Leadership: Determinant of Women Empowerment

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A b s t r a c t

Empowerment is a concept that is of equal importance to both men and women. This idea of sharing power is not a concept which is unique to men or women alone. In fact, it is a concept that is touted and desired by all. However, having said this, issues surrounding women in leadership and in the workforce, are seemingly defined by gender at times. Empowerment is the focus of a great and rather interesting role. Empowerment, simply, is the idea of sharing power, of truly giving it away. Thought of in a simple manner, empowerment is the leader giving someone powers to be used on his behalf. And yet, there is much more to this idea, which also involves high degrees of trust and enablement. Women in the workforce are a reality, and empowerment works. What are the strategies to empower women with success? First, may be to start with creating structures that work for women; this might include flexible schedules or time/ job sharing and many more . Structures that are friendly will create opportunities for all. More often than not, if the opportunities are there, women will certainly follow and seek those out. Secondly, provide the needed training and resources. Thirdly and finally, create a culture of respect and leaders who create culture that respect all employees usually have little issues with gender conflicts, as the culture is based on respect with dignity of human value. The present issues of women will probably be the issues of tomorrow. However, the intensity of these issues will be different. This is because it will take time to see that women are great contributors to the workforce, are assets of great value to the organization, and that when we, as leaders, take the time to empower women, we are creating teams- departments- organizations, that are rich in culture, diversity and time.

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Development is a phenomenon that is taking place in all walks of life. It aims at improving the quality of life (e.g. increasing access to education, health, sanitation and other basic needs) of all people regardless of their sex, colour or caste. For the process of development to be more efficient and effective, both women and men should equally participate in the decisions and processes that shape their lives. However, women being considered as a marginalized group in societies around the world, contribute very little to the process of development. One of the policy approaches that can help women contribute equally and more efficiently to development is the empowerment approach. This approach is seen as a viable policy approach for women in development.

Empowerment is the most recent policy approach to women in development. It takes into account not only both the practical and strategic gender needs of women but also recognizes their role in

development. Empowerment has a number of dimensions with leadership as being one of them, it is worth mentioning here that the different approaches to women's empowerment used in development activities include economic participation, political participation, educational attainment, health and well-being etc. The major focus of this paper is to assess the empowerment of women from a perspective of their presence in leadership roles.

Review of Literature:

Kaushik Sanjay (2013) "Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India." *International Journal of Management and Social Sciences Research* (IJMSSR) ISSN: 2319-4421 Volume 2, No. 2. Social and economic development of women is necessary for development of any country. Due to changing environment, now women are easily acceptable at the entrepreneurial opportunity. Our increasing service sector also promotes the women entrepreneurship. The purpose of the study is to find out various motivating and de-motivating internal and external factor of women entrepreneurship. It will also suggest the investment and interesting working time of women.

Goyal Meenu and Prakash Jai (2011) "Women Entrepreneurship in India- Problems & Prospects." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research,* Vol.1 Issue 5. The study revealed the concept of women entrepreneur; reasons women become entrepreneurs, reasons for slow progress of women entrepreneurs in India, suggestions for the growth of women entrepreneurs and schemes for promotion & development of women entrepreneurship in India.

Thapa Arjun Kumar and Gurung Leena (2010) "An Assessment of Factors Influencing Empowerment Level of Females: A Case Study of Pokhara," *Economic Journal of Development Issues* Vol. 11 Issue 1. The paper attempted to analyze the association between social, economic and demographic factors on the female empowerment level. The study underpins the importance of economic interventions to empower and uplift all round condition of women.

Choudhary Neelam "An Account of Women Entrepreneurship Development in India: Challenges, Opportunities & Future Prospects." The paper analyzed women's participation in entrepreneurial activities to highlight the contribution of women entrepreneurs towards economic development. It examined the facilitating factors and policies and programmes of the government also exist to promote and strengthen the development of women entrepreneurship in India.

Objectives of the study comprise: to identify the factors which empower women, and to identify the association of empowerment and leadership qualities of women.

What is 'empowerment'?

Empowerment has been used to represent a wide range of concepts and to describe a proliferation of outcomes. The promotion of women's empowerment as a development goal is based on a dual argument: that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is intrinsically worth pursuing; and that women's empowerment is a means to other ends. The word 'empowerment' is used in many different contexts and by different organizations. Its meaning and understanding largely depends on the context in which it is being used. To Oxfam empowerment means being able to challenge the existing oppression and inequality in society (Oxfam, 1995). Rowland sees empowerment as a bottom-up process that cannot be formulated from top-down. To Rowland, empowerment does not only mean to have access to decision-making but also being able and entitled to occupy the decision-making space (Rowland, 1995). Batliwala defining it from a feminist perspective state that women empowerment should result in (a) an understanding that both men and women are equal beings regardless of their gender. Using their full potentials can help construct a more humane society for all.

