

Challenges of Women in Leadership Roles During Pandemic

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 8

Special Issue: 1

Month: February

Year: 2021

P-ISSN: 2321-4643

E-ISSN: 2581-9402

Impact Factor: 3.122

Received: 20.01.2021

Accepted: 18.02.2021

Published: 26.02.2021

Citation:

Jayant, Savitri, and R. Suji Raga Priya. "Challenges of Women in Leadership Roles During Pandemic." *Shanlax International Journal of Management*, vol. 8, no. S1, 2021, pp. 29–37.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/management.v8iS1-Feb2021.3755>

Dr. Savitri Jayant

*Professor & HOD, Department of HRM & General Management
ISBR Business School, Bangalore*

M. R. Suji Raga Priya

*Research Associate
Human Resource Department, ISBR Business School, Bangalore*

Abstract

Women around the world are paving the way for an inspiring style of leadership that is dynamic, confident, authentic, and highly effective. It is evident that the countries led by women leaders seem to have been particularly successful in fighting the Coronavirus. The rapid transition to remote employment has taken about other problems for organisations, for successful performance assessment, monitoring, and transparency are often a challenge. The new dilemma focuses around how senior leaders should rethink in decision making and other ways that promote trust, innovation, and cooperation. Therefore, Woman leaders during this pandemic situation are faced with certain challenges that require them to readjust and reorganize to establish a balance between work-related and family-related characteristics. This research paper analysis how female leaders are feeling the impact of the pandemic and how they are expanding their leadership style and also how they influence in work today and beyond. This paper is based on the pilot study conducted among Women with leadership roles working in IT and Educational sector. A Survey with in-depth interview and questionnaire has been used to collect the data and it is analysed through a comparative and regression study. The study also focuses on acute challenges faced by Women working in leadership roles from home and ways to improve the quality and to aspire to boost the standard of leadership in these tumultuous times.

Keywords: Women, leadership, Pandemic, Challenges

Introduction

The latest outbreak of the coronavirus raises unparalleled management problems to business executives and beyond. COVID-19's humanitarian toll raises concern among staff and other stakeholders. The large size and the utter unpredictability of the epidemic render it impossible for managers to react. The epidemic is indeed characterized by a disaster at the "landscape scale": an unexpected event that results in a large volume of uncertainty that causes disorientation, loss of coordination, and volatility of emotion. When leaders recognise a condition as such, they'll start reacting. However, they cannot respond in a regular emergency by enforcing advance plans.

A small number of company-level executives cannot gather information or draw action efficiently enough to function effectively. This helps mobilise their teams by identifying clear action agendas and motivating others to define and incorporate objectives responsive to these targets. While the team network is a well-known system, it is worth pointing out that very few businesses have expertise in applying it.

Efficient team networks show many characteristics independent of their technical spectrum. They are multidisciplinary. Experience indicates that crises are difficult to include professionals from various disciplines. They are supposed to behave. It is not enough to simply request experts' ideas; experts need to compile knowledge, formulate strategies, introduce and improve

Leaders can promote cooperation and openness across the team network. One way of doing this is by spreading authority and exchanging knowledge, that is to demonstrate how the teams can run themselves. In crisis circumstances, the instinct of a leader could consist of enhancing the decision-making authority and managing facts on a purely informed basis. Instead, teams are expected to follow suit.

Leaders in the Crisis: The Importance of 'Deliberate Peace' and 'Bound Hope'

Senior leaders must therefore ensure that they enable the best individuals in the team network to take crisis management decisions. As policy makers probably make errors, they must learn fast and make changes without overreacting or paralysing the organisation. Senior officials will have to appoint new decision makers at the start of a crisis. When a scenario develops, new participants in crisis management will emerge in the networks of teams. These leaders are not usually senior managers.

Members experience the best quality of daily disasters. Character is a central element of recent landscape crises. Crisis management leaders must be capable of unifying teams for a common goal and of formulating questions for inquiry. The best thing is to demonstrate many attributes.

