

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN LEADERS AND MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS IN IT INDUSTRY IN COIMBATORE

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Abstract:

In this study, researcher investigate the challenges of women leaders and managerial effectiveness in the IT industry in Coimbatore. The study is focused on two dimensions: workplace challenges, and managerial effectiveness.

A five-point scale instrument that measures leadership effectiveness (leading organization, leading people, leading self) was used to collect data. The participants (N = 187) was top and middle level managers that used IT for organizations' activities. Collected data were analyzed using a t test. The paper concludes that perceptions of leadership roles differ among the mid-level women leaders when compared to high-level women leaders. These findings are interpreted, and implications are discussed.

Key words: *leadership, leadership effectiveness, IT Industry, Women leaders, Coimbatore.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past three decades, the position of women in India has shifted significantly. The percentage of women attending school, college, and earning doctorates has climbed dramatically. Women hold the top positions of leadership in several professions and businesses. The response of society as a whole is receptive, yet some areas remain male-dominated. In other words, women continue to face obstacles in obtaining corporate executive leadership positions. Numerous companies are adopting leadership development programs geared only at achieving women in leadership positions. These programs identify roadblocks and challenges and then advise women on how to overcome them.

Women have experienced domestic and societal prejudice. Decades of social study and action have focused on gender disparity in various fields. However, gender inequality in organizational leadership has been shamefully neglected. Discrimination against women in the workplace has hindered their growth in positions that are more prestigious in men's eyes. Women in the workforce have consistently fought against not just horizontal segregation but also the division of men and women into gender-specific occupations. Women's advancement in managerial positions has not kept pace with the number of working women. Their presence at the level of senior management is negligible. There is a bottleneck at middle management levels, even though more women are graduating and assuming management roles.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The percentage of women engaged in the Indian IT industry has expanded significantly over the previous decade (Stalin et al., 2021, Raghuram et al., 2017). They now make up over 30 per cent of the workforce (Srinivasan et al., 2013). This accomplishment is partly hidden because most women working in IT businesses are in entry-level positions. At the same time, their representation decreases as they progress up the corporate ladder, and very few reach the boardroom.

The greater the level, the fewer female employees there are (Salini et al., 2020, Shyamsunder, 2014). Effective leadership involves persuading, inspiring, energizing, and acknowledging individuals to achieve a competitive edge for the business (Stalin et al., 2019).

Effective leadership involves assuring the company's progress, boosting organizational productivity, and promoting self-awareness, self-development, and self-improvement (Koochang et al., 2017). Leadership effectiveness is essential to the success of any company (Bryman et al., 2007; Hofmeyer et al., 2015).

Numerous traits are ascribed to good leadership, including leading change and innovation, inspiring, persuading, resolving conflict, listening, empowering subordinates, learning, and establishing connections (Paliszkievicz et al, 2014). Effective leadership influences positively work satisfaction, connection building, trust, knowledge management procedures, and better organizational performance (Dasborough MT, 2007; Mastrangelo et al., 2014). Effective leadership may favour people's trust, improve knowledge management procedures, and ultimately contribute to enhanced organizational performance.

The nature of the software services business in India presents professionals, particularly women professionals, with different obstacles (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). It is because the software industry has a unique global delivery model with long working hours (Scholarios & Marks, 2004), conference calls outside of the conventional working hours or fast-tracking a software project in shifts (Teagarden et al., 2008), and rapid technology changes that render skills quickly obsolete, necessitating software professionals to frequently re-skill by putting in extra training and educational hours (Armstrong et al., 2007).

Due to this highly demanding work environment, individuals feel obligated to upgrade their knowledge and abilities during their free time, often even forgoing holidays (Wang et al.,

2008). Married Indian women are subjected to more cultural pressure to abandon their employment than women in other significant emerging economies (Hewlett & Rashid, 2010).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research design is descriptive. The approach of the study is based on the main data and secondary data. The study relies mostly on the primary data obtained using a structured questionnaire to gain the thoughts of the respondents. The study is restricted to Coimbatore city. A convenient sampling method was employed in the study to acquire the data. The questionnaire was built with a Likert type scale, such as 5=highly satisfied and 1=highly dissatisfied. A total of 200 questionnaires have been issued to ten IT businesses in Coimbatore (20 firms; from each firm, 10 mid-level and 10 top-level women leaders) and of which 192 were received. After the evaluation of these questions, 5 questionnaires were eliminated on account of incomplete replies. Finally, 187 completed questionnaires were employed for the present investigation. T statistics were employed for the analysis.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 4.1 shows the Women Leaders challenges faced in IT industry

S. No.	Women Leaders challenges	Mid-level leaders(N=73)		High level leaders(N=114)		t -value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Fearing the Self Threat of Not Fitting-in	3.478	.056	3.714	.155	4.6964*
2	Balancing Personal and Professional Life	3.601	.298	3.722	.361	2.4079*
3	Getting Back after Career Breaks	3.403	.516	3.863	.096	9.0545*
4	Confidence gap	3.771	.703	3.805	.269	0.6766
5	Finding a support system	3.616	.421	3.711	.388	1.8905
6	Workplace harassment	3.703	.074	3.588	.128	-2.2885*
	Overall women Leaders challenges	3.596	.344	3.734	.232	2.7396*

Source: Primary data

*denotes significant at 5% level

The highly viewed variable for mid-level women leaders' challenges are 'Confidence gap' and 'Workplace harassment' since their mean scores are 3.703 and 3.771 respectively. Among the high level leaders, these are 'Getting Back after Career Breaks' and 'Confidence gap' since their mean scores are 3.805 and 3.863 respectively. Regarding the variables in women Leaders challenges, the significant difference among the two group of leaders have been noticed in all the

variables except ‘confidence gap’ and ‘finding a support system’ since their respective ‘t’ value are significant at five per cent level.

