QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS STUDY OF WOMEN MANAGERS

Introduction

In-depth interview of 15 women managers has undertaken in the study with a motive to explore their leadership and decision making styles. Questions which are asked them are related to their leadership and decision making style, their sex role orientation and organizational culture. The interview guide has consisted with open ended questions. It was divided into five parts like leadership styles, decision making styles, sex role orientation and organizational culture.

LEADERSHIP STYLES OF WOMEN MANAGERS

The interviewee’s opinion was that they exhibit relationship-oriented leadership style. They think that because women are brought up and socialized in a particular way this type of management style suits their personality. Other than this they pointed out that subordinates and superiors never like to take a ‘NO’ from a female manager.

But 60 per cent interviewees accepted that they do not have particular leadership style it is based on the situations and need of the hour they are adopting the style. They prefer mixed leadership styles. They believe that relationship oriented style always not work out. Women are good in task oriented style also.

Leadership is a capability to lead a team. Leadership is an attribute which shows motivation and support to the team. The leader should get the confidence from the team that they take care by the leader in all situations. She added to this that her style is target oriented and aggressive, But she gives the team time to understand what she is expecting from them and try to adapt the situation then only measuring the performance. (Respondent)

Only 5 per cent of the interviewees said that they preferred Authoritarian style. This they explained is their work culture demands that style. It is usually believed that male managers are stricter and assertive compared to female managers. But they feel that women managers also can take strict actions. Sometimes women managers are forced to be stricter with their subordinates.
Many interviewees had the opinion that women managers do not have good networking and focus on career development. They do not update their skills. They need to find out their own mentor in the career. These are the reasons they found for the lesser number of women in senior management. They stated that women are good in management as they have experience in managing different people in the family such as spouse, kids, in-laws and parents.

DECISION MAKING STYLES OF WOMEN MANAGERS

The majority of interviewees agreed that they never take risk in decision making. They consult their subordinates and superiors before taking decisions. Sometimes it is not possible to take decisions based on facts and data so they prefer intuitive decision making. Most of them stated that they play always safe. Because they feel organization has given its resource to them, they need to take care of that. Their decisions should not damage the organization. They think twice before taking a decision. They feel when leaders take a right decision their brand will be high in organization. More than subjective, they take objective decisions for their subordinates.

Some interviewees had the opinion that they take decisions based on data and experience. They believe in “Opportunity Risk”. Without taking some times risky decisions it is difficult to grow in the career. Decisions of a leader are having lots of importance in their career.

A majority interviewees believed that experience is the base for adopting particular decision making style. They feel that instead of adopting particular decision making style based on the need of the organization and situation decision style had to be adopted.

Decision-making style is based on a practical point of view. She never takes decision when emotionally disturbed. She believes that a leader can make better decisions in an organization to ensure the team makes it to the starting line. Leader can assemble the team, work out disagreements among team members who are nipping at one another, decide who needs more training and who must pull more weight. (Respondent)
“Decides on values and set goals are to insure a fruitful decision making-process. Therefore, before making a final decisions or taking any course of action, she discovers and creates as set of alternative course of action and gather information about each. Having two way communications enhance the team’s effectiveness in positive leadership decisions making in any organizations”.(Respondent)

Interviewees stated that organization role is very important in adopting a decision making style. The organizations which give freedom in decision making may help to develop a decision making style. Conservative and stereotypical attitude in the organization never allow women managers to take their own decisions.

**Sex Role Orientation**

The researcher enquired to women managers about their sex role orientation. They believed that there is no relation between biological sex and leadership but sex role orientation can influence leadership and decision making style of a manager. They think that in leadership one can not possess only one gender characteristics and its necessary to adopt both gender characteristics.

“The femininity helped me to mentor her subordinates. Feminine character understands others. So, that the relation with the subordinates are very cordial.”

Some women managers felt that their feminine characteristics have helped them to maintain relationship oriented leadership style. There is a lot of good qualities in feminine which can make use of women in management such as their patience, diplomacy and keeping warm relations. But still feminine characteristics expect obedience in nature.