"Bonded optimism," or faith mixed with realism, is another significant attribute. If leaders demonstrate disproportionate confidence despite clearly challenging circumstances, they will lose legitimacy at an early stage in a crisis. For leaders to develop trust that the organisation can find a way through its challenging circumstances, but also to demonstrate that they understand the uncertainty of the problem and have started to grapple with it by obtaining further knowledge. If the problem is finished, hope would be more useful (and can be far less bounded).

Make Decisions under Uncertainty: Avoid Evaluating and Expecting

Leaders can help deal with confusion and by constantly gathering knowledge as the situation progresses and watching how well their solutions perform.

In fact, this also involves pausing from crisis control, analysing the scenario from different perspectives, anticipating what might come next, and finally responding. Although certain times during the crisis call for decisive intervention, with little opportunity to evaluate or anticipate, policymakers can inevitably take chances to pause, reflect and plan ahead before going on.

Two cognitive habits can help leaders evaluate and predict. One, named updating, includes revising proposals focused on gathering fresh information teams and improving expertise. Second, let leaders evaluate current and future actions and determine whether to alter, implement, or discard them. Updating and doubting support leaders mediate their duelling instincts in conceiving ideas focused on what they've achieved before, and bring out new and practical concepts.

The World need Empathy not Sympathy

Being in a leadership role, Empathy plays an very important role. It helps you to assess what the consequences of your choices and behaviours would be on viewers, and to strategize accordingly. Without empathy, team members cannot be nurtured, nor will a new breed of leaders be conceived.

Good Communication: Openness and Regular

Neither strategy reassures. As Amy Edmondson recently said, “Transparency is ‘task one’ for crisis leaders. Be transparent on what you know, what you don’t know, and what you do to understand more.” Reflective, regular feedback indicates leaders are watching the scenario and changing their reactions. Optimistic, realistic perspective will have a powerful impact on staff and other partners, motivating them to help the turnaround of the business.

The coronavirus pandemic tests business and organisational leaders in every industry around the globe. Its effects may linger indefinitely, posing larger challenges than anybody anticipates. The prolonged instability causes leaders to adopt different strategies to implement work from home. Individuals who behave in a pro-active manner will support their organizations and families prepare for this bigger scale crisis.

Literature Review

Kloot in 2004, studied Australian public sector universities, gender discrimination at senior levels has long been identified as a major concern. Via policies for the recruiting and retention of senior women, universities are trying to resolve the problem. This paper explains what occurred when three women were promoted to lead divisions of one faculty of a major university that has such gender equality policies. All three died by the end of the year. The women encountered a system of male-oriented management, with no experience of the ideals of feminine management. There were separate views of leadership positions and different perceptions of alternative career prospects for women and men. For these senior women, gender issues were more apparent, but stayed unknown to men. Suggestions to enhance the retention of senior women include the recruitment of a reform agent to provide senior women with resources and guidance, more open management procedures and systems, and improvements in recruiting practices.

Porterfield et al, 2005 states that Over the years, women’s leadership positions have changed drastically. Women have often had leadership potential and desire; however, they were unable to advance in leadership roles due to political, economic and cultural constraints. Latest findings indicate that conventional productivity disparities have dropped dramatically. Recently, a gender comparison in emotional intelligence showed a substantial gap in female favour. Changes in leadership continue independently of gender and social stereotypes. Future attention would certainly pursue the direction of women in leadership positions.

Place et al, 2018 says that the very little study attempts have been made into gender and public relations leadership. My study on the role of women in public relations often illustrates the importance of research on gender issues. Specifically, our study showed that most leadership and gender research emphasizes women’s leadership participation, reasons leading to women’s lack of presence, leadership types and desires, and women’s leadership and management positions. This manuscript offers suggestions to improve women’s participation in leadership positions, particularly in providing a roadmap for potential research opportunities. This involve implications for quantitative methods, leadership approaches and study positions, leadership styles, behavioral transformation, and schooling.

