Coping Strategies Adopted by Women in Leadership Position to overcome their Barriers

Dr. K.Vidyakala[1], Dr. K. Nithyakala[2]

[1] HoD, Department of Business Administration, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India; email: vidyakala@psgrkcw.ac.in

[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India; nithyakala@psgrkcw.ac.in

Abstract

In the current scenario there is a growing focus on women leadership, due to the fundamental gains women have made in the workplace. This changing scenario has given liberal opportunities for women to be successful leaders. Simultaneously, there is a paucity of women leaders and women in senior management positions who could be taking up leadership positions later and thus it is the right time to address the issue of women leadership and encourage and support women to take up leadership roles. Companies have taken many kinds of support structures in the working places, such as various coping strategies for increase the number of women at the top positions. The present study will discuss about the coping strategies adopted to overcome the barriers among women leaders in their leadership positions based on the survey results among women in leadership position at Coimbatore,Tamilnadu.

Keywords: women leadership, coping strategies.

Introduction

Women are the personification of power, love, sacrifice and courage and play a momentous role in today's economy. Their income and spending capacity are critical to the country's economic well-being. Today, about 45.4% of female contribute to the global workforce. Women's formal and informal labour can transform a community from a relatively autonomous society to a participant in the national economy. Recent decades have witnessed exponential expansion of the role of women in the urban and rural workforce (Gran, 2019). Gender related patriarchal values are so deeply ingrained in our society's consciousness that they are largely invisible and most of the corporate companies hire men for the top positions. In India, women make up 42% of new graduates, but only 24% of entry-level roles

professionals. Of these, about 19% reach senior-level management. Women hold only 7.7% of management board seats and just 2.7% of board chairs (Financial Express, 2017). Women are still underrepresented in business leadership positions even with the progress witnessed in equality. Women-led companies make up only 4% of Fortune 500 companies, a trend that holds steady throughout most business Sectors (Women Leadership Institute, 2018). There is no deficiency of qualified women to fill leadership roles. There is something intrinsic in the system that's working against them; also hostile work environments, negative stereotypes about women in leadership, and bias also keep women out of the top spots. It is the ideal time to address the obstructions faced by women leaders and strategies to be formulated which will help women to take up influential positions. The leadership gender gap is obstinate and pervasive but solvable. Hence, the present study concentrates work life balance barrier faced by women leaders and coping strategies adopted to overcome these barriers.

Strategies Adopted by Women Leaders:

Women generally do not radically change either in their work life or their family life, or both. They also did not expect, ask for, or rely on their organizations to provide the support and assistance they required, since they found that existing work/family programs focused on changed needs and issues from theirs and believed that they were responsible for meeting many of their own needs. According to research within the field of career development, women have the same possibilities as men to advance up the corporate ladder, particularly if women are entering the same occupations and are similar to men in ambitions and abilities.

Coping Strategies:

Women use variety of individual coping strategies that allow them to continue to balance work and family, while successfully meeting their high achievement needs. The specific strategies used were a function of the women's personal histories and personalities (e.g., need for achievement and self-efficacy), the types of careers and organizational settings (e.g., law practice versus financial management), and the individual family situations (e.g., some women were exclusively responsible for family and children). Not all women use every strategy, and the individual strategies also likely differed in effectiveness even for the women who used them. Numerous strategies address the need for renewed work-family balance and more personal time, which lie primarily in the domain of the individual. Women use a more limited, set of strategies to address their need for continued achievement and accomplishment.

Objectives of the Study:

- To assess the coping strategies adopted by women leaders to overcome barriers faced by women leaders.

Purpose of the Study:

This study focuses on the identification of coping strategies mostly followed by women in leadership position.

Review of Literature

Yousefi et al., (2017) analysed the organisational workplace conflicts and the difficulties of handling different management style as well as heavy workload that causes job stress. The study revealed that employees with job stress leads to low levels of productivity, increased absenteeism and employee's turnover. The results of the study suggested that coping strategies of stress such as job sharing, flexible timing, work from home and mental wellness programme can be effective for organizations as well as reduce job stress.

