

## **Women Leadership” is not a new praxis- A Review**

*Brijesh Bal*

*Research Scholar,*

*Department of Management Studies*

*CMR School of Management,*

*Bangalore*

*brijeshbal1@gmail.com*

*Anitha. B*

*Assistant Professor,*

*Department of Management Studies,*

*CMR School of Management,*

*Bangalore-*

*anitha.b@cmr.ac.in*

### **Abstract**

Leadership provides direction and vision, motivates and inspires others and helps to be successful in the achievement of goals. For any organisation to achieve its objectives there should be a good leader crowned with good management. The main characteristic of a true leader is the right things are done for the right reason in the right way. Women's leadership can be defined as the lady who is in control of power and decision-making. Women's leadership is not restricted to the workplace but to being good at home to lead your family. A leader has multi-trait qualities, attributes and characteristics. India has witnessed strong women leaders in the past from freedom fighters to the present corporate heads and entrepreneurs. Leadership is not an action but an ongoing practice of personal and professional evolution. In summary, leadership is a dynamic blend of attributes that can influence individuals and team members towards organisational and as well as individual success. Through this review article, much effort is put into identifying various aspects

related to women's leadership traits, challenges and how to confront them by cultivating a favourable environment in the organisation and society to encourage women's leadership.

**Keywords:** *Career break, gender diversity, glass ceiling, leadership, work-life balance*

## **Introduction**

Leadership provides direction and vision, motivates and inspires others and helps to be successful in the achievement of goals. Leadership and management are essential for an organisation to achieve its objectives. The main characteristic of a true leader is the right things are done for the right reason in the right way. Women's leadership can be defined as the lady who is in control of power and decision-making. Women's leadership is not restricted to the workplace but to being good at home to lead your family. A leader has multi-trait qualities, attributes and characteristics. India has witnessed strong women leaders in the past from freedom fighters to the present corporate heads and entrepreneurs. Leadership is not an action but an ongoing practice of personal and professional evolution. In summary, leadership is a dynamic blend of attributes that can influence individuals and team members towards organisational and as well as individual success. Leadership principles are the standards by which leaders make decisions and act on their responsibilities. They are the guiding principles leaders use to decide what is right and wrong, what should be done or not and how to deal with people who fall short of those standards.

## ***What is the best type of leader?***

There is no best type of leadership style. The leadership arises from the needs of the situation, the leadership styles are delivered as one gains experience, by their personality or personal trait or by the need of their position in an organisation or its culture.

The most recognised names in the field of research of leadership are Kurt Lewin and Glenn Parker.

Kurt Lewin leadership research:

- 1) Authoritarian (autocratic) Leadership: This leader has a clear expectation of “what”, the “when”, something needs to be done and “how” people should do it. The leader is in command and control of the followers.
- 2) Paternalistic leadership: Similar to the parent-child relationship, where leaders are seen as “father figures”. The leader guides and protects his subordinates as members of this family.
- 3) Participative leadership (Democratic): It is the most effective style. Democratic leaders actively participate in the groups, not necessarily as leaders.
- 4) Delegative leadership (laissez-faire): The whole group is involved in decision-making. Everyone's input is equally valued, no matter how much or little qualified they are. So, if the members involved are qualified experts, the results would be more excellent.

Glenn Parker leadership models:

- 1) Supportive leaders: Gives their team members opportunities to take on new challenges. Leaders do not actively participate but support them in all shapes and forms to work effectively.

2) Teaches: This type of teacher leadership will influence the employees how to perform and teach them to perform their duties. In the case of some individuals, there will be a teacher figure probably an elderly or experienced person who influences their actions and decision making.

3) Motivators: The leaders who use ethical procedures from their lives which helped them to be successful are the motivational leaders. They motivate their members with the same philosophy of life about how they became successful.

4) Role models: In this leadership style as the name says we have a role model in our lives who we aspire to become. So, everybody's role model matches their personality the best and achieves extraordinary which they are yet to become.

#### **Objectives of the study:**

- 1) To survey the various characteristics of women's leadership.
- 2) To analyse the challenges faced by women leadership.
- 3) To analyse the difference in leadership styles through literature.

This paper helps to understand the women leaders' variable traits and the differences in their leadership styles. The study also highlights the challenges faced by the women leaders and prompts the solution to some extent.

#### **Research Methodology**

The researcher adopted a systematic literature review method for this study. The researcher found that most of the studies are conducted in developed countries where as women leaders in developing countries face similar barriers during their careers. The gender gap and glass ceiling they have to break are some of the issues experienced by women in any organisation. Various books, articles, newspaper reviews and online were used for data collection. The data collection was also obtained from various online Google Scholar databases, Scopus articles, peer-reviewed and scholarly articles and studies on women's leadership available from as early as 1914. Also, various secondary data from public libraries, news reviews, and online webinars were referred to in the study to get the current scenario of the participation of women in leadership in various organisations.

#### **Literature Review**

An extant literature survey was conducted to find different leadership traits and characteristics of a successful leader among women. It is found that there are fewer chances of gender diversity in almost all organisations. Gender parity to be implemented in an organisation is a big challenge and is an ongoing process. An unnoticeable bias about a male member in a group stands the best chance to be a leader than a single female in the group due to various factors which the society still presumes that it is not achievable by a female gender. Members of the group are more likely to agree with a male leader when power is exerted than a female leader (Forsyth, Donelson, 2010, Group Dynamics, 5th ed.). The "glass ceiling" effect is best suitable to define unacknowledged barriers to advancement in a profession which affect women and minor group members. Many effective leadership qualities are exhibited by women from the old age era but still, men take over the position due to the age-old concept of masculine traits. In 2014, a meta-analysis including 99 independent samples across 95 studies found men and women do not significantly differ in leadership effectiveness (Paustian et.al, 2014 "Gender ad Perceptions of Leadership Effectiveness: A meta-analysis of Contextual Moderators." Journal of Applied Psychology).

