

A STUDY ON CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN LEADERS CONSISTENTLY PROGRESSING IN BUSINESS & SOCIETY

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the challenges faced by women in leadership roles within business and society. It highlights key issues such as gender bias, limited access to networks and mentorship, and the impact of traditional gender roles on women's professional advancement. The study emphasizes the importance of women leaders in driving economic resilience, job creation, and social innovation. Moreover, women frequently encounter difficulties in balancing professional responsibilities with personal commitments, which can exacerbate stress and limit their career mobility. Through a comprehensive analysis of case studies and interviews, this study aims to highlight effective practices that empower women leaders, ultimately contributing to a more equitable business environment. By understanding both the challenges and the strategies for overcoming them, this research seeks to promote gender equality in leadership positions across various sectors.

Keywords: Women Leadership, Gender Bias, Business Transformation, Leadership Challenges, Leadership Barriers, Women Leadership Strategies.

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Introduction

Women leaders bring unique perspectives and collaborative approaches to decision-making, towards organizations. Similarly, women entrepreneurs are vital agents of change, fostering economic resilience, job creation, and community development. However, limited access to resources, networks, mentorship, and funding often acts as significant barriers to their success.

In recent decades, women have emerged as transformative leaders and entrepreneurs, playing a pivotal role in shaping businesses and societies worldwide. Women's leadership and entrepreneurship not only contribute to economic growth but also bring diversity, innovation, and inclusivity to the forefront of organizational and social progress.

Historical Context: Barriers to Women in Leadership

Historically, women have been excluded from leadership roles due to a combination of societal norms, discriminatory practices, and institutional biases. The gender gap in leadership began with legal and cultural barriers preventing women from accessing higher education and professional opportunities. Even when women were able to participate in the workforce, they faced systematic discrimination, such as wage gaps, limited advancement opportunities, and gender stereotyping. Balancing professional demands with traditional gender roles,

The Shift: Changing Dynamics of Leadership

In recent years, the shift toward gender equity in leadership has been supported by several societal and organizational changes:

The Role of Education and Professional Development:

Educational attainment among women has dramatically increased over the past few decades, with more women than men now graduating from universities in many countries. This increase in

educational qualifications, combined with women's increasing presence in the workforce, has positioned women to take on leadership roles in various industries.

Changing Corporate Culture:

Many businesses are realizing that gender diversity in leadership is not only the right thing to do but also contributes to improved organizational performance. Companies that prioritize gender diversity at the leadership level tend to outperform their competitors in terms of profitability, employee satisfaction, and innovation.

Benefits of Women in Leadership

Economic Impact:

Numerous studies have demonstrated that gender-diverse leadership teams perform better financially. Companies with higher representation of women in leadership roles tend to show stronger financial performance. For instance, research from McKinsey & Company (2020) found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to experience above-average profitability compared to companies in the bottom quartile.

Improved Organizational Culture and Employee Well-Being:

Women in leadership often prioritize workplace culture, focusing on collaboration, inclusivity, and employee well-being. This can result in more open communication, better work-life balance policies, and healthier organizational environments, which are linked to increased employee productivity and reduced turnover rates.

Innovation and Problem-Solving:

Diverse leadership teams bring a variety of perspectives, which can lead to more innovative solutions and creative problem-solving. Women leaders often approach challenges differently, emphasizing collaborative solutions and considering social impact alongside profitability. This can foster more sustainable and innovative business models, particularly in industries like technology, healthcare, and social enterprises.

Representation and Role Models:

The visibility of women in leadership roles serves as an inspiration to other women and girls, signaling that leadership positions are attainable. This not only boosts the aspirations of young women but also contributes to a cultural shift where leadership is no longer seen as gendered but as a competency that anyone can achieve regardless of gender.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the challenges faced by women leaders, like gender bias and difficulty accessing networks and mentorship.
2. To study how successful women leaders overcome these challenges and what strategies they use.

Hypothesis

H0: Women leaders do not experience significant gender bias in their professional environments, and such bias does not negatively impact their career progression and leadership effectiveness.

H1: Women leaders experience significant gender bias in their professional environments, which negatively impacts their career progression and leadership effectiveness.

