Organizations Take Initiatives for the Development of Women Leaders

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Abstract

Purpose:

1. *To Understand the male to female ratio prevailing in the organization*
2. *To Understand how effective are women development initiatives in organizations from a women's perspective to determine if they will be appreciated and perceived as positive by the women.*
3. *To understand if the presence of women leaders in the organization leads to better engagement.*
4. *To understand, as suggested by research, are women leaders warmer and more male leaders more aggressive?*

Research Methodology: Sample - The sample size would be 50 men and women from all over India belonging to different age groups between 25-50 and are currently working in various corporations

- Primary Research: In-Depth Interview, Survey.
- Secondary research: literature review.
- Analysis of the collected data.

***Practical Implications:** This will help identify why, even though there is awareness about the importance of having women leaders, the initiatives were taken for their development have not contributed significantly. This paper will help understand if these initiatives are enough in the given culture of the organization that has pre-defined norms and expectations from a woman's standpoint of view.*

***Originality:** This research will mainly focus on the view of women about development initiatives in the organization.*

Key-word: Leadership, Women, Masculine, Social Expectations, In-Depth Interview.

1. Introduction

Organizations invest on leaders in trying to teach their managers how to lead. Leadership has come to be seen as a competitive advantage and hence stands at the core of the culture of organizations.

Employability of a person is defined as an ongoing process of either creating or acquiring through full and optimal use of one's competencies. It is not related to gender but related to an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities required performing the various roles and responsibilities of the job or position. However, women have always been in smaller numbers in the oppositions. A true picture of their capabilities has not been represented. Further, women are said to account for 50% of the talented workforce. However, only a few of those are in managerial positions [1]. Although there has been an increase in the number of working women, senior positions have not been significant. It has been found through numerous studies that women can sustain leadership positions; however, the risk perceived is high, and there is an inherent chance of failure; moreover, women also occupy leadership positions in few organizations such as non-profit organizations [2].

Statistics have identified that women only account for approximately 35% of the working class, wherein 22.6% work in organizations, around 6% in senior management. Only approximately 5% are employed on the board of directors [3]. This data also implies that the rest of the workforce constitutes males, and most of the board is also occupied by the other gender. Research also highlights the fact that women earn less than their counterparts, that is, males. A lack of appropriate guidance for women leads to a decrease in salary and reduce chances of promotion [4]. Due to disparity in pay and very few women in leadership positions, research on the development of women and its awareness has increased.

Satisfaction is another area, which needs to be explored. Job satisfaction includes pay and a variety of hygiene factors such as workplace surroundings, supervision, and promotion opportunities. Women are said to be more satisfied with their job than men are; however, since women tend to have low expectations, it is easier for them to be fulfilled; it can also be argued that the set of characteristics of the job may be more appealing than satisfaction from the job.

Although research has highlighted that the majority of the workforce (approximately 90%) feels that they are more comfortable with a women leader in terms of reporting to them but, the reality is that only approximately 5% of the positions of leadership across the globe are occupied by women [5].

The role of gender for promotion to any senior leadership position is not limited by any type of culture or to any particular count, which implies that there is a lack of women leadership organizations leading to the conclusion that there are some barriers in the way of women are hired in an organization. This study would aim to try to identify and understand the reasons for such discrimination if any. Leadership studies have shifted their focus from hierarchy-based to teamwork and the participation of employees in recent times. It is the more female-oriented type of leadership [6].

2. Literature Review

There has always been a comparison of men to women and women to men, and the same has been applied to leadership. Women are in fewer numbers than men in leadership. Some of the most emphasized reasons for the same have been the work-family conflict, the glass ceiling, and fewer opportunities [7].

Many stereotypes find more strength in trends that are present in literature and associate various leadership traits with genders. One of the most focused themes in the literature is the decision-making capability of both genders in leadership positions in an organization. The two traits that have been highlighted about men's decision-making are rational and analytical; whereas women have been attributed to be slow decision-makers compared to men [8].

Fewer women are in leadership positions than men leaders of various organizations leading to a gap, which increases for the women of color.