Women managers were of the view that Androgynous sex role orientations are suitable in the management world. They explained that if one stick to one gender orientation the development of effective management functions in particular situations is not possible. They feel that women managers have to adopt suitable gender orientation based on the situation.
“Women managers are necessary to be able to two dispersed faces: family and career. In Indian society typically, household works, child nurturing, looking after of family etc., rest mainly with the women which need potentials like tolerance, kindliness and nurturance which are measured as basically feminine qualities. In the office, she has to work similarly and sometimes more to prove herself. Sometimes, she is forced to be rough, task oriented and more self-confident, which are considered as conventionally male traits. So, to maintain a work life balance, women managers are required to carry both the feminine as well as masculine qualities” (Respondent)

Organizational Culture

Women managers were asked about their view on their organization’s culture. Since women managers were selected from different industrial sectors their views were different on organizational culture. The demographic profile of the organization has impact on the culture of one organization.

Women managers from manufacturing sectors view that in manufacturing sector women are less at the managerial level. At the recruitment time, more than skills of a person gender is given importance. As a woman whether they can work in night-shifts, travel and handle a group of men employees’ matters in recruitment in manufacturing sector. Even though still there is male domination in management, a change is perceptible and organizations are encouraging women to enter in this field. They felt that in manufacturing sectors the organizational culture is very challenging for them. They need to be more innovative and task-oriented to prove themselves. Women managers in manufacturing sector expressed their need for more women friendly culture. They want flexible work timings; work at home options in manufacturing sector also like other sectors.

The women managers from service and IT sectors have viewed on their organizational culture that these organization cultures broadly support women in management. Their opinion is that there is a lot of opportunity for women to enter in leadership positions. The organizations are supporting and no gender differentiation in allocating leadership positions to women. Gender equality is on the increase in
these sectors. Many women-friendly policies are being introduced in service and IT sectors. There is opportunity is giving for women leaders to take innovative decisions. But one has to use the opportunity and lead effectively.

OBSERVATIONS

From the above in depth interviews it was found that women managers prefer participative and mixed leadership styles. The majority women managers have a clear view about their leadership and decision making style. Women managers are not risk-takers in decision making. They prefer consultative decision making but at the same time they analyse their decisions with data and information.

At the time of interview, the researcher observed that women managers are very confident and active in work place. In between the interview, they were getting phone calls from their clients and subordinates. Even though the researcher had taken prior appointment she had to wait for a long time because the women managers were held up in meetings. It was observed that junior and middle level women managers were not handling the work situation in relaxed way but were a little stressed. Another observation of the researcher was that they were reluctant to accept and acknowledge any sudden demands. They are not flexible in nature. They were comfortable with routine work. But senior women managers were very open and relaxed in their work and they spent lot of time for giving their interviews. This openness and flexibility may be the reason they have reached such senior managerial levels. Another possible reason may be that their experience helped them handle the situations with more relaxed way.

Leadership is challenging and women should be always ready to accept new situations and demands. They need to get trained to handle the work situations in a relaxed manner. Then only they can encourage and motivate their followers. This study suggests that organizations need to give importance on entry level and middle level women managers’ career development and provide special training programmes and mentors in work place.
MAJOR FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Significant Findings

Demographic Profile of Women Managers

- Among women managers (31.5) per cent belonged to the age group of 39-44.
- Majority of the (77.2) per cent of women managers held post graduate degree.
- Most of the (44.4) per cent women managers were working in service sectors.
- The Human Resource Department was the more preferable department among women managers (2.4 percent).
- In work experience (38.6) percent women managers had more than 8 years of experience.
- Most of the women managers (51) per cent belonged to middle level management.
- Most of the women managers (69) per cent secured their promotion less than 3 times in their respective career.
- Most of the women managers (64.7) per cent attended training programmes on leadership style and Decision-Making style.
- Among demographic variables the age, experience, type of industry, managerial level and training are important predictors in aspects of leadership that influence organizational success.

Leadership Style

- Among the three self perceptions leadership styles, (51.5) per cent of women managers practised high level democratic style followed by (49.4) per cent of women managers who practised moderate level of Authoritarian style and (40.7) per cent of women managers practicing laisses faire in high level.
**Sex Role Orientation**

- In large number of women managers (48.1) per cent showed androgynous sex role orientation, followed by feminine and masculine sex role types.