H0: A significant majority of women leaders do not feel optimistic about the future of women in leadership roles, believing that ongoing societal changes will not lead to improved opportunities for advancement.

H2: A significant majority of women leaders feel optimistic about the future of women in leadership roles, believing that ongoing societal changes will lead to improved opportunities for advancement.

Literature Review

Ahmad Mukhtar B (2022) The article by Ahmad Mukhtar B explores the capacity and effectiveness of women in leadership roles, utilizing a feminist and historical approach. This Study aims to identify whether leadership is more effective and has better performance than male leadership. It highlights the increasing presence of women in managerial positions, particularly in Indonesia, where women occupy significant roles in government and education. The research also identifies key feminine traits that contribute to effective leadership, including caring, vision, collaboration, courage, and intuition. It argues that women's leadership styles often align with transformational leadership principles, fostering inclusive decision-making and improved organizational performance.

Afrin Sharmina (2023) The article investigates the relationship between women's entrepreneurship and leadership development in Bangladesh, where women manage only about 7% of economic establishments. The study identifies key factors influencing women entrepreneurship development (WED) and their impact on leadership skills among female entrepreneurs. Using a sample of 370 women entrepreneurs from the Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the research employs exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling to analyze data.

Lad, Vaishnavi. (2024). This research paper explores the evolving role of women in business leadership within Mumbai, India's economic hub. It examines the challenges and opportunities female leaders face in a competitive environment, utilizing case studies and interviews with women across various sectors. Despite persistent socio-cultural barriers, work-life balance issues, and limited access to professional networks, women in Mumbai are increasingly assuming leadership roles. The study highlights the positive impact of gender diversity on corporate culture, decision-making, and overall business performance

Research Methodology

Research Design:

Data was gathered from 84 individuals in the Mumbai region through a structured questionnaire utilizing a survey-based approach. The questionnaire addressed participants' demographics, their attitudes towards Women leadership challenges & transformation to Business & society.

Sampling:

We were using a convenience sampling technique from various locations within the Mumbai region.

Data Collection:

The data was collected using an online survey.

Limitations of the Study

- A small sample size can make it difficult to draw conclusions about the study.
- There may not be enough prior research on the subject.
- Respondents may be biased to avoid embarrassment or project a favorable image.

Data Analysis & Interpretation Experience of the Respondents during the Survey

How many years of professional experience do you have in a leadership position?

84 responses

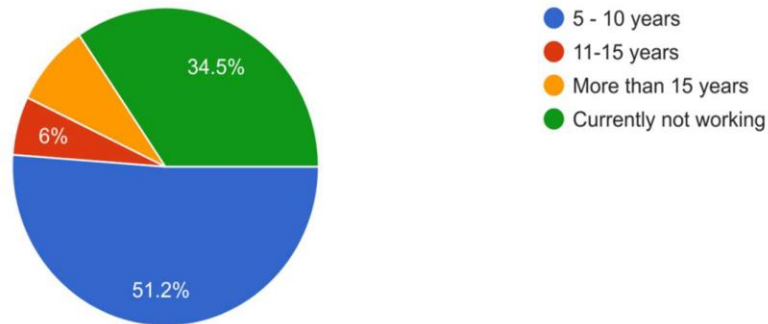


Table 1.1

Attributes (no. of years exp)	Responses	Percentage
5-10 years	43	51.2 %
11-15 years	5	6 %
More than 15 Years	7	8.3 %
Currently Not Working	29	34.5 %
Total	84	100 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents that 43 women respondents are having 5-10 years experience, 05 women respondents are having 11-15 years of experience while 07 women respondents are having more than 15 years of experience. 29 Women are those respondents who are not currently working.

Years of professional experience does women have in a leadership position?

What is your current professional position ?