Women are seen as equally more competent as men finds 2020 metanalysis led by Eagly. The study involving more than 30,000 U.S adults from 1946 to 2018 on three types of traits – communion (compassion, sensitivity) agency (ambition, aggression) and competence (intelligence, creativity). According to a 2010 study by Anita Williams Woolly, team collaboration is greatly improved by the presence of women in the group. Women rank better than or equal to men in seven of the eight traits relevant to leadership assessed in the 2008 national survey by the Pew Research Centre. In a study conducted in 1990, it was found that women ‘lose authority’ if they employ feminine styles of leadership in male-dominated roles (Levy. P,2010, p372, Industrial Organisational Psychology: Understanding the workplace 3<sup>rd</sup> ed)

The first wave (1848-1920): It was during this period of July 1848, that the first movement towards rights for American women began by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott at Seneca Falls, New York. At this convention, the participants signed the Declaration of Sentiments which affirmed women's equality with men and passed a dozen resolutions calling for various specific rights, including the right to vote.

The second wave (1963-1980): National women's political causes were founded in 1971, with high passage points including the “Equal Pay Act”.

The third wave (1990's): During this time feminists encouraged women to express their sexuality and individuality.

Fourth wave (present-day): The ‘Metoo movement’ took off in 2017. The fourth wave feminists are turning their attention to the systems that continue to grapple with the concept of intersectionality and regardless of sexuality, race, class and gender by Sarah Pruitt, what are the four Waves of feminism? June 19, 2024.

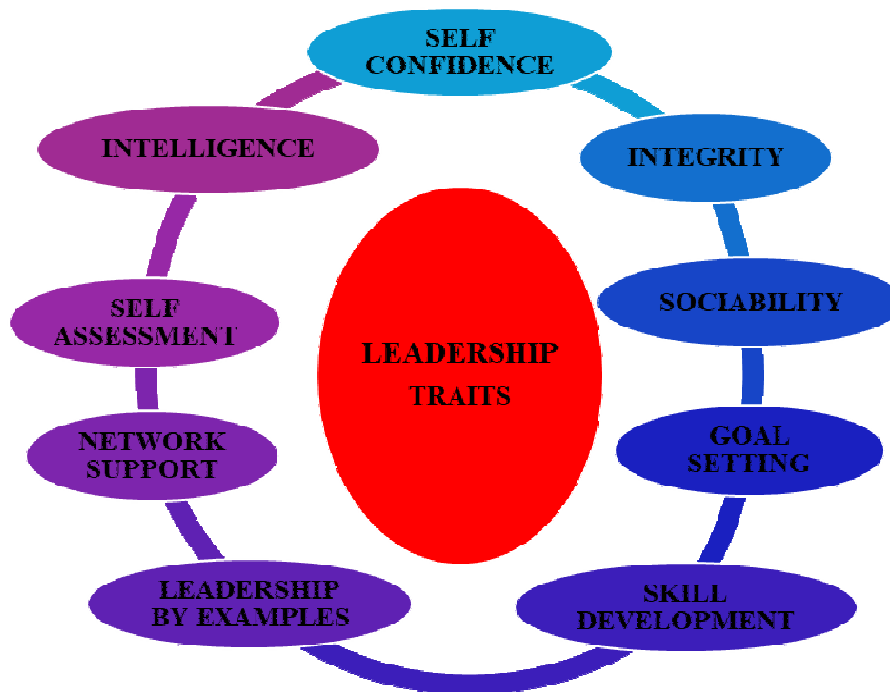
India has witnessed strong women leaders in the past from freedom fighters like Rani Laxmi Bai to political leaders like Indira Gandhi have inspired the Indian population in many ways.

### **Research Gaps**

An extant literature review has found few studies offering a comprehensive discussion of gender stereotypes percolating the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of life about women's leadership. However, one should admit that previous literature has not brought many factors of women's leadership challenges and the styles adopted. The factors of work-life balance affecting women in leading the organisation are not been comprehensively studied previously. The CEDA (Centre for Economic Data and Analysis) showed that 34 per cent of women exit firms over work-life balance compared with just 4 per cent of men. (Dbleena Majumdar, ET, March 18, 2024) The CEDA also reports that in 73 per cent of surveyed organisations, only 21 per cent have supporting strategies for gender diversity goals. About 59 per cent of firms lacked the mandatory internal grievance committee, 37 per cent did not provide maternity leave benefits and only 17.5 per cent provided childcare benefits. The organisational norms, values and structures disadvantage females in their career advancement which not many studies have highlighted. Women employees constituted 26 per cent of the India Inc. workforce in all sectors (ET Bureau, March 08, 2022) As per the survey, hiring sentiment improved in India by 5 percentage points compared to the prior