Since P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5 % level of significance with respect to Overall Women Leaders challenges. Hence there is a significant difference between mid-level and high level leaders in the IT industry in Coimbatore.

Table 4.2 shows the effectiveness of Leading Organization roles by women leaders

S. No.	Leading Organization roles	Mid-level leaders(N=73)		High level leaders(N=114)		t -value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Change	3.751	.722	3.811	.688	1.194
2	Innovation	3.647	.576	3.835	.772	3.741*
3	Influence	3.422	.096	3.683	.585	5.194*
4	Diversity and Inclusion	3.678	.488	3.927	.370	4.955*
	Overall Leading Organization roles	3.625	.471	3.814	.604	3.771*

Source: Primary data

*denotes significant at 5% level

The highly viewed variable for mid-level women leaders’ challenges are ‘Change’ and ‘Diversity and Inclusion’ since their mean scores are 3.678 and 3.751 respectively. Among the high level leaders, these are ‘Diversity and Inclusion’ and ‘Innovation’ with the mean score of 3.927 and 3.835 respectively. Regarding the variables in leading Organization roles, the significant difference among the two group of leaders have been noticed in all the variables except ‘change’ since their respective ‘t’ value are significant at five per cent level.

Since P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5 % level of significance with respect to Overall Women leading Organization roles. Hence there is a significant difference between mid-level and high level leaders in the IT industry in Coimbatore.

Table 4.3 shows the effectiveness of Leading People roles by women leaders

S. No.	Leading People roles	Mid-level leaders(N=73)		High level leaders(N=114)		t -value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Motivation	3.569	.711	3.807	.532	4.7362*
2	Listening	3.508	.709	3.711	.631	4.0397*
3	Empowerment	3.711	.498	3.838	.075	2.5273*
4	Interpersonal Communication	3.699	.509	3.905	.477	4.0994*
5	Building Relationship	3.588	.367	3.753	.381	3.2835*

6	Conflict	3.492	.585	3.677	.479	3.6815*
	Overall Leading People roles	3.595	.563	3.782	.429	3.7279*

Source: Primary data *denotes significant at 5% level

The highly viewed variable for mid-level women leaders' challenges are 'Empowerment' and 'Interpersonal Communication' since their mean scores are 3.711 and 3.699 respectively. Among the high level leaders, these are 'Interpersonal Communication' and 'Empowerment' with the mean score of 3.905 and 3.838 respectively. Regarding the variables in Leading People roles, the significant difference among the two group of leaders have been noticed in all the variables since their respective 't' value are significant at five per cent level.

Since P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5 % level of significance with respect to Overall Leading People roles. Hence there is a significant difference between mid-level and high level leaders in the IT industry in Coimbatore.

Table 4.4 shows the effectiveness of Leading Self roles by women leaders

S. No.	Leading Self roles	Mid-level leaders(N=73)		High level leaders(N=114)		t -value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Values/Principles	3.689	.571	3.797	.311	2.149*
2	Self-awareness	3.681	.623	3.723	.538	.836
3	Feedback	3.712	.506	3.789	.642	1.413
4	Managing Time	3.603	.377	3.733	.409	2.468*
5	Learning	3.736	.489	3.778	.216	0.915
	Overall Leading Self roles	3.6846	0.5132	3.7628	0.4232	1.556

Source: Primary data *denotes significant at 5% level

The highly viewed variable for mid-level women leaders' challenges are 'Learning' and 'feedback' since their mean scores are 3.736 and 3.712 respectively. Among the high level leaders, these are 'Values/Principles' and 'Feedback' with the mean score of 3.797 and 3.789 respectively. Regarding the variables in *Leading Self roles*, the significant difference among the two group of leaders have been noticed in all the variables except 'Self-awareness', 'Feedback' and 'Learning' since their respective 't' value are significant at five per cent level.

Since P value is higher than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted at 5 % level of significance with respect to *Overall Leading Self roles*. Hence there is no significant difference between mid-level and high level leaders in the IT industry in Coimbatore regarding the *Leading Self roles*.

5. IMPLICATIONS

This study's findings suggest that women leaders are more effective at all levels of management. Women continue to believe the self-confidence gap is low and must be addressed. Women leaders anticipate an end to workplace bullying and harassment and equality devoid of gender prejudice. Obtaining a new job or returning to an old one was one of the most significant

obstacles people encountered. This issue requires consideration by the IT management. Their male counterparts reject women leaders' efforts to change the management. Their male team members mistreat the creativity, diversity and Inclusion of female leaders.

Women leaders are generally seen as having superior communication abilities. Communication is crucial leadership ability. This distinctive leadership quality may indicate that women are superior to males as decision-making and also transparency is enhanced by excellent communication.

Women leaders appreciate the organization's ideals and principles. They are willing to modify them depending on the input of their employees. They consistently demonstrate an interest in learning. For the IT industry to develop at a healthy rate, it must address the above mentioned factors and seek solutions.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that to boost women's engagement in the IT business; firms must prioritize women's leadership-related policies. Mid-level women should strive to complement one another's efforts by working together. However, the most significant alterations must be made to the position of women in society and the household. To swiftly adapt to change and address internal and external problems, female leaders should acquire and develop the necessary abilities.

The following may assist in achieving the goal: equal pay and work, flexible employment contracts, promoting women's careers, more flexible working settings, performance-based assessments, women's encouragement via the media, expanding women's labour and employment and visibility, regular and systematic statistics of women's labour.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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