The **Global Executive Leadership Inventory (GELI)** results, a survey encompassing a 360-degree angle, were looked into, studied, and analyzed by the authors of the theory. This inventory was completed by a fairly good sample of both male and female students currently in an executive-level education program. The GELI was used not just as an assessment tool but had other components such as a self-assessment one as it was a 360-degree angle survey and was not just given to the students but in addition to the other components of the 360 angle and those were the peers and supervisors and others within the context to study and analyze the students on the aspects and dimensions of the concept of leadership [9].The survey had the following divisions of leadership:

- Envisioning
- Empowering
- Designing and aligning
- Governance in terms of Reward and feedback

- Team Dynamics especially building
- Outside Orientation
- A global and future-oriented mindset
- Tenacity
- The quotient of emotional intelligence

The survey results were quite fascinating as they showed that women did better than men in scores in 9 of the 10 mentioned divisions. The only division in which men did score better was in Envisioning. It has been explained as the ability to judge the opportunities in the future that will be based on patterns and trends in the environment and the basis that coming up with new and unique business strategies [10].

Leadership is often linked with implementing the necessary change in the organization. However, these changes also have to be anticipated. Therefore, it is also concerned with the vision that a leader has regarding the organization's future and the types of ventures that the organization would be undertaking to maintain productivity and profitability. Thus, it becomes important for leaders to ensure that there is the alignment of the workforce to its goals and objective [11].

A persisting question that follows from these studies is, do different gender leaders have different perspectives on how they look at a given attribute? The way men and women deal with a problem is different as they have different perspectives, the way females interpret power is different from their counterparts. They perceive power as a capacity instead of control that can be directed towards a community.

Research also suggests that the level of effectiveness is equal for both males and females. There are more similarities between them than differences in terms of leadership behavior, and both genders are equally efficient [12].

Women's career paths are different from men's because when most of the structures of the organizations were developed, there were very few women in the organizations. All organizational features were developed based on the needs of the other males. It was easier for men to identify and learn from others while enhancing their careers. However, it could identify with only fewer role models. Women entrepreneurs need previous industry experience, business skills, and achievement motivation. Hence, the quality of their experience is important for their future career [13].

Research shows that certain specific characteristics or traits like assertiveness have been commonly marked with the behavior or kind of quality that should be seen in men. In general, men are associated more with assertiveness and their counterparts that are women with warmth. Due to this correlation, people in the organization believe that women do not have the certain qualities or

behaviors that are required and are expected by the position of a leader. Social roles theory has explained this phenomenon, which states that managers have expectations from the people they work with as per their social roles and responsibilities. Due to this social role theory, women are often considered incompetent than males in supervisory roles [14], which further strengthens the existence of a stereotype against women present with leadership positions in organizations. The qualities of leadership possess or should possess. These stereotypes affect how a gender addresses an issue, analyses it, and draws insights from it.

These previously held strong beliefs affect the value of performance by females, and research has found that the differences in rewards for the genders are 14 times greater than the difference in their performance.

Additionally, it has been found that even the pitch of voice affects the success of a person in any leadership role. Women, in general, have a high-pitched voice, and it has been found that people having a deep voice are more successful and preferred in leadership roles. These kinds of expectations and stereotypes affect individuals' beliefs about their capability to carry out certain tasks [15].

Women are less motivated than men in general, affecting their occupancy at higher level job positions and thus making them underrepresented.

Even though sex discrimination has been criticized and opened new opportunities for women, but has still failed to close the gender divide and gap in managerial positions. In the changing times, when a woman is given any significant role that requires a shift, their partner may not be able to do the same easily, which has not led to changes in policies in the way it should have.

In a study conducted by IBM in 2019, one important doubt was addressed. The study highlighted that investment in the careers of women becomes important as it will produce financial returns. According to this study, there is enough evidence to support the fact that promoting women to leadership positions is linked with benefits. In the survey, IBM also revealed the fact that there is an extremely strong connection between organizations that practice and report well on gender diversity and the ones that have good profitability. Despite emphasizing the importance of promoting women to leadership positions, organizations are skeptical regarding the benefits of practicing the same [16].

Businesses like Hilt have recognized the need for the development of women and build a committee for women that looks at their development to enable them to take up a leadership position. No description has been given of how this process is carried out. Another organization that has used

the concept of a council is Unisys India Private Limited. This council focuses on the development of women, in general, to take up leadership roles someday.

Along with businesses, educational institutes, such as Harvard and Stanford, provide women development courses that are company-specific and open programs. However, apart from the said initiatives that the organizations take, they lack frameworks that are feasible in terms of action and deliver the actual requirements. Organizations provide the same program that they would offer men or provide a program that emphasizes some issue with women.

