

## **WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN INDIA : AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

It is still amazing how several studies, including classic and contemporary research, show remarkable trends of long-term expansion and growth in companies with female managers or leaders, suggesting that there may be a direct relationship between gender and inherited effective traits for effective leadership. Women are more likely to be found in middle management positions today than they were more than a decade ago, but top positions are still less accessible for most of them although many studies have already established that women have somehow inherited qualities of soft skills useful for leadership roles. Accordingly, the question arises whether gender has a direct effect on the leadership position of a person.

This paper conducts an exploratory study to shed light on the various factors that influence the actual behaviour and performance of women in top positions. In addition, the paper attempts to examine the real barriers that prevent women from achieving leadership positions in organisations. The data is collected with the help of a structured questionnaire distributed to an appropriate sample of Employees across the board and with a random sampling approach.

The paper looks at identifying the attitudes and behavior of Women leaders and traits responsible for their growth and success. The paper also explores potential causes of the glass ceiling, discrimination, and bias against women in leadership positions.

Keywords: Leadership, Behavior, Women, Gender

### **Introduction**

Women represent nearly half of the working population throughout the world as they enter the workforce in large numbers (catalyst.org 2021). Despite these statistics, they continue to face issues related to discrimination, harassment, and inequality in all sectors, whether they are government or privately run organizations.

As the trend grows in the professional community, management has developed a tendency to rank gender diversity higher on its elusive list of priorities as a compelling success factor because it can see the prize, an added advantage in talent that is difficult to replicate or replace.

The share of women in senior management in India was 39%, compared to the global average of 31%, indicating a positive shift in attitude and management perspectives toward female leaders. The proportion of women in key C-suite positions inside the country is also greater

than the global average. (Source: Economic Times, 2022). Though this has improved a lot, there is still a scope of Improvement and more needs to be done for Female leader participation in the corporate world.

Women lost their paid jobs at higher rates than men during the pandemic, took on more responsibility for caring for the sick and children, and were more likely to experience malignancy (Center on Gender Equity and Health 2020; Bundervoet, Davalos, & Garcia 2021; Cucagna and Romero 2021; De Paz Nieves, Gaddis, and Muller 2021; Kugler et al. 2021). In fact, covid-driven containment policies had a more negative effect upon the women's labor market demands and outcomes than on men's. The overrepresentation of women in high-contact industries, such as hospitality, contributes to this effect (Alon 2020; Kugler. 2021).

According to a 2004 study by the Center for Women's Business Research, there are significant differences between how men and women lead or manage their organizations or businesses. Women have an advantage in a society that values leadership based on interpersonal skills rather than authority. (Colvin, Goeff, 2015). In areas where women are conventionally thought to excel, such as building and maintaining relationships, women are thought to be far superior.

The previous research done gives a global perspective on women leadership and traits that help them achieve success. There are research studies conducted in the recent past with an India perspective focussing on listed entities that identified Women's role in the Board. There is not much research done in the non listed companies that has focussed on direct interview and questionnaire methodology to identify the key traits for growth specific to Technology and Education Industries in the Delhi NCR region. .

This paper thus elaborates reasons why women are underrepresented in India's top positions. In addition, it provides strategies and applications that businesses can implement to eliminate the barriers that prevent women from advancing to higher positions. In addition, the research paper intends that this will contribute to organizational goals in overcoming biases against female managers, which may cause businesses to underutilize a substantial portion of the workforce.

### **Literature Review:**

In the past two decades, women in leadership have dominated management research . Marshall(1984) noted that studies that showed differences between the leadership styles of men and women were generally those in which female managers performed better on the supportive magnitudes of the leadership. This point of view is supported by various literature presented by earlier researchers, including (Brenner and Vinacke, 1979). (Davidson and Cooper, 1983) found that female leaders performed considerably better than male managers on both the person-oriented and task-oriented regions. The tendencies of stereotypes based on gender, perceptions for glass ceiling, and a generic perceptions of women on board in Indian organizations have left an adverse impression for women's work on management positions. It has been assumed that women should only work in certain fields that have been predefined for them such as Public Relations, Human Resource Management and in medium or less important

positions or specifically in the overrated fashionista or Media world, such as the stereotyping or conditions of glass ceiling comes negative impacted on women which does not let them work or take challenging jobs or top positions.

