

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN INDIA: POSITION, CHALLENGES, AND WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

“Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good.”

-Joanne Ciulla (Author and Educator)

Every organization needs a leader irrespective of its size, purpose, and functions. Leadership is not gender-specific. Leaders can be either men or women. Women in leadership positions in India are always an issue that is often discussed and still a matter of debate. This is mainly due to the position of women in Indian society, where women are not given a chance to prove themselves in leadership positions, especially in the corporate world, and they are often seen as a liability to the organization they work for. But now, this is changing slowly but surely as more and more women start their businesses and take up leading positions in many organizations, as well as in politics or research fields. Women are now making their presence felt in leadership roles in every field, like politics, entrepreneurship, administration, education, engineering, research, health, or AI. but they still face a set of challenges in assuming these roles. The way forward for women in leadership in India is to continue building a support system for them. Many studies proved that women are better leaders, as they have qualities that make a good leader, like a positive attitude, optimism, good communication skills, loyalty, commitment, and many more. Training and development can help them to make more successful.

Keywords: Leadership, Women, Organisation, India.

Introduction

Throughout history, it has been recognized that the difference between success and failure, whether in a war, a business, a protest movement, or a game, can be attributed largely to leadership. Leadership may be defined as a position of power held by an individual in a group that provides him with an opportunity to exercise interpersonal influences on the group members for mobilizing and directing their efforts toward certain goals. The leader is at the center of the group, keeps the group together, infuses life into it, moves it towards its goal, and maintains its strength. leadership position exists in every group setting irrespective of the size purpose or functions of an organization.

Leadership is a quality in a human being to induce others to do whatever they are directed to do with zeal and confidence. It is a quality or ability of an individual to pursue others to see defined objectives enthusiastically. There are many different views on what is meant by “leadership”. *Tannenbaum* defines leadership as interpersonal influence, exercised in situations and directed, through

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the communication process, towards the attainment of goals. This definition is similar to that of Terry who also describes leadership as “the relationship in which one person or the leader influences others to work together willingly on combined tasks to attain that which the leader desires”.

Gender Stereotypes in Leadership

Gender stereotyping is the practice of ascribing specific characteristics or roles to a woman or man simply because of his or her membership in a social group of women or men. A stereotype is harmful when it limits the ability of women or men to develop their abilities, pursue their professional careers, and make their own choices about their lives. Discrimination against women includes those differences in treatment that exist because of attitudes and behavior based on stereotypical expectations of women. Stereotyping is a major hindrance for women in leadership positions. As the world is often perceived as a male-dominated place, this can be attributed to existing patriarchal beliefs and other socio-cultural constraints, due to which Indian women find it difficult to liberate themselves from the challenges associated with gender stereotypical roles. The social and cultural beliefs of our society encourage gendered family roles of women taking care of our families. It is the Indian culture that has programmed us to believe that the only place for a woman is at home to meet the needs of her family. Only because of this mentality, women occupying some positions are not considered equal to men. Even today Indian women are the protectors of the country's culture, civilization, and religion. They are not expected to go out to work, especially in the corporate sector, or politics, or work long hours. Women are more acceptable in general female jobs when they are in key positions. Because Indian men suffer from an inferiority complex when they have to work under a woman.

In recent years the pathway for female leaders has been expanding. Women have made remarkable progress in obtaining higher education which not only facilitates their career growth but also positions them for leadership roles. Although tremendous strides have been made in this aspect, there is still a fundamental lack of women in leadership roles. Women and men are seen as equally good business leaders, but gender stereotypes persist. Now we need an equal and enabled world for women. A world where women are not deprived of their basic rights and don't need to fight for what they deserve. Many Indian women have already worked hard for their rights and achieved great heights breaking the glass ceiling in various fields for a long time with courage and the will to shatter the stereotypes of society, Indian women have come a long way today. There is a number of Indian women who have performed extraordinarily in their respective fields and are seen as role model by the young girls of our country. Here is the list of some of the prominent contemporary women personalities: Ahilyabai Holkar, Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali., Savitribai Phule, Anandi Gopal Joshi, Indira Gandhi, Indra Nooyi, Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chanda Kochhar, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw and many more.