84 responses

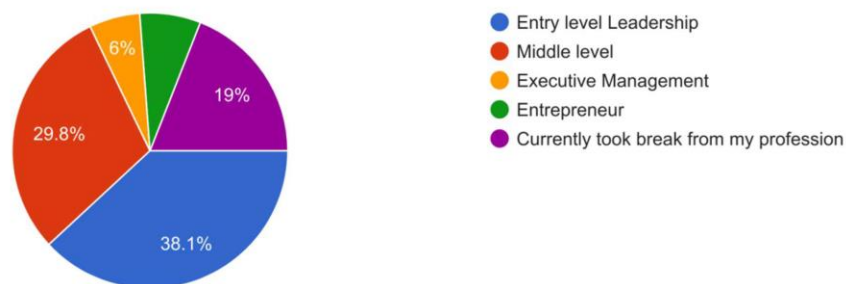


Table 1.2

Attributes (Professional Position)	Responses	Total
Entry level Leadership	32	38.1 %
Middle level	25	29.8 %
Executive Management	5	6 %
Entrepreneur	6	7.1 %
Currently took break from my profession	16	19 %
Total	84	100 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents that 32 women respondents are of Entry Level Leadership in Professional experience, 25 women respondents are having Middle Level experience while 05 women respondents are having Executive management Level of experience. Atlast 16 Women are those respondents who have taken a break from the professional field.

Does Women's Experience the Gender Biasness in the Leadership Role?

Have you experienced gender bias in your leadership role?

84 responses

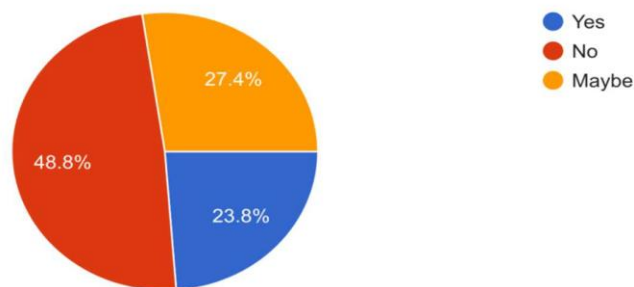


Table 1.3

Attributes (Gender Bias)	Responses	Total
Yes	20	23.8 %
No	41	48.8 %
Maybe	23	27.4 %
Total	84	100 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents that 20 women respondents had faced the gender biasness experiences, 41 women respondents stated that they haven't faced the gender biasness in the leadership role while 23 women respondents are not sure about the biasness in the leadership role during establishing or running a business.

Do you believe your organisation provides adequate support to women leaders?

Do you believe your organisation provides adequate support to women leaders?

84 responses

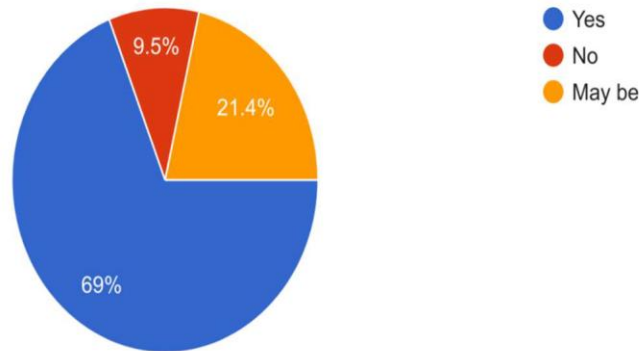


Table 1.4

Attributes (organisationSupport)	Responses	Total
Yes	58	69 %
No	8	9.5 %
Maybe	18	21.4 %
Total	84	100 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents that 58 women respondents believe that the organizations Are providing the adequate support to the women leaders, 08 women respondents believes that the organizations are not providing the adequate support to the women’s in the leadership role while 18 women respondents are not sure about the adequate support to the women’s in the leadership role.

How do you perceive the impact of work-life balance on your leadership effectiveness?