Ken Blanchard suggests that empowerment requires two things: Recognizing the importance of knowledge, experience and intrinsic motivation in improving performance, and releasing power by sharing accurate information, creating autonomy within boundaries and replacing hierarchy with self-managing teams.

Empowerment is the most frequently used term in development dialogue today. It is also the most nebulous and widely interpreted of concepts, which has simultaneously become a tool for analysis and also an umbrella concept to justify development intervention. For some, the empowerment of women is an active multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. For others, empowerment represents the ability of women to handle responsibilities, to envision a better future and to work to overcome the obstacles that confront them.

JSI Six Domains of Empowerment

There have been several efforts to devise micro indicators of empowerment. In this effort, Naila Kabeer, Linda Mayoux, Anne Marie Goetz, Rahman, Ackerley, JSI (John Show International researchers), Sara Longwe and Hashmi have provided their own

indicators. JSI defines empowerment in a behavioural sense as the ability to take effective action encompassing inner state (sense of self, of one's autonomy, self-confidence, openness to new ideas, belief in one's own potential to act effectively) and a person's status and efficacy in social interactions. In particular, it is the ability to make and carry out significant decisions affecting one's own life and the lives of other*s*.

Domain	Expressions
1. Sense of Self & vision of a future	Assertiveness, plans for the future, future-oriented actions, relative freedom from threat of physical violence, awareness of own problems and options, actions indicating sense of security.
2. Mobility & visibility	Activities outside of the home, relative freedom from harassment in public spaces, interaction with men.
3. Economic Security	Property ownership, new skills and knowledge and increased income, engaged in new/non-traditional types of work
4. Status & decision-making power within the household	Self-confidence, controlling spending money, enhanced status in the family, has/controls/spends money, participation in/ma kes decisions on allocation of resources, not dominated by others
5. Ability to interact effectively in the public sphere	Awareness of legal status and services available, ability to get access to social services, political awareness, participation in credit program, provider of service in community.
6. Participation on non-family groups	Identified as a person outside of the family, forum for creating sense of solidarity with other women, self-expression and articulation of problems, participating in a group with autonomous structure.

We collected the responses of the sampled respondents on the above six domains on a five point scale and an interesting output is displayed in the table below.

Domains	Score
Sense of Self & vision of a future	210
Mobility & visibility	224
Economic Security	218
Status & decision-making power within the household	161
Ability to interact effectively in the public sphere	194
Participation on non-family groups	114

The above table shows that the highest scoring is given to the mobility and visibility domain which means that it is undoubtedly required for women empowerment, whereas participation on non family groups is least required. Although all the six domains are required for women empowerment, their scoring shows the ranking in order as shown above.

Empowerment is seen as liberating- as simply good leadership. Empowerment can help the move towards a stronger culture of initiative, innovation and accountability. It has been found that empowered employees have a sense of ownership and responsibility, satisfaction in their accomplishments, a sense of

control over what and how things are done, and the knowledge that they are important to organization.

Another benefit of empowerment is that it enhances organizational performance. Leaders who are more empowered are perceived by their subordinates as more innovative, influential upwards and inspirational.

Women's Leadership recognizes that all meaningful and enduring change begins with the internal work we do to transform our outer behaviour. Leadership skill and capacity continue to strengthen with practice, reflection and relationships that provide authentic and rigorous feedback and support. **It** seeks to address the larger legacy of bias and imbalance in our decision-making, organizations, enterprises and society at large.

The Indian women are no longer treated as show pieces to be kept at home. They are also enjoying the impact of globalization and making an influence not only on domestic but also on international sphere. Women are doing a wonderful job striking a balance between their house and career. Here are a few:

- Dr. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairman & Managing Director of Biocon Ltd.,

- Ekta Kapoor, creative head of Balaji Telefilms**,**

- Neelam Dhawan, Managing Director, Microsoft India**,**

- Naina Lal Kidwai**,** according to the *Economic Times,* the first woman to head the operations of a foreign bank in India.   (HSBC).

- Priya Paul, with a bachelor's degree specialising in Economics from Wellesley College, USA. She entered her family business and is currently the Chairperson of Park Hotels.

Women like these are an inspiration for all other women who strive to achieve great heights in their lives. Taking them as role models each one of us can be there where they are right now. All we need have is faith in ourselves, confidence and above all a fixed aim that we need work towards.

The present study is conducted on women professionals working in different fields in Udaipur city to evaluate the factors leading to women empowerment and leadership. The primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire designed for the purpose of evaluating the factors leading to women empowerment and leadership at workplace by framing 20 statements. The questionnaire was administered on 50 respondents including corporate, academicians, and professionals. The data collected was analyzed using statistical tools such as factor analysis.