- Among 48.1 per cent Androgynous respondents (22.4 percent) scored high level in democratic style than feminine and masculine respondents. (24.1) per cent Androgynous respondents scored moderate level in Authoritarian and laissez faire styles.

- There is positive correlation between sex role orientation of women managers and all the three leadership styles (Authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire).

**Organizational Culture**

- Majority of the women managers (62.7) percent perceiving moderate level of bureaucratic organizational culture, (52.7) percent of women managers experiencing moderate level of innovative organizational culture and (55.6) per cent of women managers have moderate level of supportive organizational culture.

**Decision-Making Style**

- More than half of the women managers (63.9) per cent endorsed by directive Decision-Making style in dominant level.84.2 percent women managers were least preferred conceptual Decision-Making style.

- In the case of Decision-Making style education, experience, type of industry and managerial level were found to be good predictors.

- Sex role orientation is positively correlative with conceptual and behavioural decision making style.

- The Level of directive Decision-Making and analytical Decision-Making style positively correlating with all three (Authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire). Level of conceptual Decision-Making style is positively
correlated with authoritarian and democratic leadership style but negatively correlated with laissez-faire leadership style. As the level of behavioral Decision-Making style is negatively correlated with all the three leadership styles.

HYPOTHESIS TESTS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

H1: There is no significant relationship between demographic variables such as age, education, experience, managerial level and type of industry and level of authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles.

- A correlation test was applied to understand the relation between demographic profile and leadership styles. It was found that, level of authoritarian leadership is positively correlating with career profile such as education, work experience and managerial level. The Democratic leadership is positively correlating with managerial level alone. Laissez-faire leadership is correlating with age, education, experience and managerial level. Here managerial level is positively correlating with all level of leadership styles.

H2: There will be no significant prediction of laissez-faire leadership style by demographic profile of the respondents.

- In multiple regression models it was found that Sex Role Orientation plays a predominant role in predicting the level of laissez-faire leadership styles of women managers. The ‘t’ value is 4.712 and Beta value .287. Both the values are higher. So sex role orientation is the strongest predictor of the two variables introduced. The second variable age of the respondent’s value is above +2 and so also strong in predicating the level.

H3: There is no significant relationship between demographic variables such as age, education, experience, managerial level and type of industry and level of Directive, Analytical, Conceptual and Behavioural Decision-Making styles.

- Demographic profile variables such as age, Type of industry and experience is positively correlated with all the three Directive, Analytical and Conceptual) decision making style. Level of Behavioural Decision making style is positively correlated to educational status and training attended.
H4: There will be no significant prediction of Directive decision-making style by Demographic profile of the respondents.

- Experience plays a predominant role in predicting the level of Directive Decision Making styles of women managers. The ‘t’ value is 3.566 and Beta value 0.260. Both the values are higher. So experience is the strongest predictor of the two variables introduced. The second variable in the model is managerial level. Though its ‘t’ value is significant (p<0.05), the value is only 1.981. So this variable is only a marginal predictor of the directive decision making style.

H5: There will be no significant prediction of Analytical decision-making style by Demographic profile of the respondents.

- Education plays a predominant role in predicting the level of Analytical Decision Making styles of women managers. The ‘t’ value is 3.300 and Beta value 0.251. Both the values are higher.

H6: There will be no significant prediction of Conceptual decision-making style by Demographic profile of the respondents.

- The result indicates that higher the scores of the respective independent variables, the higher would be the decision making level. In conclusion it is said, that Type of the industry of the women managers have high influence on adopting level of conceptual decision making styles.

H7: There will be no significant prediction of Behavioural decision-making style by Demographic profile of the respondents.

- The result indicates that higher the scores of the respective independent variables, the higher would be the decision making level. In conclusion it is said, that experience of the women managers have high influence on adopting level of behavioural decision making style.
H₈: There is no significant relationship between organizational culture and level of authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire leadership styles.

- Level of authoritarian and democratic leadership positively correlating with Bureaucratic culture and supportive culture. Laissez Faire Leadership level only correlating with innovative culture. As the Beurocratic and supportive culture value increases the authoritarian and democratic leadership level also increases.