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84 responses

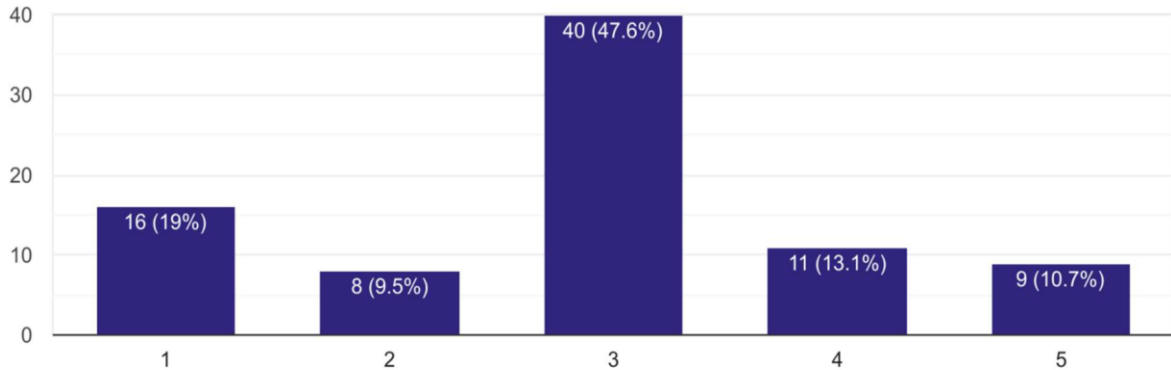


Table 1.5

Attributes (Impact of work life balance)	Responses	Total
Towards Negative Side (1-2)	24	28.5 %
Neutral (3)	40	47.6 %
Towards Positive Side (4-5)	20	23.8 %
Total	84	100 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents that 24 women respondents have perceived the Negative impact of work-life balance on your leadership effectiveness, 40 women respondents believed that they perceive the Neutral impact of work-life balance on your leadership effectiveness while 20 women respondents are the Positive impact of work-life balance on your leadership effectiveness.

What challenges do you think women face in leadership roles?

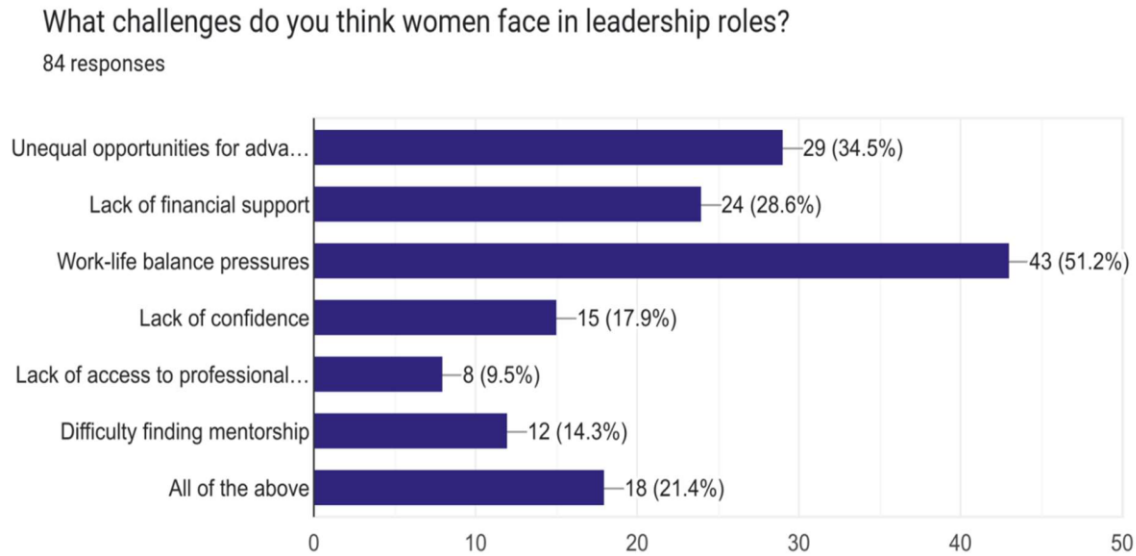


Table 1.6

Attributes (Challenges faced)	Responses	Total
Unequal opportunities for advancement in women	29	34.5 %
Lack of financial support	24	28.6 %
Work-life balance pressures	43	51.2 %
Lack of confidence	15	17.9 %
Lack of access to professional networks	8	9.5 %
Difficulty finding mentorship	12	14.3 %
All of the above	18	21.4 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents the various multiple responses of the particular individual criteria challenges faced by women in the leadership roles. 29 women’s responses states that they face unequal opportunities for advancement in women, 24 women’s responses states that they face Lack of financial support, 29 women’s responses states that they face Work-Life balances in the leadership roles in business field, 15 women’s responses states that they face Lack of confidence in the leadership roles in business field, 08 women’s responses states that they face Lack of access to professional networks in the leadership roles, and 12 women’s responses states that they face Difficulty finding mentorship in the leadership roles, while 18 women’s responses states that they face every type of difficulty in leadership roles in the business field.