The analysis was carried out by studying the responses of the sample on selected 20 statements on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 5.0 to 1.0, where 5 stands for "Strongly Agree," 4 stands for "Agree," 3 stands for "Neutral," 2 stands for "Disagree," and 1 stands for "Strongly Disagree."

The main factors of women empowerment were identified using factor analysis by taking into account the Eigen values of factors, factor loadings, and assignment of variables. Based on the Eigen value and factor loadings, seven factors were identified based upon their characteristics.

Impact,   refers to an individual, is perceived degree of influence over outcomes in one's work and family environments. In other words, an individual must have the opportunity to exert influence in order to have an impact on outcomes at work (Spreitzer, 1995).

Self-determination refers to everyone's internal need to control the environment (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). It is also defined as women's need to choose, to initiate and regulate actions or to choose the process and work behaviours at work.

Being meaningful   the work done by women employees should be treated as valuable work. They evaluate the job based on their own values and feel that they are doing something meaningful.

Professional growth refers to personal development in job and profession. Empowered women feel more professional growth in their career.

Independence in decision-making, Independent women are treated to be empowered and make decision on their own.

Competence and self efficacy points at one's work role efficacy or personal mastery; women must feel that they are competent to engage in the behaviours required by the organization or family. Thus empowerment is about self-actualization and competence. Competence and self-efficacy refer to enable the women to be confidence in their capacity to make the choices.

Trust Empowerment is connected with trust. Trust creates an atmosphere for empowerment and grows in such an atmosphere. Trust requires values like solidarity and maturity. Empowerment cannot be installed like software but must be grown.

Talented and confident women leaders have seven characteristics in common:

1. They place a high value on relationships and judge the success of their organizations based on the quality of relationships within them.

2. They prefer direct communication.

3. They are comfortable with diversity, having been outsiders themselves and knowing what kind of value fresh eyes could bring.

4. They are unwilling (and unable) to compartmentalize their lives and so draw upon personal experience to bring private sphere information and insights to their jobs.

5. They are skeptical of hierarchies and surprisingly disdainful of the perks and privileges that distinguish hierarchical leaders and establish their place in the pecking order.

6. They preferred leading from the center rather than the top and structure their organizations to reflect this, and

7. They ask big-picture questions about the work they do and its value.

Such skills and strengths of women leaders are now highly desirable. Networked technologies, the knowledge economy and demographics of globalization all support the skills, talents, and presumptions that women bring.

Distinguishing Leadership Qualities:

*   **Perseverance:** As a leader, women come across challenges, and they need persistence, perseverance and the ability not to take "no" for an answer.

*   **A Nurturing Spirit:** "Women being a nurturer, have a sense of being fair and just, and use of our women's intuition is one of the strongest trait."

*   **Confidence:** One of the defining characteristics of leadership is confidence – "having unconditional belief in your own abilities." Women have the ability to cultivate confidence in their own abilities by actively seeking out and responding to feedback, taking on tough assignments and excelling at them, maintaining successful relationships and developing expertise that sets women leadership apart.

Finding 1:

Women leaders are more persuasive than their male counterparts.

The women leaders scored significantly higher than male leaders in ego-drive (persuasive motivation), assertiveness, and willingness to risk, empathy, urgency, flexibility and sociability.

The strong people skills possessed by women leaders enable them to read situations accurately and take in information from all sides. This willingness to see all sides of a situation enhances their persuasive ability.

Finding 2:

Feeling the sting of rejection, women leaders learn from adversity and carry on with an "I'll show you" attitude.

The women leaders were in the mid-range on ego-strength (resilience), which was lower, though not significantly, than male leaders. But they possess stronger interpersonal skills (empathy, flexibility and sociability) and are more assertive than their male counterparts.

This combination of traits enables the women in our study to express a unique approach toward dealing with disappointment, rejection or situations that don't work out their way.

Finding 3:

Women leaders have an inclusive, team-building leadership style of problem solving and decision making.

While the male leaders demonstrate fine levels of empathy, flexibility, sociability, and urgency (a need to get things done immediately), the women leaders scored significantly higher in these areas.

Finding 4:

Women leaders are more likely to ignore rules and take risks.

Women leaders scored significantly lowered down in external structure (adhering to established procedures) and cautiousness. They were also significantly higher in their levels of urgency and risk taking. And they have very high scores in abstract reasoning.

The women leaders are more likely to push back when they are overly bound by regulations and rules, engage in more risk taking and come up with innovative solutions. Women leaders are more assertive and persuasive, have a stronger need to get things done and are more willing to take risks than male leaders. Women leaders also were found to be more empathic and flexible, as well as stronger in interpersonal skills than their male counterparts. *"These qualities combine to create a leadership style that is inclusive, open, consensus building, collaborative and collegial which ensures women empowerment."*

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