Research also suggests that we know that the extent to which women occupy leadership positions and the kind of organizations they do so. However, little is known about the settings or circumstances leading women to occupy such positions.

A few distinguished companies like Coca-Cola, Vodafone, Walmart, H &M include women empowerment as a part of their CSR. However, it raises the question of whether they implement any women-centric initiatives consciously or to satisfy a law or look good in the eyes of the public and their employees. Women empowerment is considered as uplifting women from poverty through small enterprises control by the business. However, it falls in a separate domain away from equality in terms of rights and opportunities [17].

Though there are many studies and papers done on this topic, research still fails to address certain aspects and cover some areas. Firstly, it does not help us understand if organizations that are well aware of the need to empower a minority of gender necessarily lead to good programs that help support women's long-term careers. Secondly, it does not throw any light on whether women's positive influence in terms of patience shown to fellow teammates or warmth leads to creating any programs or their betterment. Even if women do fulfill the basic social expectations, it may not necessarily lead to good programs that help their careers and livelihood. Thirdly, if being warm also makes them approachable and fulfills the social expectations associated with them [18].

3. Data and Methodology

3.1. Findings will help us Understand the Following Questions Better

1. Do men outnumber women in top-level management?
2. There is awareness about the need for women leaders?

3. Organizations focus on women development initiatives as they realize the importance of women in leadership positions?

4. The positive influence of women leads to initiatives for women's development?

5. Initiatives such as back-to-work programs and workshops help women in their career development and not just immediate return to work smoothly?

6. Women leaders are considered more patient than male leaders and, therefore, warm and easy to approach?

3.2. Variables Used for Study

There are various kinds of variables that affect any research or any study. The ones which have been looked at are the dependent and independent one to analyze the results of the survey that was conducted.

3.2.1. Dependent Variables – Women development initiatives.

3.2.2. Independent Variables – Awareness for the need for women leaders**,** Effectiveness of initiatives for women, Positive influence of women.

The variable career development is dependent upon women development initiatives in case women return to work.

The variable patience shown by an individual is dependent upon the variable warm and easy to approach.

3.3. Design

The mix of qualitative and quantitative data was taken for the study along with the literature review. For qualitative data, 25 interviews were conducted. For the quantitative data, a survey containing 14 questions was floated and answered by 50 respondents. The results collected by both methods were used to understand the industry position of women-centric initiatives and discuss them further. The results can also help us find the limitations in women's development initiatives in the corporate world.

3.4. Sample

For this study, we conducted 25 interviews. To get a broad range of answers, we kept the answers open-ended. After getting some idea about the awareness level for women's development initiatives and the kind of initiatives generally undertaken by the organization, we created a survey with 14 questions. The Sample size was 50. 80% of the sample was females and 20% males. The age group for the sample was 25-50. The Industry distribution was such that 80% of the people belong to FMCG, Banking, and IT. The remaining 20% belonged to Real Estate and Consulting [19].

3.5. Method

Telephonic interviews along with a questionnaire containing 11 Likert scale type questions were taken. On top of these two methods, we had three more questions that gave us some more background to understand the type of programs in the organization and how long they have been in policy.

4. Results

4.1. Question 1- The Number of Males in Leadership Positions in the Organization Outnumbers the Number of Females in the same Positions

80% of the sample strongly agreed with this question. Out of these, 40, 8 were males. Since the sample size for males was only 10, 80% strongly agreed with this statement. The remaining 20% of both the males and the sample agree with the above statement.