How would you rate the women's difficulty in accessing mentorship opportunities?

How would you rate the women's difficulty in accessing mentorship opportunities?

84 responses

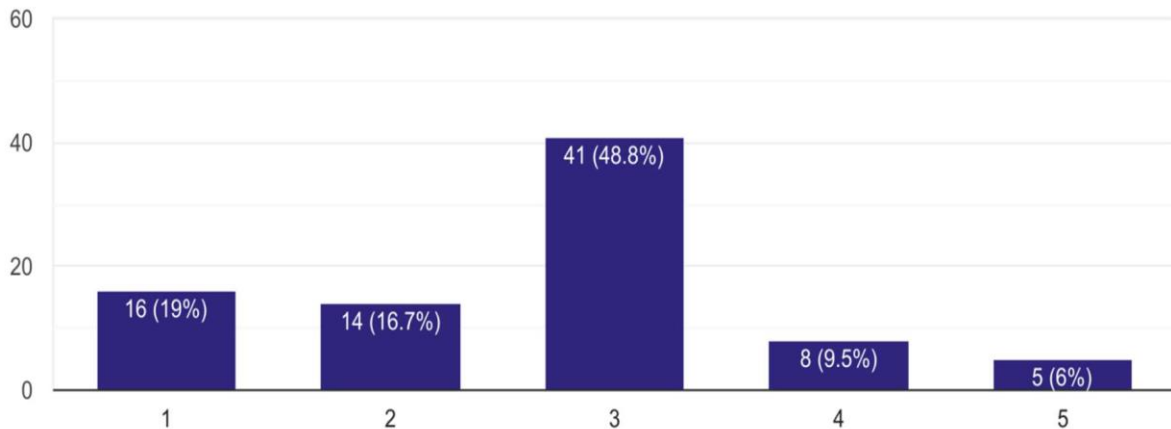


Table 1.7

Attributes (Women Difficulty)	Responses	Total
Towards Difficult Side (1-2)	24	25.7 %
Neutral (3)	41	48.8 %
Towards Easy Side (4-5)	13	15.6 %
Total	84	100 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents that 24 women respondents had faced difficulty in accessing mentorship opportunities, 41 women respondents believed that they face neutral nature in accessing mentorship opportunities while 13 women respondents had faced easy side in accessing mentorship opportunities.

To what extent do you believe mentorship has contributed to your career progression as a woman in a leadership role?

To what extent do you believe mentorship has contributed to your career progression as a woman in a leadership role?

84 responses

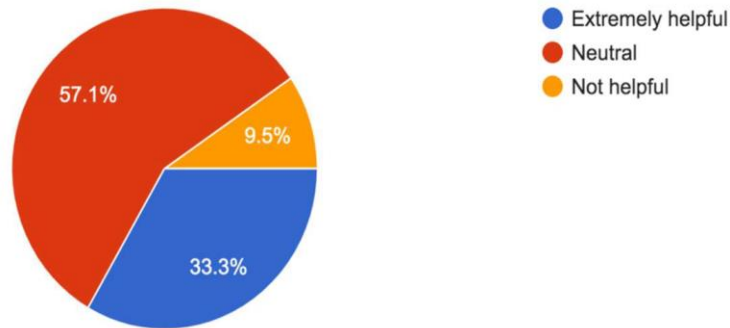


Table 1.8

Attributes (Contribution to Mentorship)	Responses	Total
Extremely Helpful	28	33.3 %
Neutral	48	57.1 %
Not Helpful	8	9.5 %
Total	84	100 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents that 28 women respondents had face Extreme helpful mentorship has contributed to your career progression as a woman in a leadership role, 48 women respondents states that they face Neutral level mentorship has contributed to your career progression as a woman in a leadership role while 08 women respondents found that they were not helpful mentorship has contributed to your career progression as a woman in a leadership role.