Women in leadership roles have had a significant impact on many fields. They have helped to change the way we think about and deal with gender issues. They have also helped to change the way we view leadership.

Leadership Roles in Various Fields

When women become leaders, they provide different skills and imaginative perspectives. More importantly, female leaders bring structural and cultural differences to the table, which drive effective solutions. This creative standpoint and unique sense of awareness will also allow them to study and uncover the finer details that may go unmissed by others. Now women in every field are playing their leadership roles very well. Be it technology, education, politics, media, or any other -

- **Women in leadership roles in the tech industry:** Women have come a long way in the technology industry, and there are now many women in leadership roles. There has been a recent increase in women in leadership roles in the tech industry, and there are many reasons for this. Firstly, more women are getting involved in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) subjects at school, and the tech industry is starting to take notice. Secondly, the tech industry is becoming more inclusive, and companies are recognizing that diversity is key to their success. This means that not only are women being appointed to leadership roles, but they are also being allowed to showcase their skills in a variety of ways. Lastly, the tech industry is undergoing a lot of change, and this is giving women the opportunity to show their abilities in a number of new ways. For example, women are now playing a major role in developing app development and digital marketing strategies or in the field of AI.
- **Women in leadership roles in the non-profit sector:** In the non-profit sector, women are making a name for themselves in leadership roles. There are many reasons for this, but the

most important one is that non-profits are seeking ways to be more sustainable. When a non-profit is seeking to become more sustainable, the leaders must be from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. This includes women.

- **Women in leadership roles in the business world:** Women are working both at home and excelling at the workplace. They are one of the greatest examples of maintaining a work-life balance. Women entrepreneurs in India from all age groups and backgrounds are constantly breaking stereotypes and changing the business scenario. There has been a recent push to have more women in leadership roles in the business world where there are so many growth opportunities.
- **Women in leadership roles in the healthcare industry:** There are many women in leadership roles in the healthcare industry. This includes doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals. There are a few reasons why women should consider a career in the healthcare industry. First, the healthcare industry is growing rapidly. According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics, the healthcare industry is expected to grow by about 17 percent between 2016 and 2026. This means more jobs and opportunities for women in the healthcare industry.

Second, the demand for healthcare services is increasing. This is because more and more people are getting older and requiring more healthcare services. As the population ages, the demand for healthcare services is likely to continue to increase. Overall, the healthcare industry is growing, and there are many opportunities for women in the healthcare industry. However, women face challenges in terms of leadership roles and gender-based discrimination.

- **Women in leadership roles in the education sector:** Women in leadership roles in the education sector are making great strides. Working in the education sector has always been a comfortable area for women. They are becoming more visible and are taking on a larger role in the field. There are many reasons for this and one of the main reasons is that women are becoming more educated. In the past, women were not given the same education opportunities as men. They were not given the same opportunities to learn and were not given the same opportunities to achieve in the field. However, this is no longer the case. Women are now receiving the same education opportunities as men and are achieving great things in the field.

Women are now entering the field of education in large numbers whether it is normal education or technical or medicine or any other. They are becoming more visible and are taking on a larger role in the field.