4.2. Question 2- Please Provide your Opinion about the Positions for the above-mentioned Question

75% of the sample agreed that the number of males outnumbers the number of females in leadership C- suite positions, whereas 15% agreed that this statement is true at the department head level. The remaining 4% said that it was at all levels.
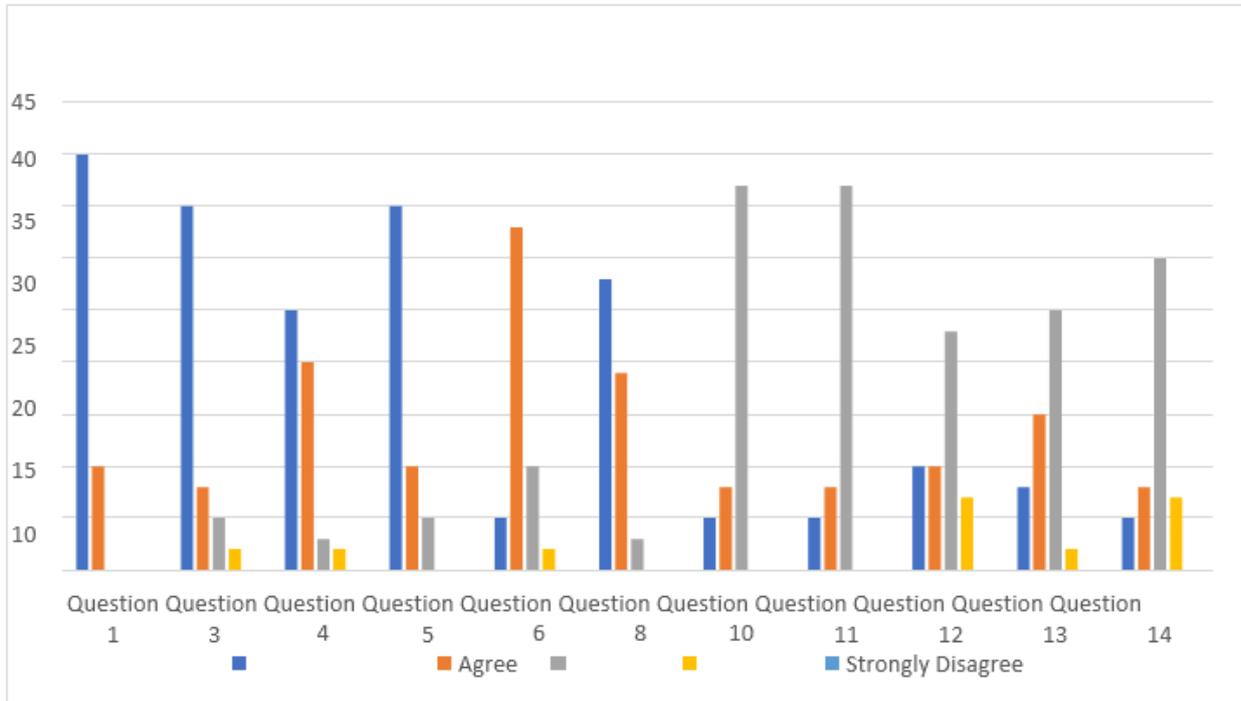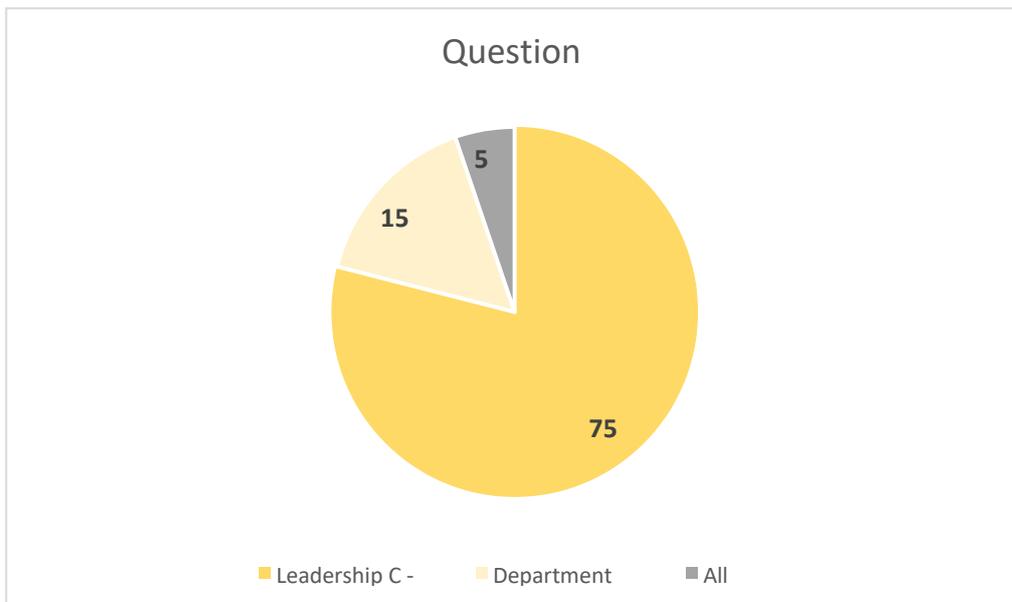
Figure 1 - Results of 11 Questions out of 14

Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 represent the results of 11 questions out of 14, indicate Pie chart of results for question 2 of the survey, and 3 present Pie chart showing results for question 9, respectively.