quarter and by 43 percentage points which with this time past year. “The key theme “for hiring in 2022 will be specifically hiring for specific roles, focusing on the right profile. Recruiters will prioritise “whom to hire” rather than “what to hire”, now will be the year of data-driven recruitment” quote Siddhartha Gupta, Mercer Mettl (Hiring recruitment trends, People tree). Lack of flexibility and family-friendly policies, together with traditional gender roles that assign women with child care and family responsibilities impede women’s access to paid employment. Previous data about how many organisations follow childcare facilities and maternity norms are not available. Women do not pursue a more lucrative career in science and technology due to the affordability of quality childcare services for children of working mothers, and family tradition in the case of the Indian scenario, Anker, R., & Hein, C. (1985). Between 2010 and 2020 number of working women in India dropped from 26 percent to 19 percent. As infection surged, female employment plummeted to per cent by 2022. Women in India represent 48 per cent of the population, they contribute only 17 per cent of the GDP compared to 40 per cent in China. (Economic Times, June 02, 2022).

### Conceptual framework:



### Leadership traits:

Leadership traits are the attributes of a leader that are observed in common among all the leaders who are in authority. The leadership traits encompass physical, emotional social and intellectual characteristics with the ability to communicate effectively and motivate others, self-confidence, ambition and high energy (Bolden et al. 2003: Freedman, 2016).

During the 1990s, the study of leadership traits focussed on understanding an individual's behaviours, thoughts and feelings, as well as those of others and the appropriate actions of them. The review of past studies of traits accumulated for 60 years by Northouse in 2013 has proposed a set of five major leadership traits that individuals should possess or seek to develop, intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability. (Northouse P.G. 2016, Leadership: theory and practice, Sage).

i) Intelligence: Intellectual or cognitive ability includes mental capacity for understanding, reasoning and perception as well as aptitude for grasping facts and relationships between them. Leaders have higher intelligence than non-leaders (Bader, P. K., Zaccaro, S. J., & Kemp, C. F. 2004, April)

ii) Self-confidence and determination: Effective leaders have self-assurance and self-esteem. Self-confidence about their ideas, judgement, ability, skills and decision-making enables them to step ahead with the belief that any decision made can be overcome. Determination is the motivation a leader needs to come to a decision which includes energy initiative, persistence and tenacity.

iii) Personal integrity: Effective leaders show their character by being ethical, trustworthy and honest. Leaders should maintain the confidence of followers; effective communication and trustworthiness. Leaders should take responsibility for their actions and decisions.

iv) Sociability: This is the heart of effective leadership by Zaccaro and his authors. Social appraisal skill or social intelligence is the aptitude for understanding the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of others and oneself in social situations and acting appropriately. Sociability traits in a leader are being friendly, courteous and diplomatic, showing concern for the well-being of others, exhibiting good interpersonal skills and helping to create cooperative relationships within their work environments (James W. Holsinger, 2017)

v) Goal setting: To sustain leadership development, it is vital to delineate specific measurable goals that align with both your personal growth and the overarching objectives of the organisation. These goals will direct one's actions and decisions towards meaningful change.

vi) Skills development: While technical skills have their place, humanitarian skills like empathy, active listening and effective communication are crucial for exemplary leadership. To achieve these abilities workshops seminars, and online courses are necessary to reach out.

vii) Leadership by example: Just not enough to preach the qualities of effective leadership but also embody them. Consistency in action displays the same traits of authenticity in your behaviour and commitment to the same values you espouse which your team needs and looks like a role model in you.

viii) Network support: Cultivating a robust network of mentors, peers and even industry experts can offer a reservoir of wisdom and moral support. This relationship not only serves as a source of guidance but also offers the psychological bolstering needed to face the challenges of leadership with resilience.

ix) Self-assessment and peer review: Conduct periodic self-assessments to gauge your competencies and weaknesses. Also, check the feedback from peers, mentors and even subordinates. This helps to know about your leadership acumen and illuminates the paths for personal growth.

### **Essential characteristics of a good leader**

(Anne Gomez, OLLU, Nov. 3, 2023, Our Lady of the Lake University)

1. Integrity: This is the trust factor in leadership. A leader who is confident and inspiring the members maintains credibility, stands by his words, upholds the values and principles, and is ethical will develop trust and dependability among the team members.
2. Innovation: Leaders should be able to adapt to change and encourage innovation by valuing new ideas and creative problem-solving.
3. Vision: A leader's vision provides direction and purpose, inspiring the team members to achieve the goal.
4. Passion: This trait fuels dedication and perseverance. Passion about work and vision inspire others to give their best.
5. Communication: Effective communication is key to displaying true leadership. Strong communication skills shall ensure that messages are clearly understood, thus fostering collaboration and trust.
6. Self-awareness: One should understand their strength and weaknesses. This enables them to make informed decisions, leverage their strengths and work on areas that need improvement. This allows them to relate better to their teams.
7. Empathy: This quality of a leader enables one to understand his member's emotions. This helps in conflict resolution and creates supportive feelings and a good rapport with them. This makes the members feel that their leader cares about their well-being.
8. Courage: This quality of a leader helps to make tough decisions and face challenges. A courageous leader will take calculated risks and confront difficult situations. They will stand up for their beliefs.
9. Delegation: By delegating the work the leader expresses confidence about his members. This will enable the team members to empower and develop their skills and responsibilities.
10. Learning agility: Learning agility allows leaders to be quick learners and willing to adapt the changes. Accept and practice by seeking new information which improves their decision-making and problem-solving abilities.
11. Adaptability: Leaders must adapt to evolving situations and challenges. Embrace change and adjust their strategies accordingly and are better equipped to lead their teams through uncertainty and ambiguity.
12. Decision making: This is not just a task, it is a pivotal skill. Decision-making by effective leaders is done through, thorough thoughtfulness after carefully weighing the pros and cons seeking diverse opinions and choosing a course of action with conviction. This meticulous approach not only drives their objective forward but also builds trust and respect among the team members, reinforcing the leader's role as a trusted guide.
13. Accountability: This means taking responsibility for one's actions and decisions. This fosters a culture of ownership and reliability.
14. Gratitude: This expression goes far beyond simple courtesy. It serves as an acknowledgement of the hard work and contributions of team members boosts their morale and improves interpersonal relationships. This fosters a positive work environment enabling improved productivity and motivation in their job.