Chin et al, 2011 gives a brief study on how Women are also pushed towards greater social equity at home and at college. Yet, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles and still

considered an exception compared to men in high leadership positions, particularly in higher education institutions. In analysing variations between how men and women lead, they sometimes do less than in their different interactions as they lead. Stereotypic gender role assumptions may restrict their leadership behaviours. Perceived incongruity between women and leadership positions creates challenges to leadership, resulting in dual ties, more unfavourable success evaluations, and differing expectations relative to males. It's becoming abundantly evident that a gender-neutral leadership perspective is inadequate, and we need to recognise the impact of societal worldviews and socialisation on influencing leadership style. There's enough to say that female leadership models are deliberately different—more collaborative and transformative than men. This gets more nuanced with social and ethnic diversity aspects. We could transform our leadership beliefs and foster better theories and varied examples of successful leadership. Although modern leadership theories support transformational and inclusive leadership types, corporate cultures also reflect cultural expectations of gender and ethnicity. In higher education organisations, there is also a conflict between hierarchical and inclusive leadership forms embodied in contrasting activities. Although leaders can have an edge in such situations, they often face challenges in shifting corporate environments that mirror societal prejudices toward women as leaders.

Vasavada 2012, This study focuses on woman representatives in non-profit organisations (NPOs) and suggests a mechanism to reduce these women's problems. Taking a cultural feminist viewpoint, the paper discusses non-profit leadership in India, but the suggested structure can be applied in organisations worldwide...

Madsen et al, 2012, studied the post-secondary organisations which failed to attract capable, productive leaders to step into crucial management roles. One explanation for the continuing shortage of prepared leaders is that few women in higher education are now in a position to play those important positions. This summary of the topic addresses the relevance and relations of HRD, leadership growth, higher education, and women's leadership initiatives in higher education. It illustrates the overall problem of the topic, its intent, the technique used, and its importance to practise. Concerns regarding the absence of women in leadership roles in higher education contexts are introduced, and the particular aspects of this complex Special Topic are highlighted along with a concise introduction of each post. This topic would include frameworks for researchers and practitioners in different fields of study to use in the growth, evaluation, and research of women's leadership initiatives in higher education and beyond.

Surawicz et al, 2016 gave a detailed report on the proportion of females in leadership position in medical school and medical college. There are many reasons regarding women becoming underrepresented in clinical medicine. Two subjects include invisible wall of glass and leaked pipes. (The loss of women faculty along the path, or pipeline, to advancement). Both aspects appear to be concerned. Glass ceiling problems appear to be of two types: structural culture issues and bias issues, particularly implicit bias. Leaky pipeline problems involve work-life transition difficulties and women's leadership growth need.

Bhattacharya et al, (2018), discusses the main factors that promote women's elevation to leadership positions in India's IT and ITES-enabled services industry. Using several case studies, it followed interview-based exploratory case study approach and collected observational evidence using semi-structured interviews. The study established essential person and organisational influences that promote women's leadership advancement. The results are useful for human resources and diversity professionals to build gender-balanced, responsive leadership in organisations that can draw, maintain and grow women's leadership talent

Chanana, 2020 claimed that in view of gender leadership roles, most women are concentrated in lower level academic positions. Women scholars have identified the conflict between personal

and professional life. Hence the circumstance is insufficient to understand exclusion of women from senior-level academic positions. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced a nationwide scheme to equip women in diverse careers. Gender inclusivity project has a positive impact on gender equity in higher educational institution. The initiative has inspired many women in the region, and created a wide reaching network of them.

