
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A CHALLENGING LEADERSHIP IN INDIAN SCENARIO

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Abstract: Women empowerment is a debatable subject. At earlier time they were getting equal status with men. But they had faced some difficulties during post-Vedic and epic ages. Many a time they were treated as slave. From early twenty century (national movement) their statuses have been changed slowly and gradually. Today we have seen the women occupied the respectable positions in all walks of the fields. Yet, they have not absolutely free some discrimination and harassment of the society. A few number of women have been able to establish their potentialities. Now that we have come out of those dark days of oppression of women there is a need for strong movement to fight for the rights of women and to ensure that they get all the rights which men have or in other words a movement for the Empowerment of Women.

Keywords: Challenges, Gender, Leadership, Women Empowerment

Introduction: 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.

According to the Government of India Report, *'Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power.* In this process, women should be empowered socially, economically, educationally and politically that can help them take self-decision regarding education, mobility, economic independency, political participation, public speaking and awareness to exercise rights. The women's movement and NGOs widespread network of having strong grass- root presence and deep insight into women's concerns have contributed in inspiring initiatives for the women empowerment. Women today are trying to understand their position in the society and have become increasingly aware of sexual inequalities in every sphere of life by seeking ways to fight them with pride and dignity.

Objective of the study: The objective of present study is to understand the conceptual framework of women empowerment in Indian context, various policies and programmes, basic issues and key challenges. The paper also gives special emphasis on various efforts initiated towards women empowerment and also pay due attention to make some recommendation for accelerating the women empowerment drive in India and thereby pave the way for further study in the area.

Research Methodology: The proposed study *"WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A CHALLENGING LEADERSHIP IN INDIAN SCENARIO"* is based on secondary data. Secondary data were collected from several working papers on women empowerment,

articles published in reputed journals and other related websites of Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India.

Review of the 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 demotivating 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

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 multidimensional 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.

Need for women empowerment in India: Human development encompasses elements that contribute critical issues of gender and development. The dignity and culture of a society can be detected from the status of women in that society. According to Rameshwari Pandya (2008) Empowerment has become the key solution to many social problems. Empowerment of women is empowerment of family/household and in turn development of a

nation of a country. Empowerment of women leads to benefit not only to the individual woman and to women groups, but also to the families and community as a whole through collective action for development. In this contemporary world, women need to gain the same amount of power that men have. In India, women are still facing different obstacles in male-dominated cultures. The things are related to women's status and their future. The worth of civilization can be arbitrated by the place given to women in the society. In India women are still victim of abuse and violent crimes. According to a global survey conducted by Thomson Reuters, India is the fourth most dangerous country in the world and worst country for women to live in amongst G20 countries. There is stalking, harassment in educational institutes and at work place & outright trafficking and forced prostitution. The female literacy rate is also lower than the male literacy rate. The ground reality is deprivation, degradation and exploitation of women specially women from rural areas and those belonging to deprived sectors of the society.

Challenges before woman in India": There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India.

Education- While the country has grown from leaps and bounds since its independence where education is concerned, the gap between women and men is severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India. Not only is an illiterate women at the mercy of her husband or father, she also does not know that this is not the way of life for women across the world.
Poverty- Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy. Due to abject poverty, women are exploited as domestic helps and wives whose incomes are usurped by the man of the house. Additionally, sex slaves are a direct outcome of poverty, Mortality Inequality- Due to gender bias in health & nutrition there is unusually high mortality rate in women reducing their population further especially in Asia, Africa & China.

Professional Inequality - This inequality is practiced in employment & promotions. Women face countless handicaps in male customized & dominated environs in Govt. Offices and private enterprises.
Health & Safety- The health and safety concern of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country, and is an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country.

Household Inequality- Household relations show gender bias in infinitesimally small but significant manners all across the globe, more so, in India e.g.

sharing burden of housework, childcare & menial works by so called division of work which absolves men of all work.

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 others.

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 nonfamily 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 below.

Domains	Score
Sense of Self & vision of a future	212
Mobility & visibility	226
Economic Security	219
Status & decision-making power within the household	164
Ability to interact effectively in the public sphere	192
Participation on non-family groups	116

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: Leadership recognizes that all meaningful and enduring change

begins with the internal work we do to transform our outer behavior. 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:

- *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).*
- *Dr. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairman & Managing Director of Biocon Ltd.,*
- *Ekta Kapoor, creative head of Balaji Telefilms,*
- *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 Vijayawada 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 academicians, professionals and working women's in related to various domains. 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 behaviors 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 behaviors 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.

Findings: 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.

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.

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.

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, and sociability the women leaders scored significantly higher in these areas.

Suggestions: Empowerment of women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved by adopting definite social and economic

policies with a view for bringing phenomenal change in the plight women's education and empowerment in India

The Ministry of Education both at Centre and State level should work out strategic steps to stop firmly the ongoing high drop outs among girls especially in rural areas to realize zero drop-out among girls

The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family". Education is a powerful tool of social transformation. Women face high risk of malnutrition hence focused attention would have to be given to meet the nutritional needs of women at all stages of their life cycle.

Conclusion: India has many legislative and provisions for empowerment of women. Many schemes have developed for the improvement of women empowerment. But still leaves much to be desired. Top priority should be given for the enlightenment of women in creating skills and enhancing the literacy rate for women. Women empowerment will improve only when economic imbalances remove and improve the social and economic status in our society. Women leaders have an inclusive, team-building leadership style of problem solving and decision making. Even in five year plans the weight age and priority should be given. Let us work towards giving women their much deserved respect and status.

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