Figure 2 - Pie chart showing results for question 2 of the survey

4.3. Question 3 - You are aware of any Women Leadership Development Initiatives that Exist in your Organization

70% of the sample strongly agrees that they are aware of women's leadership development initiatives. Out of the remaining sample, 15% agree, 10% are neutral, and 4% people disagree with this statement. Upon conducting interviews, it came to light in real estate organizations. The women leadership initiatives are non-existent; a part of the sample disagrees with the statement.

4.4. Question 4 - There is Awareness in my Organization about the Need for Women Leaders

25 people that is 50% of the sample, strongly agreed with the statement, whereas 40% agrees and 6% is neutral. A part of the sample again disagrees with any awareness of the need for women leaders. This result is supported by the literature that states that there is awareness about the need for women leaders.

Figure 3 - Pie chart showing results for question 9
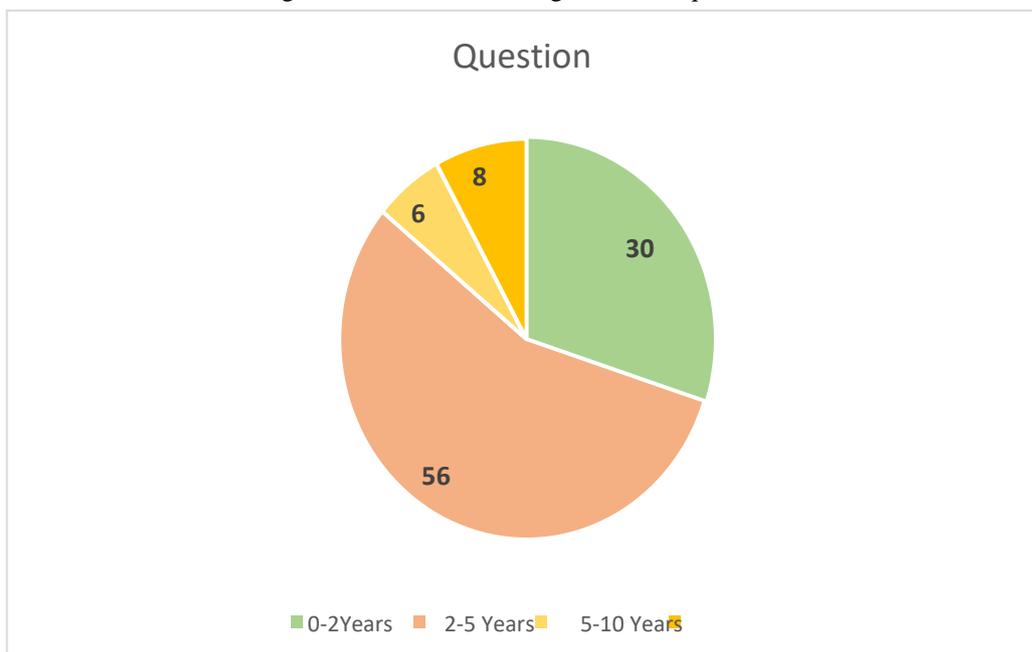
4.5. Question 5- There Awareness in your Organization about the Difficulties Faced by Women to Reach Top Management Positions

70% of the sample strongly agrees with the above statement, and 20% agrees with it. 10% of the sample feels neutral to this statement. This 10% of the sample were women in organizations with

women-oriented leadership programs in a nascent stage and thus feel that their organization does not pay much attention to the difficulties they face.

4.6. Question 6 - My Organization has Women-oriented Leadership Development Initiatives

Only 10% of the sample strongly agrees with this statement. The interviews revealed that organizations that are sensitive to women in terms of decisions of location and the daily issues they face strongly agree with this statement. 66% of the sample agrees to the statement. Almost all organizations that the sample works in have a back to work programs, and people in the organizations are well aware of them. 20% of the sample is neutral of this statement, and 4% disagrees.