Although women make up a large portion of the workforce, we see only a handful at the top. Women's participation in the workforce in India is increasing. Moreover, entrepreneurship has given women in India the opportunity to enter a variety of fields and areas. It is argued that there are three parts of character that affect success in management, namely, locus of control, self-appropriateness, and the need for achievement (Porter and Lawler, 1968). An in-depth study of 48 successful British women managers (White et al., 1992) found that they possessed an internal locus of control, that is, they strongly believed in their own ability to determine the direction of their careers. Bandura (1977) asserts that self-efficacy influences behavioral choice. White et al. (1992) found that female leaders had high self-efficacy and the majority indicated that persistence and perseverance were critical factors in their success. These female leaders also rated highly the need for achievement, which is often cited as an indicator of successful leaders (Cox and Cooper, 1988). According to Bass et al. (1971), there is some evidence that similarities have been found between men's and women's potential leadership ability, cooperation and competition (Lirtzmaan & Wahba, 1972), and problem solving (Matthews, 1972) in various personal characteristics. A review of the literature comparing male and female leaders concludes that women have the necessary qualifications and skills for managerial and professional positions (Herbert and Yost, 1979)

The existing literature shows mixed effects of gender diversity on corporate financial performance. Several consulting reports argue that gender diversity is immensely important because it leads to smarter and better decision making, thereby having a significant impact on earnings (Credit Suisse Research Institute 2019. Bank of America Merrill Lynch 2018. Deloitte 2018). However, the Times Report (2003) argues that U.K. companies are better off without WDs on their boards, pointing to a negative relationship between corporate performance and the presence of WDs in FTSE 100 companies. Matsa and Miller (2012) find that the value of Nordic companies dropped significantly after the introduction of the quota system for WDs. Some scholars argue that WDs bring in new perspectives, create new board dynamics and a positive environment, which ultimately improves firm performance (Huse et al. 2009). While this inclusion is essential, there are many practical challenges, such as finding suitable WDs with the necessary qualifications and appropriate experience.

Deloitte Global's Women in the boardroom report revealed that women hold 17.1 percent of the board seats in India. This number increased by 9.4 percent from the 2014 edition – the year when the Companies Act, 2013 mandated having one woman member on every board. Moreover, only 3.6 percent of the board chairs are women, down by 0.9 percent since 2018.

Globally, 19.7 percent of the board seats are held by women, an increase of 2.8 percent since 2018 compared with 1.9 percent over 2016–2018. At this pace, the world could expect to reach near-parity only in 2045. Austria, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the UK, and the US saw the most notable increases.

Deloitte Global’s research revealed a positive correlation between appointing a female CEO and the diversity on the board. Globally, companies with women CEOs have significantly more women on their boards than those run by men – 33.5 percent vs. 19.4 percent, respectively.

### Research Methodology of the Study

The methodology used in the paper is descriptive research

#### The paper test the below mentioned proposed hypotheses:

H 1 : There is a significant relationship between women leadership behavior and sustainable organization growth / organizational performance.

H 2 : Women managerial traits have a direct relationship with sustainable organizational growth.

H3: There is a significant impact of women leadership behavior on the effectiveness of the organization

The data collected is through a questionnaire circulated across metro regions and also through the use of the online survey softwares. The survey was filled by almost 389 respondents and the following results were captured and documented.

### Test Results

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS 21.0 version. The collected data were checked for coding errors and logical inconsistencies In addition, three main hypotheses were tested in the data analysis. The chapter on data analysis is divided into 3 parts parts: Part I deals with the demographic distribution of respondents, Part II deals with the analysis of leadership behavior of female leaders, and Part III deals with the path analysis of leadership characteristics using a structural equation model

The demographic profile of the respondents were analyzed to understand the respondents' backgrounds. The demographic characteristics related to the socio-economic background of the respondents are given in Table 1.1.