- **Women in leadership roles in the engineering sector:** Women in leadership roles in the engineering sector are paving the way for a new era of success. Women are not only excelling in traditionally male-dominated fields, but they are also leading the way in some of the most innovative fields. There are several reasons why women are excelling in leadership roles in engineering. First, they are breaking down the barriers that have been put in place. Women are not only leading the way in their field, but they are also setting a new standard for the rest of the world. Now women are coming up with new ideas and solutions that are not only innovative but also help solve some of the biggest challenges facing the engineering sector. Women are exhibiting strong leadership skills. They are not only leading their teams but also setting an example for the rest of the engineering community.
- **Women in leadership roles in the arts and entertainment industry:** The arts and entertainment industry has been traditionally dominated by men. However, this is no longer the case. More and more women are joining the ranks of leadership in the arts and entertainment industry. Women are leading in the arts and entertainment industry because women are more open-minded than men and they are more creative, more collaborative, more sensitive to others, more perceptive, and more integrative and strategic. There are many talented women in the arts and entertainment industry, and giving them the recognition they deserve is important.
- **Women in leadership roles in the media and communications industry:** When it comes to women in leadership roles in the media and communications industry, there are many to choose from. From journalists to editors, broadcasters to social media managers, countless women are leading the charge in this field. Women now form 52% of TV news reporters, 20% of radio newscasters, and 13% of print reporters in India. Homai Vyrawalla (9 December 1913 – 15 January 2012), was India's first woman photojournalist. Since then, many other women have made a name for themselves in the media and communications industry. Some of the most

famous women include Faye D'Souza, Nidhi Razdan, Madhu Trehan, Shereen Bhan, and Shaili Chopra. While the media and communications industry has traditionally been dominated by men, this is starting to change. Women are now making up a larger percentage of the workforce in this field, and there are many great women leaders in this field

- **Women in leadership roles in the sports world:** There is no doubt that women have made great strides in the sports world. From playing and coaching at a young age in various games women are doing great in the field of athletics, cricket, wrestling, chess, tennis, and more. There are so many well-known names as Indian sportswomen like Marrycom, Fogat sisters, Deepika Kumari, Saniya Mirza, Saina Nehwal, and Mitali Raj who made India proud by winning medals, set a benchmark and has become role model for generations to come. They've broken the chains and are now on a mission to empower millions of Indian women. Indian sportswomen have to make a remarkable road to distinction and success as a leader.
- **Women in leadership roles in the food and beverage industry:** Food and beverage is an industry that is growing rapidly and with that, there is a growing number of women in leadership roles. Within the food and beverage industry, there are women in leadership roles in departments such as marketing, sales, production, and distribution. Some of the most well-known women in leadership roles in the food and beverage industry include Indira Nooyi, the president and CEO of PepsiCo Americas Beverages; Shelly Lazarus, the president and CEO of Coca-Cola North America; and Natalie Bond, the president, and CEO of Mondelez International.

To be successful in a leadership role in the food and beverage industry, it is important to have both the technical and business skills necessary. Additionally, it is important to be able to communicate well and be able to work cooperatively with others.

As we saw that now women are making their presence in every field in a remarkable positions and having a leadership roles. It is very important for changing the world and empowering women. Because their increasing role not only increased diversity in decision-making, creativity, and innovation in fields but also boosts the confidence of other women. But there is still a long way to go will end the old beliefs by giving equal rights to women in society. There are, of course, also some challenges that women in leadership roles face. These include:

Challenges and Way Forward for the Leadership Role of Women in India

Challenges of Women's Leadership

There are several leadership challenges faced by women in India, including cultural and societal barriers, gender bias, lack of access to resources and opportunities, and discriminatory laws and policies. Despite these challenges, many women have been breaking barriers and making strides in leadership roles in various fields.

- **Cultural and social barriers:** One of the biggest challenges faced by women in India is the deep-rooted cultural and societal norms that reinforce gender roles and limit women's opportunities. Women are often expected to prioritize their roles as wives and mothers over their careers, and they face discrimination in the workplace and society at large.
- **Family responsibilities:** Women often have to balance family responsibilities with their job or business which can limit the amount of time and resources they have available to dedicate efforts to their duty. This is a big challenge for women especially in a leadership roles when they have to pay extra attention in the workplace with their family responsibilities.
- **Lack of resources:** Another challenge is the lack of access to resources and opportunities, including education, finance, and networking. This limits women's ability to develop their skills and advance their careers. Additionally, discriminatory laws and policies, such as the wage gap and limited maternity leave, make it difficult for women to be successful.
- **Challenges in raising funds:** Raising funds for women in business can be challenging due to several reasons, like lack of networks because women may have limited access to networks of investors and mentors, which makes it difficult for them to secure funding for their businesses. Women may have limited assets or collateral to put up as security for loans, which can make it harder for them to access traditional funding sources. Investors may view women-led businesses as riskier than those led by men, which can make it more challenging for women to secure funding. Many women may not have the financial literacy or knowledge necessary to navigate the funding landscape and make informed decisions about fundraising options.