15. Influence: Influential leaders inspire others to follow their lead willingly. Their influence stems from their character, actions and ability to connect with others.

16. Respect: Respect for all team members regardless of their role or background is essential for creating a harmonious and inclusive workplace. This helps to create mutual support and enables everyone to thrive.

Bottom line: This comprehensive exploration of 16 essential qualities that make an extraordinary leader serves as a guiding compass. They are not just mere attributes but pillars on which impactful leadership is built. Leadership is not an action but an ongoing practice of personal and professional evolution.

### **Reasons to be a Leader**

- 1) Personal growth and development.
- 2) Leadership roles offer an opportunity to make a positive impact on both individuals and organizations.
- 3) Ability to inspire and empower others.
- 4) Leads to recognition and achievement.
- 5) Helps tackle challenges and drive change.

### **How leaders motivate employees**

- 1) By offering recognition and appreciation for their hard work.
- 2) Clear and transparent communication from leaders can enhance employee motivation.
- 3) Providing employees with a sense of empowerment and autonomy which boosts their enthusiasm and engagement.
- 4) Leadership can offer professional growth to motivate team members.
- 5) Aligning individual and team goals with the organisation's mission brings in a sense of purpose and drive.
- 6) Leaders can offer feedback and coaching which can help employees improve and stay motivated.
- 7) Promoting work-life balance can increase overall job satisfaction and motivation.
- 8) An inclusive and collaborative work environment can enhance employee morale.
- 9) Implementing recognition programs and incentives can provide tangible rewards that motivate employees.

### **Concept of Women Leadership**

The concept of women's participation in positions of power and decision-making in companies was developed by Marilyn Loden, Sally Helgesen and Helen Fisher over 40 years ago. India has witnessed strong women leaders in the past from freedom fighters to the present corporate heads and entrepreneurs. Leadership is not restricted to the workplace but to being good at home to lead your family. Leading your family is not only your right but also your responsibility. Cultivating exceptional leadership qualities is not a destination but an ongoing journey. Women also have substantial advantages in education and social service (Eagly, Karau and Makhijani, 1995).



Women managers have broken the glass ceiling in medium-sized, non-traditional organisations and have proven that effective leaders do not come from one mould. The first wave is female executives in the developing world, and the second wave is making its way to top management proving successful by drawing their skills and attitudes developed from their experience during the first wave.

The women respondents describe themselves in ways that characterise ‘transformational’ leadership – getting subordinates to transform their self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal. In some interviews, these women view themselves as leaders whose leadership style is more like ‘interactive leadership’ because they actively work to make their interactions with subordinates, encourage them to participate, share power and information, enhance other people's self-worth and get others excited about their work.

While men are expected to be strong, tough, decisive and exhibit competitiveness and control, women are considered to be very cooperative and supportive but emotional and vulnerable. This explains why women leaders are more likely interactive leaders. Women believe that employees perform better when they feel they are part of the organisation and can share in its success. Allowing them to get involved and to work to their potential is a way to maximise their contributions and use human resources most efficiently. Many women experience bias not only as a result of gender but also due to race, social orientation disability or other aspects of their identity, according to the 2022, women in Workplace report by McKinsey & Company.

### **Different leadership styles for women**

Women leaders' characteristics differ significantly from women's characteristics more generally (Schneider and Bos, 2011). Adopting an androgynous leadership style by women to overcome gender stereotypes that have prevented them from being viewed as leaders in the past (Korabik, 1990). Schein 2001, observed that women perceive their leadership role as androgynous compared to men.

Transformational styles of leadership are mostly observed among women leaders. Female leaders, when leading female-dominant organizations, exhibit transformational leadership (Eagly et al., 1995; Lowe et al., 1996). Transactional and transformational leadership were first conceptualized by James Mc Gregor Burns in leadership (New York, Harper and Row, 1978) and later by Bernard Bass in Leadership Performance Beyond Expectations, New York, Free Press, 1985). The commonly observed women's leadership styles are explained below:

| <b>Leadership Styles for Women</b> |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
|                                    | <b><i>Transformational style</i></b>                                  |
|                                    | <b><i>Interactive or Participative style</i></b>                      |
|                                    | <b><i>Democratic and collaborative style, participative style</i></b> |
|                                    | <b><i>Empathetic and Nurturing style</i></b>                          |
|                                    | <b><i>Service style or Servant style</i></b>                          |
|                                    | <b><i>Authentic style</i></b>   |
|                                    | <b><i>Adaptable</i></b>   |