Objective of the Study

- To Study Challenges faced by Women in leadership Role in Educational & IT sector.
- To evaluate the impact of independent factors like Different leadership Style, different strategy, Trust, Communication, Learning and development on Productivity through Regression Analysis.
- Comparative study between Experience and Productivity & Age and Work Life Balance using Paired sample T-test

Research Methodology

This paper is about the study of challenges of women in leadership roles during pandemic. Primary data is collected through a set of questionnaires during the month of Jan – Feb 2021 from employees who are working from home in Educational and IT Sector for about six months. Secondary Data is collected through Newspapers, Magazines, and Research papers published from 2004 to current year. Data Sampling Size was 100 respondents, With IT & Educational Sector. Non Probability Random Sampling Technique is used. SPSS software is used to analyse data – Descriptive statistics, Regression, paired sample t- test.

Data Analysis

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std.	Variance	Skew	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Sector	100	1.39	.567	.321	1.126	.241	.307	.478
Age	100	2.85	.672	.452	-.018	.241	-.331	.478
Current Position	100	2.11	.345	.119	1.750	.241	3.763	.478
No. of Subordinates	100	2.43	.756	.571	-.905	.241	-.656	.478
Experience	100	2.18	.500	.250	.333	.241	.367	.478
Work from Home calls for a different leadership style when compared to office environment	100	1.22	.416	.173	1.373	.241	-.119	.478
Work from Home/ Virtual working is difficult for leadership Roles	100	2.99	.927	.858	-.058	.241	-1.684	.478
Virtual Work from home requires a different strategy when compared to office work	100	.22	.416	.173	1.373	.241	-.119	.478
Work from Home is difficult while adhering to organizational culture	100	1.22	.416	.173	1.373	.241	-.119	.478

E- Leadership creates communication barriers with/among team mates	100	2.17	.620	.385	-.126	.241	-.464	.478
Trust among my team members was disrupted while working from Home	100	2.28	.604	.365	.347	.241	.290	.478
Work from home has led to increased Work load/Work Hours	100	1.08	.273	.074	3.144	.241	8.043	.478
According to you, Productivity remains the same whether it is work from office or Work from Home	100	1.20	.402	.162	1.523	.241	.325	.478
Level of satisfaction with your famil's support	100	2.19	.971	.943	.822	.241	.924	.478
Work from Home for prolonged period of time has disrupted Work Life Balance	100	2.01	.689	.475	-.013	.241	-.855	.478
Authority and Autonomy with your Job Role remains the same whether it is WFH/ WFO	100	1.26	.463	.215	1.418	.241	.802	.478
WFH because of the pandemichas								
affected your scope for learning and development in the last fewmonths	100	3.58	.713	.509	-.714	.241	1.111	.478
WFH has deprived you of your personal and proffesional space	100	2.06	.776	.602	.556	.241	.238	.478
Valid N (list wise)	100							

Regression Analysis

Table 2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.840a	.748	.723	.41828

a. Predictors: (Constant), Different Leadership Style, Different Strategy, Communication, Trust, Family Support, Learning and development

Table 2: Shows Model Summary of Regression Analysis, R value = 0.840, R Square value = 0.748 and Adjusted R square Value = 0.723. R value is high hence proving 84 % significance value between Dependent and independent variable.

Table 3 ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	19.688	5	3.938	22.506	.000 ^b
Residual	16.271	93	.175		
Total	35.960	98			

a. Dependent Variable: Productivity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Different Leadership Style, Different Strategy, Communication, Trust, Family Support, Learning and development

Table 3: Shows Anova Result, P value is less than 0.05, Hence showing significant results

Table 4 Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.903	.439		6.619	.000
Different Leadership Style	.190	.081	.187	1.57	.000
Different Strategy	-.023	.130	-.016	-.176	.004
Communication	.219	.077	.223	2.834	.006
Trust	.190	.088	.183	2.154	.003
Family Support	-.040	.047	-.065	-.854	.002
Learning and Development	.652	.074	.770	8.864	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Productivity

Table 4: Shows Coefficient values of each independent variable. Since all the p value is less than 0.05. Proving highly significant relationship between Productivity and independent variables (Different Leadership Style, Different Strategy, Communication, Trust, Family Support, Learning and Development)

Compare Means: Paired Sample T- Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Experience - Productivity	-3.83838	.77863	.07826	-3.99368	-3.68309	-49.049	98	.000
Pair 2	Age - Work Life Balance	-3.39394	1.44856	.14559	-3.68285	-3.10503	-23.312	98	.000

Table 5: Shows Paired sample T test, A comparative mean analysis between two pairs one is Experience and Productivity have p value <0.05, highly significant and the other pair between Age and Work Life Balance having P<0.05, Proving significant relationship.