4.7. Question 7 - Please Select the Kind of Women-oriented Leadership Initiatives that Exist in your Organization

This question had the choice of ticking multiple options. 40 people in the sample chose the option of back-to-work programs. 60% of people chose the option of workshops. During the interviews, these 2 were the most frequent answers given by the sample. Certain organizations support collaboration across various women senior leaders. Some of the other initiatives include a department meeting, where women talk about the day-to-day issues they face in front of an audience that contains both males and females.

4.8. Question 8 - The Women Leadership Development Initiatives are Effective in my Organization

The sample does not strongly agree with this statement in any capacity. It is because these initiatives do not solve the day-to-day issues for women. The back-to-work programs cannot contribute much towards the end as the ratio is still skewed in favor of men.56% of the sample agrees to this statement. 19 people are neutral to this statement, and 6% sample disagrees

4.9. Question 9 - How old are these Women-oriented Leadership Development Programs?

For some of the organizations that the sample is associated with, the initiatives are 0-2 years old, mainly because they joined the organizations recently and then came to be aware of such programs or had to inquire about maternity leave recently. 56% of people agree to the 2-5 years. For

the remaining two ranges that are 5-10 years and 10+ years, 6% and 8% of people agree to them, respectively.

4.10. Question 10 - Please Rate the Effectiveness of these Back to Work Programs

10% of the sample strongly agrees with this sample. 16% agree, and 74% are neutral. The majority of the people cannot rate this initiative as they have not been a part of them even if they are aware of this initiative. There are various components to the back-to-work programs, such as mentorship for females after joining the organization. The mentors that were earlier participants of the same program guide them on their work and help them come up to speed. The other such component is sponsors. The sponsors help the participants of these initiatives gain important projects to help them in their career development.

4.11. Question 11 – The Back to Work Programs helps Females in Terms of their Career in the Organization

10% of the sample strongly agrees with this statement. 16% agree with this statement. The back-to-work programs are believed to help immediately when women re-join the workforce but not career development. 74% of the sample is neutral.

4.12. Question 12 - Employees more Comfortable Working under Women Leaders than Male Leaders as they Display more Patience

Approximately majority of the sample was neutral to this statement. Only 10% strongly agreed to the statement, and 10% agreed to the statement. 14% of the sample disagreed with the statement. In some cases, the women leaders are so few that the question is not justified as it is wholly dependent on one person.

4.13. Question 13 - There is a Positive difference in the Way Women Leaders Interact with the Workforce as against Male Leaders, making them Easy to Approach?

50% of the sample is neutral to this statement. 46% strongly agree and agree with the states collectively. It is felt that women are more patient when listening to others' opinions. However, it is not so frequent that it becomes a hindrance in the case of a male leader. 4% of people disagree with the above statement.

4.14. Question 14 - Women Leaders Lead to Better Employee Engagement as they Involve themselves more with the Team

60% of the sample is neutral to the statement. 14% disagree with the above statement. 26% strongly agree and agree with the states collectively. The reason behind this is that women are warmer, and employees are sometimes more comfortable around them. However, most people do not see any difference in engagement, be it a male or female leader.

5. Analysis

A correlation analysis was carried out to figure out how different variables relate to each other.

The dependent variable Existence of Women development initiatives are associated with independent variables such as awareness for the need for women leaders, the effectiveness of initiatives for women.

For the positive influence of women, it is the dependent factor, and the effectiveness of women-oriented leadership development programs is the independent variable.

The variable career development depends on the effectiveness of women's development initiatives if women return to work.

The variable patience is related to the variable – warmth shown by an individual and another variable - easy to approach.

The correlation analysis for part one shows a medium correlation between the existence of women development initiatives and awareness in the organization for the need of women leaders. The correlation between them is 0.513.

There is a high correlation between women's development initiatives and their effectiveness, which shows that if there are any women-oriented initiatives, they are considered effective as the correlation between them is 0.904.

Question numbers 12, 13, and 14 are considered for the positive influence of women as these statements are directed to check if women have a more positive influence. However, a correlation between this and the effectiveness of women-oriented leadership development programs will help us determine whether positive influence increases the push for these programs. There is a medium correlation of 0.634 between these two factors, which means that it might not necessarily lead to a push for better and effective women leadership development initiatives.

The variable career development that question 11 contains has a medium correlation with the independent variable existence of women leadership development programs, A correlation of 0.445 means that these initiatives do not necessarily contribute to the career development of women.