- 1) Transformational Style of leadership: This is when you inspire and motivate others to achieve a shared vision and goals. This style can create positive change, bring innovation and growth in an organisation, also foster loyalty, satisfaction and performance among your team members.
- 2) Interactive style of leadership: This leader involves others as much as possible by delegating tasks, inviting team members for group discussion and building trust and their commitment towards organisational goals. The decisions made are more on a collaborative approach.
- 3) Democratic style of leadership: This leadership style allows everybody to participate, exchange ideas, have their opinion heard and encourage discussion, then ultimately conclude with a final decision.
- 4) Empathetic style of leadership: This type of leadership is seeing things from employees' perspectives, and understanding their needs by maintaining a close rapport.
- 5) Service style of leadership: It is a selfless leadership style where you focus on the needs of others before you consider your own. This type of leadership involves others in decision-making only purely on ethical and caring behaviour.
- 6) Authentic style of leadership: Leaders with high integrity exhibit this type of leadership style where they take responsibility for their decisions and actions.
- 7) Adaptable style of leadership: This type of leadership allows one to thoroughly diagnose the situation, understand the problem or challenge on hand, and then prepare to take the challenge.

### **The key difference between female and male leadership styles**

The leadership style that women are said to adopt is a more democratic and participative approach in contrast male leaders have traditionally been associated with a more autocratic style and emphasizing clear directives and quick decisions. (Eagly, Alice & Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary. (2001), The Leadership Styles of Women and Men. Journal of Social)

Men provide direction for their employees while women encourage employees to find their own direction.

The way the women promote themselves is different from male members. The studies show that women tend to promote the success of their teams rather than their contribution. (Christine L Exley, Judd B Kessler, The Gender Gap in Self-Promotion, The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 137, Issue 3, August 2022)

The women members are the pillars of the family and community. they are caregivers, mothers, leaders, entrepreneurs and activists.

### **Issues faced by women leadership**

1) Unconscious Bias: This is all about a belief in gender stereotypes to subconscious attitudes about female capabilities. Even some can go to the extent of preferences for women who act, speak and dress in certain ways. Some issues are unaware that hiring managers are likely to consider female applicants 'marital status' and age with career breaks facing challenges while returning to work.

Solution: Provide training about anti-discrimination and better equity practices.

2) Sexual or gender-based harassment: This is still a significant problem where women face the risk of sexual hostility. To deal with these women, they must quit jobs, change industries or reduce their work hours.

Solution: Have a grievance cell with strong committee members including female staff, and implement anti-harassment and anti-discriminating training programs.

3) Limited career advancement opportunity: Women are consistently judged as having ‘lower leadership potential’ than their male counterparts and are less likely to be promoted.

Solution: Promote women into new leadership roles. Conducting mentorship programs and professional development strategies helps provide opportunities and grow professional networks.

4) Unequal Pay: Seen at lower levels even at the C-suite women are more likely to be paid less than their male counterparts.

Solution: Need to welcome women at all levels of leadership, and push for diverse pools for promotion and new hires. And cultivate a culture of equal pay regardless of gender.

5) Difficult expectations: Female leaders often face lower expectations than their male counterparts. Women are taken less seriously as leaders, less likely to be authoritative, and face lower expectations for their career advancement.

Solution: The company needs to provide more opportunities for women to prove themselves through adequate promotions and assignments.

6) Lack of sponsorship and mentors: For career advancement, people need sponsors that can demand opportunities and support leadership development. Female employees are less likely to meet sponsors and mentors to keep themselves accountable for their advancement.

Solution: women leadership development programs and seminars to train the male members to ally and provide opportunities to women employees and act like mentors guiding them for career advancement.

7) Becoming C-suite members: To encourage women's leadership, the organisation must provide women with C-suite-level positions and resources and support to obtain them.

Solution: Perform a workplace culture audit to determine how current employees including women feel about their career advancement opportunities. Find ways to effectuate cultural changes and give female leaders the resources they need.

#### **How to help advance more women into leadership: (American Psychological Association)**

1) Identify – Potential leaders early.

2) Establish – Mentorship and sponsorship programs.

3) Support- Women in joining women-led professional organisations

4) Focus- on allyship, an ally is the one who consistently and intentionally works to promote a culture of inclusiveness and building an environment that benefits all in a community.

- 1) Identify: The candidates with a high potential for leadership skills can be identified early in their career through assignments, mentoring and coaching. This will also help them develop their networks and demonstrate their ability to take on greater responsibilities.
- 2) Establish: Training and mentorship programs including career guidance, support, feedback and knowledge for women and also sponsorship which goes beyond the role of mentor would influence proactively advocating for a new joiner.
- 3) Support: Women-led professional organisations allow members to have their leadership abilities. Mingling with other women, observing their leadership traits by directly working under them and also receiving support from the women members to take on the lead role are more available.
- 4) Focus: It is not only women who can help boost the number of female leaders but also trained male executives can even do. Training the male members on how to be allies is more likely to vouch for incidents of gender inequality than men who are not trained in this approach can contribute to promoting women's leadership.