- **Challenges in gaining trust and confidence from others:** Gaining trust and confidence from others can be a challenge for women as leaders due to various factors, including stereotypes and biases. Women may not receive the same level of support and mentorship as men which makes it harder to build confidence and establish themselves as a leader.
- **Different performance standards and expectations:** There are different performance expectations and standards for male and female employees working at the same level, pay parity, and always a lack of support from mentors and sponsors. Women may be evaluated differently than men with a greater emphasis on interpersonal skills and likability rather than competence and performance. Social biases lead to assumptions about women's abilities and roles.

Despite these challenges, there are several ways forward for women in leadership roles in India. Firstly, there needs to be a concerted effort to change cultural and societal norms that reinforce gender bias and discrimination. This can be done through education and awareness campaigns, as well as policy changes that promote gender equality. Secondly, there needs to be greater access to resources and opportunities for women, including education, finance, and networking. This can be achieved through government policies that prioritize women's empowerment and economic development, as well as private sector initiatives that promote gender diversity and inclusion. Thirdly, there needs to be a concerted effort to promote women in leadership roles, including through mentorship and leadership development programs. This can help to build a pipeline of talented and qualified women who can take on leadership roles in various fields. Finally, there needs to be greater representation of women in government and politics, which can help to ensure that policies and laws are more inclusive and promote gender equality. This can also serve as a role model for women in other sectors to aspire to leadership roles. Overall there are significant challenges faced by women in leadership roles in India, there are also while many opportunities to promote gender equality and empower women to succeed in various fields. By addressing these challenges and promoting greater gender diversity and inclusion, India can unlock the full potential of its women and achieve greater social and economic progress. Women face various challenges when trying to rise to positions of leadership. To overcome these challenges, companies need to educate the public about the changing times and the diversities women bring to women's work, empower women at all levels of leadership, and increase the number of women in senior leadership roles. Companies should welcome women on the corporate ladder and encourage hiring women in middle management and senior leadership roles. This will further help to combat the challenge of very few women at the top of the corporate ladder. Additionally, organizations should create programs to encourage empowering women and create a sense of belonging. Finally, they should work towards educating people about gender diversity and its importance in achieving organizational goals. Companies should strive to create a culture of gender equality and ensure that there is no gender-based discrimination in the workplace. Additionally, companies should also take steps to support female employees by providing them with flexibility in terms of working hours and job roles. This will help in creating an environment where both male and female employees can work together effectively. A recent study by Yale found that although women are more likely to be hired in entry-level roles, they are less likely to be promoted into positions of greater responsibility.

We need to see more women in leadership roles, and this can only happen when we make gender diversity a priority. Women need to be allowed to prove their leadership capabilities and be rewarded for their contributions. This will go a long way in achieving many women's goals of becoming successful CEOs. Women when making decisions related to career paths and goals for both genders. By doing this, we can ensure that more women make it into senior positions as well as ensure gender diversity within the company.

This is especially important in India as the number of women in senior leadership roles is low and has not seen much change in the past few years. This can be changed with conscious efforts from companies to give women careers by providing them with equal opportunities, including directors and vice presidents positions. So, there are several ways by which women themselves can overcome these challenges. Here are a few:

They should take advantage of mentorship and training programs. These programs can help them learn about the challenges that face and how to overcome them. Also should have a clear vision and strategy for my career. This will help stay focused and motivated

And be prepared to face criticism and tough conversations. This is part of being a leader and it is essential to success.

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