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## WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN INDIA: THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined how Indian male and female managers perceived and used leadership styles and civility techniques in professional settings. The employment of politeness strategies and male and female leadership styles have been heavily researched in the Western context, but this research is lacking in the dynamically changing Indian setting, where society has historically been hierarchical and very paternalistic. The number of Indian women holding executive roles in the workforce has steadily increased, creating new linguistic settings. The purpose of this study is to increase public understanding of both the potential and difficulties that women managers encounter in patriarchal societies.

This study shows that gender stereotypes still exist in the workplace in India because it is thought that female leadership goes against patriarchal culture and traditional religious beliefs. Gender stereotypes, patriarchy, and religious beliefs continue to devalue, degrade, and limit women. On the other hand, female managers excelled at presiding over meetings. Despite the dual roles that Indian women were required to play as mothers, wives, and professionals, they outperformed male managers. This shows that gender roles are evolving and that the paternalistic society of Indonesia is being influenced by global factors.

**Keywords:** Indian women, Stereotypes, Barriers, Leadership.

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### INTRODUCTION:

This study, which examined how men and women behave in the contemporary workplace and the attitudes of managers and subordinates regarding their leaders, who may be either male or female, is significant given the shifting roles of men and women in Indian culture. It is intended that the study's findings would not only shed light on the leadership practices of Indian male and female leaders, but will also lay the groundwork for management education that will benefit both sexes in positions of authority. Greater gender diversity has been promoted as an organisational strategy, functioning as a key corporate performance driver for achieving the competitive advantage, in response to the changing social and cultural trends of the society. Men are also seen as being more focused and career-

oriented in Indian organisations, which has greatly influenced organisational culture. Women are becoming more active in a variety of fields, including social science, medicine, engineering, academia, law, and entrepreneurship. Indian women are coping poorly with a variety of oppressive and rigid patriarchal family structures, relationships to men through their families of origin, matrimony, and procreation, as well as patriarchal traits. The viewpoint that typically prevails is based on the assumption that women are unable to manage the ideal balance between their personal and professional fronts. After giving birth, they lose their career momentum. The culture of the Indian people is characterised by the crowning of women as "rulers" at home. While carrying out their multiple jobs, it is believed that they prioritise their family

above all else, which has a detrimental effect on their performance gaps in terms of their career growth ladder. The majority of company founders frequently encounter the conflicting notion that there aren't enough effective women leaders in today's multinational firms, while women leaders hold the opposite view and think that these organisations don't use open performance evaluation standards. According to a Harvard Business Review study from 2019, men and women are seen as equally effective in leadership roles. Social perceptions that women shouldn't hold senior leadership positions have a negative impact on their career. Organizations must therefore change their hiring and promotion practises to guarantee that qualified women are given meaningful consideration. By establishing a system that supports career growth, diversity, and work-life balance to assist organisations achieve their goals, women can rise into leadership roles by learning about the global leadership competencies. As MNCs use the distinctive skill set and experience of women in the workforce, these developmental programmes help female leaders improve the knowledge, proficiencies, and abilities needed to run organisations in a global setting, resulting in better growth and higher aggregated revenues.

#### **WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN INDIA:**

Despite a deeply ingrained patriarchal culture, it is quite paradoxical that India has produced countless women leaders over the years, including Indira Gandhi, the country's first female prime minister, Pratibha Patil, its first female president, Kiran Bedi, the country's first female inspector general of police, Indira Nooyi, the country's first woman and person of Indian descent to lead Pepsi Co., and Chitra Ramak. Since they reached the pinnacle of their professions and made their mark on the younger generation of women leaders, these women leaders continue to serve as inspirations for all young Indian women who desire to leadership positions. Compared to their counterparts in other regions of the world, more Indian women employees hold senior leadership positions.

#### **Barriers to Women Leadership in Indian Context:**

**Organizational culture:** The cultural norms that support gender-insensitive hiring,

promotion, and retention procedures, among other things, considerably contribute to the lack of women working in the office corner. Additionally, men predominate in the social milieu of an organisation. In order to succeed in the traditionally male-dominated workplace, women executives tend to adopt behaviours and/or quirks comparable to those of their male colleagues.

