumbai (29%), Kolkata (12%), Bangalore (17%) are fairly equally distributed while cities such as Pune, Amhedabad and Hyderabad have also been represented (25%) in the category of Others.

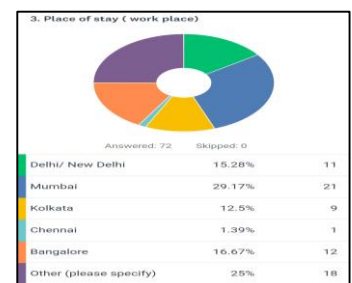
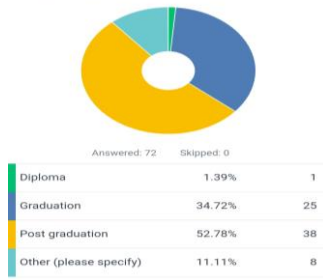


Fig 1.3 City-wise distribution of respondents

4. Highest education degree achieved



**Highest education received**

Almost all of the respondents are graduates and post-graduates or more. Only 1 among the 72 respondents was a diploma holder. The majority are very-well qualified and thus can be considered as those whose opinions matter and who, in turn, can influence the future generations. The persons included in the category of Others were mostly, Ph.D. holders.

Fig 1.4 Education-wise distribution of respondents

**Nature of work**

The respondents were from a diverse background. There were respondents not only from the IT, Finance and Marketing but also from Education, government employees, media houses and entrepreneurs. Thus, we see that the responses are diverse and therefore can be considered representative.

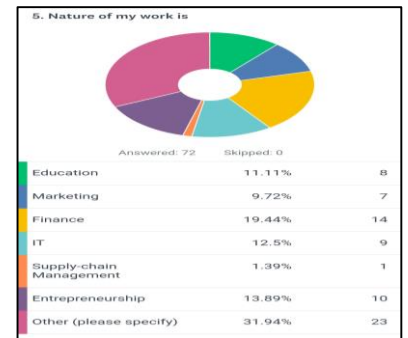


Fig 1.5 Respondent's nature of work

The next five questions were directed towards obtaining the respondent's views on women leaders. The questions and the given responses were as follows:

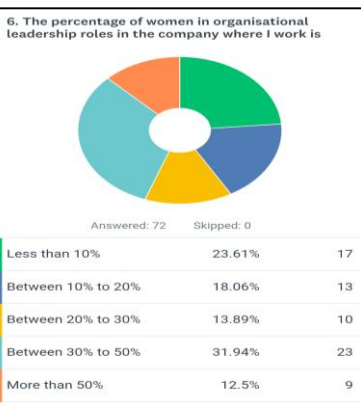


Fig 1.6 Exposure to women leaders

**1) Exposure to women in leadership roles (middle and senior level).**

The question asked to determine the above was: The percentage of women in organizational leadership roles in the company where I work is?

Less than 13% said that there were more than 50% of women holding middle or senior level positions in their company. This shows that in most companies, the middle and senior level of leaders are primarily men. In fact, as the chart shows, almost 25% of the respondents said that women were 10% or less. Thus, we can be assured that the data corresponds with the government and ILO data and can be considered authentic.

**2) The glass ceiling**

The question was asked to determine whether there is there a point in time when women are not allowed to grow in the organization in which they work?

Almost 64% of the respondents have disagreed with the notion of a glass ceiling out of which 26% have strongly disagreed. On the other hand, a significant 20% are unsure of their answers. This is a very telling point as this shows that 20% of the respondents are unable to say a yes but don't have sufficient data to say a confident yes or no. According to the, the reason why there are less women is because lesser number of women enter the job market and hence more men are found as leaders.

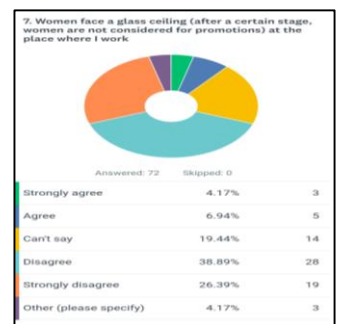
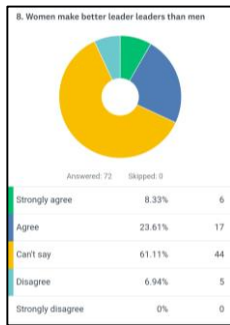


Fig 1.7 The glass ceiling



### 3) Do women make better leaders?

A whopping 61% couldn't make a choice and decided to go with a 'Can't say' where as 30% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that women made better leaders than men. Only 7% disagreed. What we see is that though no one has strongly disagreed, and 8% have strongly agreed, most of the respondents are neutral about the role gender plays in determining good leadership qualities.

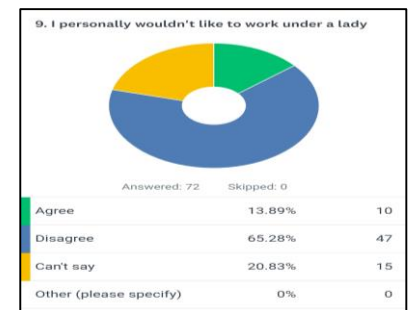
Fig 1.8 Do women make Better leaders

### 4) Views about working under a woman

Although 66% disagreed with the statement implying that they are agreeable to take orders from a woman, it is telling that the rest are not ready for a woman boss. Of the balance 34% of the respondents, almost 15% outrightly rejected the idea of a lady as a boss where as 19% put themselves in the 'Can't say' bracket.

### 5) Personal Views about women as a leader

The majority of the respondents said that leadership is gender-neutral and both women and men make equally good or poor leaders. 16 percent felt that women made better leaders as they are warmer, more inclusive, show empathy and are nurturers by nature. On the negative side, women are considered emotional and, if they are assertive, then they may be perceived as dominating.



## Summary and Conclusion

It is clear that at present, women do not form a majority at the top and senior levels and most industries are male driven. Even after seeing such less women in leadership positions, more than 64% believe that there is no glass ceiling. The main contention is that women themselves opt out due to family reasons or that there are so few women to start with, especially in the corporate sector. Only the Education sector and the Human Resource (HR) are female dominated. Leadership was not linked to gender by most. Many expressed that leadership is gender-neutral and expressed willingness to work under women.

In conclusion, there seems to be a shift in the mindset of the young working class towards working along with and under women. Although the present situation in corporate India puts women-leaders under 20%, the future seems bright as more and more girls get educated and join the workforce. Soon, the author hopes, India will come at par with the statistics of Eastern Europe where women and men work at par.

## References:

Krawcheck, S. (2017) *Own It*, New York, Crown Publishers

Women and Leadership roles in 2018 – [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)

Deloitte Global Centre for Corporate Governance, (2019, February), *Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective – Sixth Edition*, available at <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/risk/articles/women-in-the-boardroom-global-perspective.html>

Sondhi P, (2018, October), *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Women today in top management*, available at <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/321055>