Questions 12 and 13 can help us determine if patience shown by women leads to them being easy to approach. A high correlation of 0.935 exists between women's patience, leading to them being easier to approach [20].

5.1. Finding 1 – Men Outnumber Women in Top-level Management

The general ratio of male to female at the top-level management is 70:30 in percentage terms. In some organizations, it is worse where it is up to 8:1. This ratio becomes better as we go to middle and junior-level management as many women drop out of the workforce before reaching the top-level management, which, however, also shows how skewed the numbers favor one gender at any given level.

5.2. Finding 2 - There is Awareness about the Need for Women Leaders

Literature provides evidence that organizations understand the need for women leaders and how it has financial implications. As per the interview discussions and the survey, due to the programs' width, it can be stated that organizations are aware that there is a need for women leaders. However, research does not provide any indication as to why is there a need. Is it because of the financial results or their mere scarcity of women in top level management? Even in certain organizations where the number of women is less at middle level management, there is hardly any awareness of women leaders' needs.

5.3. Finding 3 - Organizations may or maybe not Focus on Women Development Initiatives as they Realize the Importance of Women in Leadership Positions

Some of the organizations are known for their women's development initiatives. The depth and width of these initiatives are increasing as their awareness is increasing. However, awareness of the need for women leaders does not lead to the existence of women develops leadership initiatives, as shown by a medium correlation of 0.513. In certain organizations where the number of women is less at middle-level management, there is hardly any awareness of the need for women leaders.

5.4. Finding 4 - Positive Influence of Women does not Necessarily Lead to Initiatives for Women Development

Research shows that women are warm and can be approached easily. However, a medium correlation between the positive influence of women in terms of warmth and ease to approach does not necessarily lead to effective initiatives for women. A correlation of 0.634 means that organizations still do not necessarily increase the quality of these initiatives even after they realize how positive their influence can be.

5.5. Finding 5 - Initiatives such as back to Work Program and Workshops may not Necessarily Help Women in their Career Development and not Just Immediate Return to Work in a Smooth Manner

The back-to-work program aims to help women in their immediate come back to work. Certain organizations go above and beyond to ensure that they help women in their career development and not just immediate return to work. However, the existence of women such programs does not mean that it necessarily led to career development for women, as shown by a medium correlation of 0.445.

5.6. Finding 6 - Women Leaders are Considered more Patient than Male Leaders and; therefore, Warm and Easy to Approach

Research states that women are warmer and men are more aggressive. They also have to meet the social expectations associated with them. A strong correlation of 0.935 show that women leaders are easy to approach as they are considered to be warm.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Certain findings, such as realizing the importance of women leaders leading to women leadership development programs, might be considered an obvious implication to a layman. However, the results tell us that there is only a medium correlation between these. Also, the existence of such development initiatives does not necessarily lead to career development for women. Research shows that organizations are well aware of the benefits and the need for women leaders. As shown by the analysis carried out in the study, this does not necessarily lead to initiatives directed towards women's development in the organization, which is the first hurdle and has to be crossed to encourage

women. Not only do we need these initiatives, but we need to better them as they do not necessarily lead to career development for women. The social expectations associated with job roles create a bigger issue as women have to be kinder and warmer towards their colleagues or come across as being overconfident. The same would be positively taken for a man, which adds to the burden of women as they have to work about their image apart from the work they do. Some of the issues women face is so small that organizations themselves do not know how to tackle them. These are issues mainly faced on a day-to-day basis. Men do not generally realize that women go through feeling out of place during recreational activities. Hence, the larger workforce needs to be made aware of these difficulties. Certain FMCGs such as MARS do sometimes organize workshops where females come and discuss their everyday issues. However, these issues are not just related to the organizations. However, social beliefs and traditions of the society in general, such as men, are not necessarily considered bad when they have seen smoking, but when a female does the same, it is pointed out and; therefore, she cannot go on a smoking break in a big group, which highlights a bigger issue.

7. Limitations

This paper covers many aspects that relate to the development initiatives domain. However, certain aspects can be further studied in depth. The back-to-work programs across organizations can be studied in-depth and compared to see why they necessarily do not lead to career development. Also, other aspects surrounding the culture of organizations such as long working hours and how they affect women can be studied, which would help create a more rounded off approach. A larger sample would help establish concrete results.

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