**Workplace Relationships:** The main issue is the association of female executives with their mentors, managers, and other coworkers. Due to their restricted access to knowledgeable mentors, women are hindered in the workplace. Due to their propensity to comprehend the difficulties most frequently encountered, many people choose to have mentors who are also their own gender. Men, on the other hand, do not experience these obstacles, but they also do not want to mentor a woman because they perceive her to be more emotional, less capable of addressing problems, and more likely to experience workplace sexual harassment.

**Globalization:** Due to their increased responsibilities and expectations, women in middle and senior level management face numerous additional challenges as a result of globalisation. Top executives must relocate to new towns, cities, and countries due to business relocations. For many women who have families and a spouse or significant other who works, this poses a substantial hurdle. In a similar vein, women may run into opposition to female leadership in various cultures.

**Intrinsic Motivation:** Due to several barriers to career advancement, many women lose their will to excel. These challenges include prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, familial obligations, and a lack of chances.

**Lifestyle Conflicts:** Women managers frequently have conflicts related to their multiple roles. Many women may be forced to choose between family and profession due to changing workplace requirements and promotions. Due to the impact it would have on their careers, very few female CEOs and executives chose to have children. In contrast, a lot of women have deliberately quit their occupations because of family considerations. On the other hand, the proportion of women quitting their employment after having children has

sharply decreased. Additionally, after a woman has children, she is less hesitant to travel and work long hours due to their domestic obligations, which reduces her chances of promotion.

#### **Stereotyping and Leadership Styles:**

Many organisations associate success and achievement with masculine traits like assertiveness, aggression, etc. Women, meanwhile, are thought of as being modest, quiet, and selfless. As a result, these moderate traits might be viewed as unsuitable for managerial positions. Organizations want a leader who will carry out his duties, handle criticism well, and perform to the best of his abilities.

**Marital Status Bias:** In addition, employers may have negative impressions about married and single women's employability, which could have an impact on critical choices like promotions and layoffs. Additionally, it is thought that single, unmarried women have fewer social responsibilities and are required to work longer hours than married, working women; in contrast, employers assume that married males are more employable than single men. It is thought that as their financial responsibilities grow after marriage, men show more steadiness, determination, and commitment to their careers. Thus, it is significant that one of the main issues that Indian women still face is bias based on marital status.

#### **IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES:**

There are many reasons why women's leadership is essential, not least the bottom line. According to Baroness Berridge (Minister for Women in the UK), companies in the top 25% for gender diversity on their executive teams are 25% more likely to have above-average profitability. A more diverse workforce, including more women in leadership roles, is linked to more innovation and financial performance. Studies show that having women in leadership roles can help organisations forge a deeper connection with their customers, inspire other women employees, and boost employee engagement. Increasing diversity is also a significant benefit during skills shortages as organisations have access to a broader talent pool.

#### **1. Women leaders will paint the future**

It can be daunting for women who have not yet been in a position of leadership to take on such a high-profile role due to the stigmas attached to it. This could push away the younger generation from striving to break down barriers. In 2019, the proportion of women in senior management roles globally grew to 29%. This remained constant in 2020 and grew to 31% in 2021, the highest number ever recorded. While this can be considered positive news, women just entering the workforce will need to be inspired by other women who are currently smashing their roles as a leader in the workplace. Once achieved, it can carve a direction for all young aspiring women leaders to increase the global percentage and break new records.

#### **2. Unique transformational ideas will be brought to the front**

A meta-analysis comparing male and female leaders identified female leaders were more transformational. They demonstrated more contingent reward behaviour than the two-dimensional actions (active and passive management) presented by male leadership. This transformational leadership style has been shown to build social and personal identification amongst members and also build the mission and goals set out by leadership and organisations. This demonstrates a clear positive influence on the success of an organisation and its employees.

#### **3. The enhancement of teamwork**

Women are able to make bold and wise decisions as leaders; this helps make the team environment less authoritative and more cooperative, bringing a family-like feel to the team. This boosts teamwork across the organisation and helps implement a new culture within the business.