**TABLE 1.1:**

#### Sample Respondents Profile (N=389)

Particulars		No.s	%	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	179	46.02	46.02
	Female	210	53.98	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100</b>	
Age	26 to 35 yrs	148	38	38

	36 to 45 yrs	241	62	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Job Category</b>	Managerial	284	73	73
	Non-Managerial	105	27	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Yrs of Experience</b>	< 5 yrs	83	21.3	21.3
	11-20 yrs	256	65.8	87.1
	21-30 yrs	50	12.9	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100</b>	

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table 1.2 clearly shows that the data is skewed towards Men counterparts and lower numbers of Women are at top managerial positions.

**TABLE 1.2:**

**Numbers of Women in managerial positions are few as compared to men in your organization**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>No.s</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative (%)</b>
Yes	237	60.9	60.9
No	152	39.1	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100</b>	

*Source:* compiled by the survey data

### **Leadership Behavior of Women Managers**

#### **Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire**

The survey questionnaires examined aspect validity interactively with three professionals including researchers, consultants and practicing managers. The selection of experts for validity was based on the principles of experience in organization or research experience and familiarity with women's leadership behavior in the organization. Each item of the leadership behavior was checked by item total statistics and item sum correlations to get the reliability (Hair et al. 1998). The statements with more than 0.5 correlations were considered as reliable. Further Cronbach's Alpha were calculated for each item. An Alpha value of 0.6 and above is considered as reliable (Hair et al 1998).

**TABLE 1.3:**

#### **Descriptive and Reliability Analysis (Leadership Behaviour)**

Sl.	Leadership Behaviours	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (combined)
1	Role Model	4.1	0.785	0.904	9	0.915
2	Expectations and Rewards	4.21	0.812	0.898		
3	People Development	4.16	0.779	0.897		
4	Participative Decision Making	3.95	0.887	0.9		
5	Inspiration	3.89	0.929	0.907		
6	Intellectual Stimulation	4.08	0.809	0.901		
7	Efficient Communication	4.06	0.821	0.908		
8	Individualistic Decision Making	4.12	0.792	0.911		
9	Control and Corrective Action	4.18	0.801	0.918		

**Source:** compiled by the author

The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for all the items used for measurement of leadership behavior of women is greater than 0.7, revealing all the items used for the measurement of leadership behavior are reliable, thereby validating the questionnaire. Further, the items used in the questionnaire are internally homogenous and consistent which was reflected by corrected item-total correlation. It may be concluded that the instrument used for collecting the opinion of the respondents is a valid and appropriate instrument. Further, the mean value of all the variables related to leadership behaviors is coming more than 4.0 and near to 4.0 i.e. agree. This reveals that all the respondents agree upon the associated statements/ variables of women leadership behavior.

### **Relationship between Leadership behaviours and the Factors of Leadership Behaviours**

After finding out the factors involved in leadership behaviours of women managers, next was to study the relationship between leadership behaviours and its associated factors derived by EFA. 'Multiple regression analysis' has been used for this purpose.

**TABLE 1.4:**

### **Regression Analysis Model Summary (Leadership Behaviour)**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	S. E.
1	0.823	0.777	0.775	0.161

Source: developed from the survey data

As depicted in the above table, R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.777 which reveals all these two independent variables explained 77.70 per cent of the variation of the dependent variable '*leadership behaviour of the women managers*' which shows there is a good relationship between dependent and independent variable.

Table 1.5 shows the Path Analysis along with the variable that we considered to find out the Dependent Variable and their impact on defining Leadership skills. The table below represents the regression weights of SEM of effective leadership traits through maximum likelihood estimates. The regression weights of self-confident (4.344), Self-assured (4.308) etc are coming highest, this reveals that the variable – self-confident, self-assured contribution to leadership traits is more.