### Findings

The key positive trend is that year on year women's representation in executive boards increased by 2 per cent in 2023 and currently, women hold 12 per cent of the board seats in India (source: Economic Times. Mar. 18, 2024). About 80% of working women in India have taken career breaks with 45 per cent citing childcare and personal commitments in homemaking as primary reasons. The companies are offering the hybrid mode of work culture after post-pandemic while allowing the employee to have the choice of coming to the office thrice a week or providing them a minimal logging option at the office and the rest can carry out from WFH (Work from Home). This seems to be working out well as the women employees are comfortable with hybrid mode. A recent survey by quote by Pulse of the American worker, states that 42 per cent of current workers say that "if their current company does not continue to offer remote work options for a long-term, they will look for a job at a company that does." The ideal "new normal" is an inclusive hybrid workplace where all employees – no matter where they are working- are productive, engaged, and feel connected and included (Gartner). There is a jump in productivity from 36 per cent to 55 per cent when the employee was given the option from typical conventional daily office work of 40 hours a week to radical flexibility where they have a choice over where, when, and how much they work.

**Limitations:** This study is limited to the data explored by various literature sources and cannot be adequate. This is only a likelihood challenge as explained about women leadership observed and understood by the secondary data availability. Further studies and research on particular industries or organisations need to be conducted on this topic and bring out the fair picture in the coming days. Further studies could investigate these concerns in different contexts considering differences and similarities.

### Future Scope:

Due to various factors, many features regarding women's leadership styles and various aspects were overlooked in the study. Micro study on a particular type of industry or organisation can give a better picture of the hurdles faced by women becoming leaders.

### Conclusions:

The 2023 theme of International Women's Day (March 8) is 'DigitAll', which marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. Despite progress and development, the challenges of gender diversity exist in India. There are many examples of gender bias both conscious and unconscious and each

impacts women in different ways, including in the workplace and leadership roles. There is a continuing need for more progressive mindsets and inclusive behaviours worldwide. Initiatives like gender-neutral jobs, mixed-gender interview panels to reduce bias at the hiring stage, and programs to support women's career advancement and retention will help greatly (Dbleena Majumdar, ET, March 18, 2024). Job listing should be written in a way without favouring any gender. There should be a continuous effort with innovation, technological change and education in the digital age to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

### **Recommendations**

Leading with empathy, respect and fairness is the key to a successful leadership style. As a leader, you need to express and extend consideration and fairness to your team members while they return the same courtesy. Women leaders create a positive and supportive work environment fostering trust and collaboration among team members. Now is the era of flexible work culture of hybrid mode with a lot of autonomy capped with good compensation. Now the office spaces are redesigned for a hybrid mode of work design. Many companies are redefining their work culture by adding up many benefits like free pick-up and drop, lunch coupons, and flexi-time are on the list apart from good compensation, recognition, engagement, and work-life balance promoting women employees. Appreciate the woman leader by her action behaviour or results. Make them feel what it means to you and express your appreciation by looking into their eyes. Finally, don't forget to say the simple 'Thank You'.

### **Acknowledgement**

The authors wish to thank all the women and men employees of all private companies and entrepreneurs for participating in the debate and sharing a fair opinion about women's leadership in organisations.

### **Declaration of conflicts of interest**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article, authorship and publication. This is original work and does not violate copyright.

**Funding:** No funding source was used for the current work.

### **References**

- Adler, N. J. (n.d.-a). Global leadership: Women leaders. 171–196. [https://doi.org/\(1997\)](https://doi.org/(1997))
- American College of Healthcare Executives. (n.d.). Retrieved 29 June 2024, from <https://www.ache.org/learning-center/publications/books/2346i>
- Andy Botwin. (2022a, January 17). 7 Challenges Female Leaders Face in the Workplace – And How to Combat Them. <https://www.strategypeopleculture.com/blog/challenges-female-leaders-face-in-the-workplace/>
- Antonakis, J., & Day, D. V. (2018). The Nature of Leadership (Third Edition). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506395029>
- Baker, C. (2014). Stereotyping and women's roles in leadership positions. Industrial and Commercial Training, 46(6), 332–337. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ICT-04-2014-0020>
- Beaman, L., Duflo, E., Pande, R., & Topalova, P. (2012). Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India. Science (New York, N.Y.), 335, 582–586. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1212382>

- Billing, Y. D., & Alvesson, M. (1989). Four ways of looking at women and leadership. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 5(1), 63–80. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0956-5221\(89\)90006-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0956-5221(89)90006-7)
- Blake Mouton Leadership Grid- Styles and their Polarities. (2023, February 6). *Leading Sapiens*. <https://www.leading sapiens.com/blake-mouton-leadership-grid-styles/>
- Carbajal, J. (2018). Women and work: Ascending to leadership positions. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 28(1), 12–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2017.1387084>
- Carli, L., & Eagly, A. (2011). Gender and leadership. *Sage Handbook of Leadership*, 103–117.
- Chapman, J. B., & Luthans, F. (1975). The Female Leadership Dilemma. *Public Personnel Management*, 4(3), 173–179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009102607500400306>
- Chisholm-Burns, M. A., Spivey, C. A., Hagemann, T., & Josephson, M. A. (2017). Women in leadership and the bewildering glass ceiling. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, 74(5), 312–324. <https://doi.org/10.2146/ajhp160930>
- Cohen, P., & Huffman, M. (2007). Working for the Woman? Female Managers and the Gender Wage Gap. *American Sociological Review - AMER SOCIOLOGICAL REV*, 72, 681–704. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240707200502>
- De la Rey, C. (2005). Gender, women and leadership. *Agenda*, 19(65), 4–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2005.9674614>
- De Nmark, F. L. (1993). Women, Leadership, and Empowerment. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 17(3), 343–356. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1993.tb00491.x>
- Debleena Majumdar. (2024, March 18). There are more women in leadership roles now, but challenges & biases still remain. *Economic Times Online*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/hr-policies-trends/there-are-more-women-in-leadership-roles-now-but-challenges-biases-still-remain/articleshow/108584354.cms>
- Denmark, F. L. (1977). Styles of Leadership. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 2(2), 99–113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1977.tb00493.x>
- Dhakal, P., Wiesner, R., & Maraseni, T. (2024). The interplay between the entrepreneurial leadership identity, entrepreneurial leadership competency and venture growth intentions of women in rural Australia. *PloS One*, 19(2), e0296865. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0296865>
- Donelson R. Forsyth. (2009). *Group Dynamics*, (5th Edition). Wadsworth Cengage Learning. [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sex\\_differences\\_in\\_leadership&oldid=1222089115](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sex_differences_in_leadership&oldid=1222089115)
- Eagly, A., & Carli, L. (2007). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 85, 62–71, 146. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e664062007-001>
- Eagly, A. H. (2007). Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage: Resolving the Contradictions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00326.x>
- Eagly, A. H., Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C., & van Engen, M. L. (2003). Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: A meta-analysis comparing women and men. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(4), 569–591. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.4.569>
- Eagly, A. H., & Johnson, B. T. (1990a). Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(2), 233–256. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.2.233>
- Eagly, A. H., & Johnson, B. T. (1990b). Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(2), 233–256. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.2.233>