What role do male colleagues play in supporting women leaders?

What role do male colleagues play in supporting women leaders?

84 responses

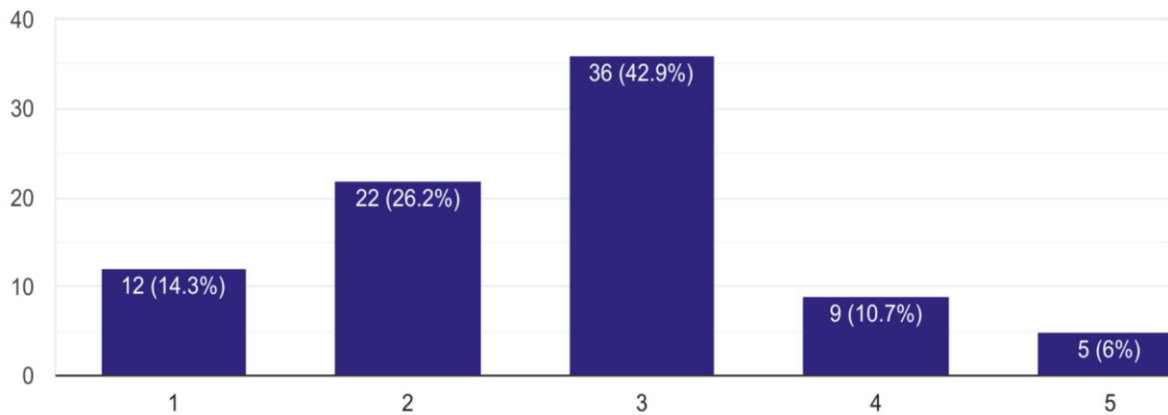


Table 1.9

Attributes (Male Supporting)	Responses	Total
Extremely Helpful (1-2)	24	30.5 %
Neutral (3)	36	42.9 %
Not Helpful (4-5)	14	16.7 %
Total	84	100 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents that 24 women respondents had experience that male colleagues play Extreme helpful nature in supporting women leaders, 36 women respondents states that had experience that male colleagues play Neutral nature help in supporting women leaders while 08 women respondents found that male colleagues were not helpful in supporting women leaders.

Do you feel optimistic about the future of women in leadership?

Do you feel optimistic about the future of women in leadership?

84 responses

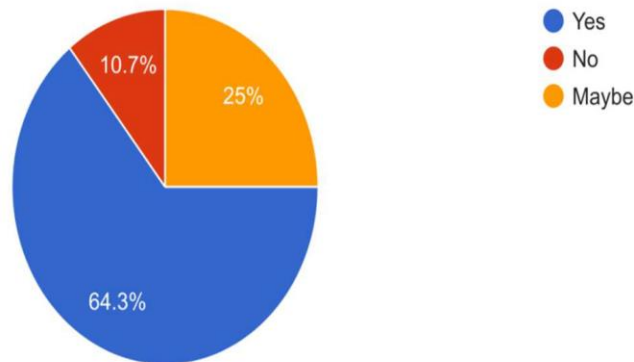


Table 1.10

Attributes (Future Optimistic)	Responses	Total
Yes	54	64.3 %
No	9	10.7 %
Maybe	21	25 %
Total	84	100 %

Interpretation

The above chart represents that 54 women respondents feel optimistic about the future of the women in the leadership of the organisation, 09 women respondents states that they don't feel optimistic about the future of the women in the leadership of the organisation while 21 women respondents are not sure about the feel of optimistic about the future of the women in the leadership of the organisation.

Findings and Conclusion

A substantial number of respondents reported not experiencing gender bias in their leadership roles, suggesting that perceptions may vary significantly among individuals. However, few respondents acknowledged facing such bias.

A large majority of respondents believe that their organizations provide adequate support for women leaders. This indicates a positive trend towards fostering an inclusive environment for women in leadership.

The support from male colleagues is perceived positively by many respondents, with neutral responses indicating that male colleagues play an extremely helpful role in supporting women leaders.

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