In the path analysis of the regression weights, all the variables are coming significant towards leadership traits of women leaders. The path analysis reveals that – *self-confident, self-assured and negotiable flexible* variables are contributing maximum to the leadership traits in comparison to rest of the variables

**TABLE 1.5:**

**Path Analysis Coefficient of Effective Leadership Traits (ELT)**

Particulars			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P Label
Initiative Risk taker	<-	ELT	1			
Integrity Responsible	<-	ELT	-0.092	0.421	-0.218	***
Democratic Participative	<-	ELT	0.449	0.528	0.85	***
Negotiable Flexible	<-	ELT	11.44	5.093	2.246	***
Empathetic	<-	ELT	12.292	5.471	2.247	***
Sensitive	<-	ELT	9.498	4.232	2.245	***
Diligent	<-	ELT	7.79	3.48	2.239	***
Conscientious	<-	ELT	3.382	1.585	2.134	***
Outgoing	<-	ELT	3.016	1.467	2.055	***
Friendly	<-	ELT	3.198	1.488	2.149	***
Dependable	<-	ELT	2.473	1.17	2.115	***
Trustworthy	<-	ELT	6.22	2.802	2.22	***
Determined	<-	ELT	6.385	2.871	2.224	***
Persistent	<-	ELT	6.503	2.929	2.22	***
Self-assured	<-	ELT	5.148	2.348	2.192	***

Self-confident	<-	ELT	6.762	3.033	2.23	***
Perceptive	<-	ELT	4.582	2.108	2.174	***
Articulate	<-	ELT	3.962	1.847	2.145	***

Source: developed from the survey data; *S.E:* Standard Error, *C.R:* Critical Ratio

### Regression Analysis of Variable (Effective Leadership Traits)

**TABLE 1.6:**

#### Regression Coefficient (Effective Leadership Traits)

Items	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P Label
Initiative Risk taker	1.568	0.027	58.773	***
Integrity Responsible	1.414	0.025	56.546	***
Democratic Participative	1.584	0.029	54.264	***
Negotiable Flexible	4.283	0.039	109.028	***
Empathetic	4.183	0.041	101.549	***
Sensitive	4.211	0.034	124.477	***
Diligent	4.306	0.032	136.317	***
Conscientious	4.082	0.032	128.907	***
Outgoing	4.159	0.037	113.104	***
Friendly	4.167	0.028	148.946	***
Dependable	4.167	0.025	166.855	***
Trustworthy	3.913	0.033	117.614	***
Determined	4.103	0.033	126.057	***
Persistent	4.054	0.035	116.788	***
Self-assured	4.308	0.035	122.41	***
Self-confident	4.344	0.032	136.973	***
Perceptive	4.265	0.035	120.927	***
Articulate	4.272	0.035	120.7	***

Source: compiled from the survey data; *C.R:* Critical Ratio, *S.E:* Standard Error,

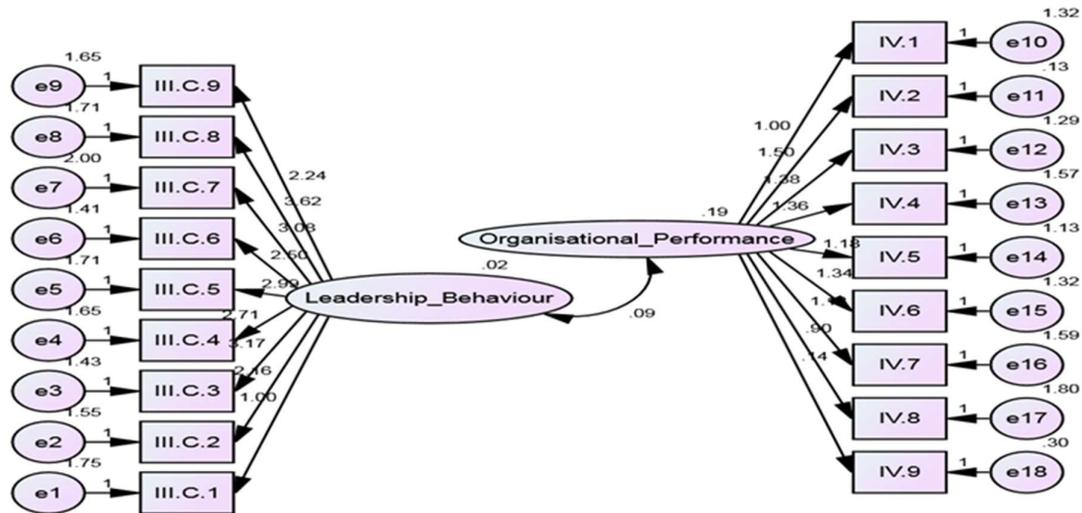
Below mentioned table proves that women managerial traits have direct relationship with sustainable organizational growth as per defined effective measure. The paper used the above tested leadership traits from the above hypothesis test that had a high impact value.