Key Findings

From Respondents statements, The key challenges faced by Women are implementing Different leadership style, Communication barrier, Different strategy, Building Trust, Prolonged Working Hours in Home, Work life Balance, Experience, Family Support, Scope of learning and development.

Regression Analysis, R value = 0.840 , R Square value = 0.748 and Adjusted R square Value = 0.723. R value is high hence proving 84 % significance value between Dependent and independent variable. Anova Result, P value is less than 0.05, Hence showing significant results. Coefficient values of each independent variable. Since all the p value is less than 0.05. Proving highly significant relationship between Productivity and independent variables (Different Leadership Style, Different Strategy, Communication, Trust, Family Support, Learning and Development) A comparative mean analysis between two pairs one is Experience and Productivity have p value <0.05, highly significant and the other pair between Age and Work Life Balance having P<0.05, Proving significant relationship.

Conclusion

A real measure of leadership and understanding happens over the duration of a journey. Here are approaches the executives may further resolve the problems that can arise when handling the crisis, and maintain seamless remote work. To accommodate the circumstance, consider the team's desires and operate on them. However, you cannot behave appropriately on the surface if you are not sensitive to the circumstance. So it's best to recognize the crisis and step on. Ignoring the condition would contribute only to more panic, confusion, and apathy from the staff. Communicate to be more receptive. Being Empathetic towards teams is one of the important quality for a leadership role. The challenges faced by Women leaders during Work from Home are implementing Different leadership style, Communication barrier, Different strategy, Building Trust, Prolonged Working Hours in Home, Work life Balance, Experience, Family Support, Scope of learning and development. There is a significant relationship between Productivity and challenging factor, as R – value is 0.8. P value from Anova and Sample Paired T test is less than 0.05. Therefore Building a strong relationship between dependent and independent challenging factors.

References

1. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/leadership-in-a-crisis-responding-to-the-coronavirus-outbreak-and-future-challenges#>
2. Chin, J. L. (2011). Women and Leadership: Transforming Visions and Current Contexts. In Forum on Public Policy Online (Vol. 2011, No. 2). Oxford Round Table. 406 West Florida Avenue, Urbana, IL61801.
3. Kloot, L. (2004). Women and leadership in universities: a case study of women academic managers. International Journal of Public Sector Management.
4. Bhattacharya, S., Mohapatra, S., & Bhattacharya, S. (2018). Women advancing to leadership positions: a qualitative study of women leaders in IT and ITES sector in India. South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management, 5(2),150-172.
5. Chanana, K. (2020). Women and leadership: Strategies of gender inclusion in institutions of higher education in India. In Strategies for Supporting Inclusion and Diversity in the Academy (pp. 141-162). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
6. Place, K. R., & Vardeman-Winter, J. (2018). Where are the women? An examination of research on women and leadership in public relations. Public Relations Review, 44(1),165-173.
7. Porterfield, J., & Kleiner, B. H. (2005). A new era: Women and leadership. Equal opportunities international.

8. Surawicz, C. M. (2016). Women in leadership: why so few and what to do about it. *Journal of the American College of Radiology*, 13(12),1433-1437.
9. Longman, K. A., & Anderson, P. S. (2016). Women in leadership: The future of Christian higher education. *Christian Higher Education*, 15(1-2),24-37.
- 10.Madsen, S. R. (2012). Women and leadership in higher education: Learning and advancement in leadership programs. *Advances in developing Human resources*, 14(1),3-10.
- 11.Vasavada, T. (2012). A cultural feminist perspective on leadership in nonprofit organizations: A case of women leaders in India. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 462-503.