- Eagly, A. H., & Johnson, B. T. (1990c). Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(2), 233–256. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.2.233>
- Eagly, A., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. (2001). The Leadership Styles of Women and Men. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, 781–797. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00241>
- Eagly, A., Karau, S., & Makhijani, M. (1995). Gender and the Effectiveness of Leaders: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 125–145. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.1.125>
- Ely, R. J., Ibarra, H., & Kolb, D. M. (2011). Taking Gender Into Account: Theory and Design for Women's Leadership Development Programs. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 10(3), 474–493. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2010.0046>
- Exley, C. L., & Kessler, J. B. (2022). The Gender Gap in Self-Promotion\*. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 137(3), 1345–1381. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjac003>
- Experiences and outcomes of a women's leadershipdevelopment program: A phenomenological investigation | Emerald Insight. (n.d.). Retrieved 26 June 2024, from <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.12806/V15/I3/R2/full/html>
- Georges Desvaux, Sandrine Devellard. (2008). Women Matter 2, Female leadership, a competitive edge for the future. McKinsey & Company. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcapjcgclcfndmkaj/https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/business%20functions/people%20and%20organizational%20performance/our%20insights/women%20matter/women\\_matter\\_oct2008\\_english.pdf](chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcapjcgclcfndmkaj/https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/business%20functions/people%20and%20organizational%20performance/our%20insights/women%20matter/women_matter_oct2008_english.pdf)
- Ghosh, R., & Narendran, R. (2017). Current State of Women Leaders in India: Challenges and Opportunities. In Y. Cho, R. Ghosh, J. Y. Sun, & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Current Perspectives on Asian Women in Leadership: A Cross-Cultural Analysis* (pp. 37–54). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-54996-5\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-54996-5_3)
- Gipson, A. N., Pfaff, D. L., Mendelsohn, D. B., Catenacci, L. T., & Burke, W. W. (2017). Women and Leadership: Selection, Development, Leadership Style, and Performance. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 53(1), 32–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886316687247>
- Glass, C., & Cook, A. (n.d.). Citation for: Do women leaders promote positive change? Analyzing the effect of gender on business practices and diversity initiatives. Wiley Online Library. Retrieved 26 June 2024, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1002%2Fhrm.21838>
- Gobaw, M. (2017). Womens role and their styles of leadership. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 9, 28–34. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEAPS2015.0415>
- Goethals, George R., and Crystal L. Hoyt, eds. (2016a). *Women and Leadership: History, Theories, and Case Studies*. Berkshire Publishing Group LLC.
- Goleman, D. (2003). Leadership that gets Results. In *Leadership Perspectives*. Routledge.
- Gosling, J. (n.d.). Leadership and Management Competencies: Lessons From the National Occupational Standards. Retrieved 28 June 2024, from [https://www.academia.edu/13544166/Leadership\\_and\\_Management\\_Competencies\\_Lessons\\_From\\_the\\_National\\_Occupational\\_Standards](https://www.academia.edu/13544166/Leadership_and_Management_Competencies_Lessons_From_the_National_Occupational_Standards)
- Haile, S., Emmanuel, T., & Dzathor, A. (2016, June 1). BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES CONFRONTING WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT POSITIONS: REVIEW AND ANALYSIS. | *International Journal of Business & Public Administration* | EBSCOhost.

<https://openurl.ebsco.com/contentitem/gcd:118808515?sid=ebsco:plink:crawler&id=ebsco:gc d:118808515>

Hill, C., Miller, K., Benson, K., & Handley, G. (2016). Barriers and Bias: The Status of Women in Leadership. In American Association of University Women. American Association of University Women. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED585546>

Hora, E. A. (2014). Factors that Affect Women Participation in Leadership and Decision Making Position (SSRN Scholarly Paper 2601782). <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2601782>

Hoyt, C. L. (2010). Women, Men, and Leadership: Exploring the Gender Gap at the Top. Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 4(7), 484–498. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00274.x>

Hoyt, C. L., & Blascovich, J. (2007). Leadership Efficacy and Women Leaders' Responses to Stereotype Activation. Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 10(4), 595–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430207084718>