The research methodology also looks at the **correlation matrix of selected leadership traits and organizational performance/ managerial**. The results from the study of the data clearly shows a significant level of correlation between the evaluated variables during the research test.

We have done the correlation analysis to know the association among the variables. In the research, the researchers have considered eighteen different types of variables which are indicators of effective leadership traits about the women manager with nine variables of

organizational performance. When compared with the articulate of women managers, it is observed that articulate is strongly associated with leadership team and motivation. Which indicates that articulate more relates to leadership and motivation though all the variables are having positive relationships. Next, perception is more correlated with leadership and leadership team and negative correlation with coordination.

### Structural Equation Model Analysis:



Source: developed from the survey data

The above model depicts relationship between independent traits and variables leading to Women Leadership Behaviour and their impact on the organizational performance.

### Conclusion and Recommendation:

While Indian regulators have put in place a holistic framework to promote the representation of women in key corporate positions, the numbers show that there is a significant gap between the idealistic measures and the reality. Given the ongoing upheaval and the current pace of change, the case for diverse boards working with a unified purpose is stronger than ever. It is time for Indian companies to pay more attention to gender diversity and gender parity. A study conducted by Harvard Business Review (2019) shows that women are perceived to be as effective as men in leadership positions. In fact, they have been found to be more competent compared to men when it comes to various key leadership skills such as resilience, integrity, initiative, collaboration, networking, creativity, problem-solving, etc. Accordingly, the societal stereotype that women are not suited for leadership positions has serious consequences for their careers. Therefore, it is imperative that companies change their hiring and promotion decisions to ensure that suitable women are seriously considered.

In 2021, the stretch factor for women increased slightly from the 2018 figure of 1.22 to 1.30 in India. It indicates that compared with men, a smaller group of women are taking on many more board seats. Men, by comparison, have a stretch factor of 1.20. The countries with the highest stretch factor for women—Australia (1.43), the US (1.33), and New Zealand (1.32)—have eschewed quotas in favor of voluntary approaches, such as non-binding targets. Meanwhile, the European countries that were early adopters of quotas have much lower stretch factors for women directors; in some cases, the factor was equal to that of men globally. In India, the average tenure of women directors marginally increased from 5.0 years in 2018 to 5.1 years in 2021. Globally, the number decreased from 5.5 years in 2018 to 5.1 years in 2021, especially in markets, such as the US (from 6.3 years in 2018 to 5.3 years in 2021), the UK (4.1 years to 3.6 years in 2021), and Canada (5.7 years to 5.2 years). source: Deloitte Global's Women in the boardroom report 2022

Indian organizations are preparing for this new change. HRD professionals could play a critical role by providing appropriate training and development that would build their confidence and ultimately prepare them for progressive leadership roles (Collins and Abichandani 2016). In addition, HRD professionals should ensure appropriate gender diversity on the board, which would hopefully encourage the recruitment and retention of more female talent and the adoption of progressive HRD practices across the organization (Alagaraja et al. 2018). They can also promote openness in organizations by holding regular team-building and confidence-building workshops that encourage organizational members to speak openly about gender biases and stereotypical views (Manikoth, Gajjar, and Mendonca 2018).

Women can be promoted into leadership positions by strengthening a system that encourages them to learn global leadership skills through a system that promotes career development, diversity, and work-life balance to achieve corporate goals. Such development initiatives enable women leaders to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities required to lead companies in a global environment. This leads to greater growth and, in turn, higher revenues as multinational companies leverage their unique talent mix and the expertise of women in the workforce. In addition, there has been a significant shift in men's attitudes toward their female counterparts and they taking on leadership roles in global organizations

### **Future Research:**

This paper focussed on the role that women leaders play in an organization's growth and bringing out the facts that act as a glass ceiling in their reaching the top position. There is scope to find out what are the key traits that one should possess that have a direct correlation with the profitability and growth in an organization where a female is leading the board or company.

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