Bernard (2009) analysed the stressors experienced and coping strategies used by women who are in leadership positions in corporate America, education, and government agencies. The study was conducted in qualitative and quantitative methods among 73(6 face to face interview and 67 survey) women leaders. The study identified that women leaders experience maladaptive levels of occupational stress to include role boundary, role ambiguity and role overload. The research revealed statistically significant relationship between stress and length of service. The study identified several coping strategies in this study, which include problem solving, active, emotion-focused, and avoidance. The results revealed that strategies are efforts to actively relieve stressful circumstances and to regulate emotionally stressful events but did not fully take advantage of coping resources such as recreation, self-care, rational cognitive thinking, and social support.

METHODOLOGY

Type of Research: The present study is descriptive in nature.

Area of the Study: The study was conducted among the women leaders in various organizations in Coimbatore. The population comprises of entrepreneurs, middle-level executives, and project leaders.

Data Collection Period: February – March 2020

Sampling Technique: The sampling technique used for the study is convenience sampling.

Sample Size: A sample size of 23 respondents was selected using convenience sampling technique.

Reliability: Reliability is the extent to which the measurement of the constructs gives consistent results. The Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the constructs. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall instrument was found to be 0.820, which depicts that the reliability of the coefficient value is at acceptance level.

Tools Used for Analysis

- Descriptive analysis

Analysis and Interpretation:

The collected data is processed, classified, and interpreted using the following statistical analysis:

Descriptive Statistics:

The main aim of descriptive statistics is to find the importance of each construct in the variable given by the respondents in the survey.

Coping Strategies

The following table presents the analysis of the coping strategies adopted by women overcome barriers in leadership position.

Table 1: Level of Agreeability towards Coping Strategies

Descriptive Statistics				
Coping Strategies	**Mini.**	**Maxi.**	**Mean**	**STD**
Structural role definition	1.0	5.0	4.013	.8929
Personal role definition	1.0	5.0	3.996	.7514
Reactive role behaviour	1.0	5.0	4.017	.9558
Prioritizing family fun & living simply	1.0	5.0	4.137	.7416
Cognitive reappraisal, social support setting priorities and recreation.	1.0	5.0	4.112	.8281
Aware of gendered structures in organisations and society	1.0	5.0	4.116	.8091
Higher self-esteem, whole identity – the possibility of being women and competent.	1.0	5.0	**4.163**	.7246
Emotion-focused coping – cognitive reappraisal	2.0	5.0	4.000	.7600
Positive thinking, advice seeking and Self-care	1.0	5.0	4.013	.7795
Focused coping –direct action	1.0	5.0	4.021	.8328
Average Mean			**4.0588**	

The above table shows the respondents' agreeability level towards strategies. Higher self-esteem, whole identity – the possibility of being women and competent has highest mean value (4.163) which implied that respondents consider development of self-discipline and whole identity is the important variable mostly used coping strategy by women in leadership position. Personal role definition i.e., aiming at changing the personal concept of the role demands for career and family has comparatively lesser mean value (3.996) which implied that women don't use much of change in personal concept of role demands for career, & family. The mean ratings are in the range of 3.9-4.2.

The average of total mean score 4.0558 implies that respondents agree in their opinion towards strategies.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study will benefit women entering in leadership position and how coping strategy helps in overcoming challenges and barriers and the important coping strategies to be adopted. Coping strategies such as participatory leadership, determination to

succeed, mentoring subordinates and delegation of power, continuous learning and planning serve as support to strengthen women leaders against much of the difficulties they encounter in their professional roles. The study suggested women in leadership position use coping strategies but they need to be trained more in emotion based coping and should be given counselling to improve sensitivity in relationship.

Acknowledgement:

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