Iannello, K. (2010). Women's Leadership and Third-Wave Feminism. Political Science Faculty Publications. <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/poliscifac/8>

Kalaitzi, S., Czabanowska, K., Fowler-Davis, S., & Brand, H. (2017). Women leadership barriers in healthcare, academia and business. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 36(5), 457–474. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-03-2017-0058>

Kapasi, I., Sang, K. J. C., & Sitko, R. (2016). Gender, authentic leadership and identity: Analysis of women leaders' autobiographies. Gender in Management: An International Journal, 31(5/6), 339–358. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-06-2015-0058>

Kiamba, J. (2008). Women and Leadership Positions: Social and Cultural Barriers to Success. Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's & Gender Studies, 6(1). <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/wagadu/vol6/iss1/2>

Leading from the Front. (Publication year 2023 Number of pages 66). UN Women – Asia-Pacific. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/07/leading-from-the-front>

Liu, Z., Riggio, R. E., Day, D. V., Zheng, C., Dai, S., & Bian, Y. (2019). Leader development begins at home: Overparenting harms adolescent leader emergence. Journal of Applied Psychology, 104(10), 1226–1242. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000402>

Madsen, S., & Andrade, M. (2018). Unconscious Gender Bias: Implications for Women's Leadership Development. Journal of Leadership Studies, 12(1), 62–67. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21566>

Mies, M. (1975). Indian women and leadership. Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, 7(1), 56–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.1975.10406363>

Nichole M. Bauer. (n.d.-b). Shifting Standards: How Voters Evaluate the Qualifications of Female and Male Candidates. <https://www.apa.org>, Volume 82(Number 1). Retrieved 14 June 2024, from <https://www.apa.org/topics/women-girls/female-leaders>

Offermann, L. R., & Beil, C. (1992). Achievement Styles of Women Leaders and Their Peers: Toward an Understanding of Women and Leadership. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 16(1), 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1992.tb00238.x>

Once more: The rise of female leaders. (n.d.). <https://www.apa.org>. Retrieved 14 June 2024, from <https://www.apa.org/topics/women-girls/female-leaders>



Paustian-Underdahl, S. C., Walker, L. S., & Woehr, D. J. (2014). Gender and perceptions of leadership effectiveness: A meta-analysis of contextual moderators. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99(6), 1129–1145. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036751>

Peter G. Northouse. (2016b). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (Seventh edition). SAGE, Thousand Oaks, California.

Prime, J. L., Carter, N. M., & Welbourne, T. M. (2009). Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge”: Managers’ Stereotypic Perceptions of Women and Men Leaders. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, 12(1), 25–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10887150802371799>

RJ Ely, DL Rhode. (2010). *Handbook of leadership theory and practice*.

Rosener, J. B. (1990, November 1). Ways Women Lead. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/1990/11/ways-women-lead>

Rosener, J. B. (2011). Ways Women Lead. In P. Werhane & M. Painter-Morland (Eds.), *Leadership, Gender, and Organization* (pp. 19–29). Springer Netherlands. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-9014-0\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-9014-0_3)

Ryan, M., Haslam, S., Morgenroth, T., Rink, F., Stoker, J., & Peters, K. (2016). Getting on top of the glass cliff: Reviewing a decade of evidence, Explanations, And impact. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.10.008>

Sarah Pruitt. (2022b, March 2). What Are the Four Waves of Feminism? PublisherA&E Television Networks. <URLhttps://www.history.com/news/feminism-four-waves>

Sex differences in leadership. (2024). In Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sex\\_differences\\_in\\_leadership&oldid=1222089115](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sex_differences_in_leadership&oldid=1222089115)

Silva, S., & Mendis, K. (2017). Male vs Female Leaders: Analysis of Transformational, Transactional & Laissez-faire Women Leadership Styles. 09, 19 to 26.

Taylor, S. N., Sturm, R. E., Atwater, L. E., & Braddy, P. W. (2016). Underestimating one’s leadership impact: Are women leaders more susceptible? *Organizational Dynamics*, 45(2), 132–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2016.02.007>

van Knippenberg, D. (2020). Meaning-based leadership. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 10(1), 6–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386619897618>

Vinchur, A. J. (Ed.). (2018). *The Early Years of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/early-years-of-industrial-and-organizational-psychology/references/01651C993B32DD009028C275252089D8>

Walker, R. C., & Aritz, J. (2015). Women Doing Leadership: Leadership Styles and Organizational Culture. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 52(4), 452–478. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488415598429>

Werhane, P. H. (2007). Women Leaders in a Globalized World. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 74(4), 425–435. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-007-9516-z>

Weyer, B. (2007). Twenty years later: Explaining the persistence of the glass ceiling for women leaders. *Women in Management Review*, 22(6), 482–496. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420710778718>

Williams, R. (2003). Women on Corporate Boards of Directors and Their Influence on Corporate Philanthropy. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 42, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021626024014>

Wilson, M. S., & Clerkin, C. (2017). Elevating Women's Leadership in India: Issues and Insights. *NHRD Network Journal*, 10(4), 55–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974173920170412>

Zaccaro, S. J. (2007). Trait-based perspectives of leadership. *American Psychologist*, 62(1), 6–16. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.1.6>

Zaccaro, S. J., Foti, R. J., & Kenny, D. A. (1991). Self-monitoring and trait-based variance in leadership: An investigation of leader flexibility across multiple group situations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76(2), 308–315. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.76.2.308>