

“A STUDY ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND WOMEN LEADERSHIP”

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ABSTRACT

Most of the studies reveal that women of India disempowered and they enjoy some lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. Gender gap exists regarding access to education and employment. Household decision making power and freedom of movement of women vary considerably with their age, education and employment status. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. More than half of the women believe wife beating to be justified for one reason or the other. Fewer women have final say on how to spend their earnings. Control over cash earnings increases with age, education and with place of residence. Women's exposure to media is also less relative to men. Rural women are more prone to domestic violence than that of urban women. A large gender gap exists in political participation too. The study concludes by an observation that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the attitude of the people towards gender equality. Empowerment was defined as a process of transformation of power relation by which oppressed persons gain some control over their lives and involved in the matters, which affects them directly the role of women in development is most intimately related to the goal of comprehensive socio-economic development. Empowerment is the redistribution of power that challenges ideology and male dominance. It is the greater transformation of the structure or institutions that reinforces and perpetuates gender discrimination. Self Help groups have been playing a vital role in employment generation and employment of women. Many self Help groups are using the financial resources availed to fund investments in assets creation and help financially and socially for the downtrodden women in India. Micro -finance is directly helping poor to empower the conditions of women in India. Women from gross roots investing in self help groups and engaging the women in social, economic, and political fields. Women will be able to plan for their livelihood through the self help groups. Marginalized women finds self help groups are rejuvenating sparks in their lives. This paper looks into the impact of Self Help groups in the upliftment of women status through their contribution to the empowered society. Self Help groups helped them to overcome majority of their personal as professional life. This is a new venture in the women empowerment and social development angle. If not full at least this micro-financing is a hope for many women who are downtrodden sections of the society. This will be programme of mass enlightenment and empowerment.

Introduction

The subject of empowerment of women has becoming a burning issue all over the world including India since last few decades. Many agencies of United Nations in their reports have emphasized that gender issue is to be given utmost priority. It is held that women now cannot be asked to wait for any more for equality.

They have demanded equality with men in matters of education, employment, inheritance, marriage, the position and status of women all over the world has risen incredibly in the 20th century. We find that it has been very low in 18th and 19th centuries in India and elsewhere when they were treated like 'objects' that can be bought and sold. For a long time women in India remained within the four walls of their household.

A long struggle going back over a century has brought women the property rights, voting rights, an equality in civil rights before the law in matters of marriage and employment (in India women had not to struggle for voting rights as we find in other countries). Two Acts have also been enacted to emancipate women in India. These are: Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and the Compulsory Registration of Marriage Act, 2006. The Domestic Violence Act recognizes that abuse be physical as well as mental.

Anything that makes a woman feel inferior and takes away her self-respect is abuse. Compulsory Registration of Marriage Act can be beneficial in preventing the abuse of institution of marriage and hindering social justice especially in relation to women.

Women are playing bigger and bigger role in economic field: as workers, consumers, entrepreneurs, managers and investors. According to a report of The Economist, 'Women and the World Economy', in 1950, only one-third of American women of working age had a paid job.

We can now see women in almost every field: architecture, lawyers, financial services, engineering, medical and IT jobs. They have also entered service occupations such as a nurse, a beautician, a sales worker, a waitress, etc.

While much research has been published comparing the leadership styles of women and men, this study specifically focused on the personality qualities in a woman and man and motivational factors which are at the core of the underlying gender differences.

This study included a valid and reliable personality assessment, the Caliper Profile, as well as a demographic analysis and in-depth interviews with 59 female leaders from some of the top companies in the United Kingdom and the United States, including: Accenture, Bank of America, Deloitte & Touché, Deutsche Bank, The Economist Group, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Ernst & Young, IBM, International Paper, Johnson & Johnson, Kohler, Lloyds.

These women came from 19 different business sectors; the highest representation was Finance (26%), followed by 7% each in Computer, Education & Consulting, Health Products & Services and Real Estate. Age breakouts of the female leaders included: 30-39 years (24%), 40-49 years (49%) and 50+ years (27%). The majority (69%) of the women was married, 5% lived with a domestic partner and 26% were single. Forty-one percent had dependent children living with them in the home. For comparison purposes, the female leaders in this study were matched to a representative sample of male leaders drawn from Caliper's database, representing similar job titles.

In today's large organization, as women climb up the corporate ladder they vanish. While the statistics vary slightly around the world, this is an extremely consistent pattern.

At the lowest levels, more than half of the employees in organizations are female. As you move to each successively higher level in the organization, the number of women steadily shrinks. At the CEO level, worldwide, there are only 3% to 4% who are women.

The majority of people we talk with make the assumption that women will excel at nurturing competencies such as developing others, inspiring and motivating others, relationship building, collaboration and teamwork. The chart above demonstrates that these competencies are more positive for women. But those competencies with the largest positive differences are taking initiative, displaying integrity and honesty, and driving for results. These are not nurturing competencies. These competencies highlight that women were seen as more effective in getting things done, being role models and delivering results. These skills describe leaders who take on difficult challenges, ensure that people act with integrity, and who simply achieve challenging results.

Finally, as women move up the ladder in an organization, the higher they move the more positively they are perceived. The degree that senior executives and boards of directors are putting men into senior positions, fearing that women will not perform well at higher levels, we hope that this information adds to the assurance that they need not worry about that.

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