
BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING THROUGH FEMININE STYLE OF LEADERSHIP

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Abstract: Every year we celebrate International Women's day on March 8th to commemorate the achievements of women, and to acknowledge their special status in society. The significant question that still haunts us is "Have women truly become stronger?" Women's day celebrations certainly become purposeful when a true platform is provided to share experiences and chalk out the way to deal with vices against women through the execution of projects associated in empowering women and building their self esteem. Empowerment is about bringing out the positive inner being of a person and maximizing it as much as possible. It is basically the creation of an environment where women can make independent decisions on their personal development as well as shine as equals in society. A lateral look at our heritage indicates the equal status of women but in reality woman has always been a second grade citizen, no matter what the generation is. Glass ceiling is one amongst the contributory challenges to the overarching status of women in India targeting which will benefit the empowerment of women as a whole. This paper aims at making a close observation of feminine style of leadership in breaking the unofficial barrier to opportunities within an organization or company which is perceived to prevent protected classes of workers, particularly women, from advancing to higher positions called glass ceiling.

Introduction: The Glass Ceiling: The set of subtle barriers that are believed to prevent women and minorities from reaching the upper echelons of corporate, industry and academia is called glass ceiling. Throughout the history, there have been very few women in positions of leadership, until the women's rights movement of the early 20th century. Significant gains started inroads during the late 20th century. But still, women have not been able to achieve parity with men when it comes to the highest levels of leadership in government, business, and academia. To get into a leadership "pipeline" at lower levels and to make inroads at the highest levels has many barriers to cross. As per the fortune magazine survey, highest percentage of men and women claimed the male-dominated corporate culture as the single most important barrier for women. Other barriers cited by women are the exclusion of women from informal networks, lack of female mentors, the existence of a glass ceiling, and management's belief that women are less career oriented. Whereas men cited the exclusion of women from informal networks, lack of female mentors, few female bosses as role models and difficulties women have balancing paid work and family as barriers to the highest levels of leadership.

Theories of leadership define leadership ability as a biological factor, an inborn skill of men that is lacking in women. No supportive results are traced to this approach. Some other studies have found some gender differences in leadership style. However, other studies have found that there are more similarities than differences in the leadership abilities of men and women, and they are equally effective. But no theory could bring in the desired change in the position of women.

Position of Women: Position of women in India has remained a topic of concern since ancient times. History proves that during the ancient days, women enjoyed equivalent status and rights like their males counterparts. In addition they were also educated in the

Vedic period. These references are available from the works of Katyayana and Patanjali. Women during this period also had the freedom to select their husbands through a system called 'Swavamvaram.' In fact during this time, women had superior position than the males. During the medieval period, the [status of women in India](#) deteriorated with the out spurge of several evil practices such as female infanticide, sati, child marriage and polygamy. In spite of this hostile environment, women excelled in literature, music and arts and also proved themselves to be good rulers during this period. Some great-women rulers were Razia Sultana who was the only women-monarch to rule the throne of Delhi, Nurjahan who ruled for fifteen years before she was defeated in a battle by Ali emperor Akbar's. In spite of these powerful women, the condition of ordinary women remained the same.

During the modern times, though there was a little development in the women status, their condition remains unchanged. There were many women reformers in India who worked for the uplift and betterment of their female counterparts. Various female writers emerged in the society. In the modern India, women were given freedom of expression and equality as well as the right to be educated. Various prestigious positions at this period were held by women. They're enjoying the 'ladies first' facility in different fields. However, the perception that a woman is one that cannot do other duties apart from her traditional duties of cooking and housekeeping remains unchanged.

Studies routinely show that girls outperform boys in school. They are more resilient, better at reading, have better verbal skills, are better at math, have greater social intelligence. 50% of medical and law students are women. 57% of all undergraduates are women. 60% of all Master's degrees are earned by women. 52% of Doctoral degrees are earned by women. Empowerment of women does not come merely with education. Real empowerment comes when women have an understanding of their capabilities and are able to take

independent decisions.

Gender differences in Leadership Styles: Women's attitudes are often based on their traditional socialization to be docile or flexible. The style of leadership traditionally used by men is **Command and Control**. A style of leadership that has often been used by women is an **Interactive Leadership Style**. The Interactive

Leadership Style is based on characteristics that have been described as more feminine, such as good communication skills (especially the ability to be good listener & to be empathetic), good intermediary skills (for negotiation & conflict resolution), and well-developed interpersonal skills & a soft approach to handling people.

Women are more likely to describe their jobs as "transformational," getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal. Men are more likely to describe their jobs as "transactional," a series of transactions with subordinates. They exchange rewards for services rendered or punishment for inadequate performance.

Women tend to see their power as coming from personal characteristics such as charisma, interpersonal skills, hard work, or personal contacts. Men tend to see their power as coming from their organizational position and formal authority.

Women tend to score higher in orientation towards production (strong pursuit of achievement, holding high expectations for self and others) and the attainment of results. **Men** tend to score higher on scales assessing an orientation towards strategic planning and organizational vision.

Women tend to score higher on people-oriented leadership skills. Men tend to score higher on business-oriented leadership skills.

Women's leadership styles, at the moment, do differ from men's but men who are not comfortable with the traditional "command and control" style can learn and

use the interactive style; Women's leadership styles are not less effective than men's styles and they can be more effective in team-based consensually-driven organizations that are becoming more common today.

Conclusion: For years women have been told that to succeed in the workplace, they need to "act more like men." These days, however, that mindset is beginning to change and women are now being viewed as possessing special traits that enable them to be effective leaders. Amy Brenengen, director, Office on the Economic Status of Women in St. Paul, Minn. echoes that sentiment. "It seems as though traits that were once viewed as being 'traditionally feminine' are now taking on more of a positive, mainstream point of view in terms of how organizations and entities are led," explains Brenengen. Recognizing the unique talents that women bring to the workplace, some organizations are making changes to foster a more 'female-friendly' environment. In a recent Newsweek article titled "Women and Leadership", Donna Orender, president of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), notes that women are more collegial and focused on team building. According to Coulter, "Top down management is being replaced by team approaches and flexible, family-oriented schedules are more the norm than the exception. It has taken time, but the workplace today is embracing women's strengths."

While some women are beginning to shatter the glass ceiling, others remain glued to the sticky floor. It seems the key that unlocks the door to success is for women in the workplace to acknowledge and focus on their strengths. As time goes on, more and more companies will soon realize the special gifts that women offer and reward them for it. In the process "It is important to be a good mother and a good wife, in shaping the future of the county as well" playing multiplicity of duties. Empowerment does not have to result in conflict between the genders. "Equality is not about one being better than the other; it is giving respect to each other"

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