#### **4. Women demonstrate superior leadership values**

A national survey by the Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends survey ranked 2,250 adult women better than or equal to men in seven of the eight primary leadership traits assessed throughout the survey. The key statistics from this survey outline that half of the respondents ranked women as more honest than men, with 20% saying that men are more honest than women. In terms of intelligence, 38% said they viewed women as smarter, with only 14% indicating men are

smarter. For the other cases, women were ranked as being more compassionate, outgoing and creative.

#### **5. Business-wide communication can be enhanced**

Communication is said and known to be among a woman's strongest skills. Female leaders will utilize this power to enhance meaningful conversations with employers, co-workers and partners, thus creating an open communication stream that creates a sense of clarity.

#### **6. Achieve a better financial outcome**

It's possible that more original ideas will be put forth in a workplace with a greater diversity. This promotes development and increases organizational sustainability. Diversity in the workplace should not only focus on women but also include a fluid mix of both sexes across the board. Gender diversity at work fosters innovation, promotes performance and employee satisfaction, and, as has been proven, fosters greater teamwork across the organisation. According to a workplace survey, organisations with gender-diverse workforces are 21% more likely to have above-average profitability.

#### **7. Fresh new outlooks and perspectives**

Women leaders will bring skills, different perspectives, and innovative ideas to the table, but these three combined will help create innovative perspectives that lead to better decision-making as a whole for the business.

#### **8. Women leaders can provide better mentorship**

The importance of role models, particularly for the younger generation, cannot be understated. Everyone needs someone to mentor them so they can advance in their careers, regardless of gender. Women can employ their skills in this area since, specifically, female leaders are better mentors than male leaders when it comes to developing and guiding new talent.

A study found that 29% of women think that being a woman will prevent them from advancing. Women in leadership positions can seize this chance to start empowering the talented young minds of the following generation in order to go past this challenge.

#### **9. The ability to wear many hats**

Women frequently perform multiple roles within one another in daily life. Along with

many other situations, you can frequently find them juggling families, occupations, and parental supervision. These aid female leaders in making quick adjustments to novel circumstances and concentrating on finding answers to practical workplace problems.

#### **10. Women in leadership roles can close the gender pay gap**

The fact that the gender pay gap can become a gender opportunity gap is something that is frequently neglected. When men and women begin their careers from scratch, it has been observed that men are typically given more opportunities that lead to higher-paying employment.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

##### **Women in leadership: Be impactful.**

Research has found that the global share of women in senior management roles is increasing incrementally, with 90% of global companies having at least one woman in a senior management role in 2021. However, it will still be 170 years until women achieve economic parity on a global scale, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report.

1. According to a survey of approximately 8,500 companies across 61 countries in 2021, conducted by S&P Global and researchers from the University of Paris, female CEOs demonstrated better empathy, adaptability, and diversity more frequently than their male peers. In the past, words like empathy, intuition, compromise, and compassion may have been seen as soft, but today they are seen as words that are becoming more and more important in the workplace—possibly even a strategic imperative. An further recent study, this one from Catalyst, demonstrates that compassionate leaders have more creative and effective teams and are more likely to keep talent. Data indicates that:
2. Empathy is a force for productivity, life-work integration, and positive work experiences.
3. Empathy boosts productivity.
4. Employees with empathic managers and leaders are more innovative and engaged in their work than are employees with less empathic managers and leaders.
5. Women of color experience less burnout when they have more empathic senior leaders.

6. Senior leader empathy is linked to reduced intent to leave.

Women leaders tend to use an empathetic style to influence others and to build trust, which produces productive and effective teams. In fact, a 2019 S&P Global Markets Intelligence Study found that firms with female CEOs and CFOs produced superior stock price performance. The study highlighted positive stock price, profitability, board diversity, and results by organizations run by female C-level leaders. One CEO who I've worked with says that she aims to balance empathy with hard data and results. This push to prove that results do go hand-in-hand with a well-balanced organization is something many female leaders have in common. They want to change the culture of their organizations and provide inspiration for other aspiring female leaders while ensuring that results and long-term thinking do not suffer; in fact, they should increase. But it's important to note that evolution is not exclusive to women. More of the male CEOs I work with understand that empathy and rigor can be impactful as a leader.

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