H₉: There is no significant relationship between sex role orientation and level of authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire leadership styles.

- Sex role orientation positively correlating with all three (Authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire). As the level of sex role orientation value increases, the authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire leadership traits level also increases.

H₁₀: There is no significant relationship between organizational culture and level of Directive, Analytical, Conceptual and Behavioural Decision-Making.

- Level of Directive and Analytical decision making style is negatively correlating with all organizational cultures. Conceptual Decision making is positively correlating with all organizational cultures. Behavioural decision making is positively correlating with innovative and supportive culture and negatively correlating with Bureaucratic Culture.

H₁₁: There is no significant relationship between sex role orientation and level of Decision-Making style.

- Level of Conceptual and Level of Behavioural decision making style positively correlating with sex role orientation. As the level of Conceptual and Behavioural decision making value increases the sex role orientation effects also increases.
H12: There is no relationship between Directive, Analytical, Conceptual and Behavioural Decision-Making style and the level of authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire leadership style.

- Level of directive decision making and analytical decision making style positively correlating with all three (Authoritarian, democratic and laissez faire). As the level of directive and analytical decision making value increases, the authoritarian leadership style, democratic leadership style and laissez faire leadership traits level also increases. Level of conceptual decision making style is positively correlated with authoritarian and democratic leadership style but negatively correlated with laissez faire leadership style. As the level of behavioural decision making style is negatively correlated with all the three leadership styles.

**IMPLICATIONS**

The above findings have to certain implications for the women managers and organisations which are listed below under the broad headings of demographic profile, leadership styles, sex role orientation, organizational culture and Decision-Making style.

**Demographic Profile**

The result reveals that different industrial sectors of Chennai have middle aged women managers who have post graduate education. More women managers are seen in service sector at the middle management level. The functional area of women managers are mostly HR and administrative department who get less than three times promotion in their career. A majority woman managers have undergone leadership and Decision-Making training.

- Compared to earlier times Indian women are seeking entry into the management world. But from this study it is clear that women still at the senior managerial level are less in number. More women are stuck in junior and middle management level. It is found that in manufacturing sectors the number of women in management is very less.
A change from within the organizations is needed; it requires a change in the organizational structure and cultural biases from male and female managers. The change implies that “creation of workplaces which are more dynamic, flexible, value-diverse, people-oriented and family-friendly. Along with organizational structural change a change in the human mind set, attitudes, beliefs and prejudices against female leadership should change. Without such a transformation of human minds, a change within industrial sectors is not possible.

The result further reveals that women managers secured less than three promotions in their career. Here, women managers were also responsible to develop and upgrade their professional skills periodically for attaining higher positions. Organizations can arrange appropriate career-planning of women managers, where they can rise to the needs of the job fully and excel through competence.

Launching a formal recruitment programme to recruit women at senior levels position and establishing mentoring programs for women will be beneficial to achieve gender equity in corporations.

Leadership Styles of Women Managers

In terms of leadership style, the women managers of the study are seen to be using three styles, i.e. democratic, Authoritarian and laissez faire in various levels. Taking a situational approach, an effective leader/manager is one who always uses the appropriate style for the appropriate situation. In the present study too, the women managers are found not to be restricting themselves to any particular style. They make use of both the relationship oriented and power-oriented styles.

The study seeks to suggest here that Authoritarian and laissez faire leadership being in all situations is not advisable. The women managers are large in number by used this style in this study. The main reason is that in the male-dominated world they try to imitate masculine style. The first generation of women managers had to follow the same style of behaviour for success that applied to men. This new generation of women managers should not follow
the style and habits that have proved successful for men but by making their own unique style based on their socialization and creating a different path to the success. The present study found out that majority women managers are androgynous in their sex role orientation. So an androgynous leadership style will be more suitable for them. Androgynous behavior increases the flexibility and adaptability of individuals as they have access to both behavior patterns depending on situational necessity rather than being confined to socially dictated gender stereotypical behaviour. This flexibility according to demanding circumstances is imperative for managers who have to constantly keep adjusting to environmental challenges.

**Organizational Culture**

In this study, the women managers have shown a moderate level of organizational culture. Organizational culture has been divided into three dimensions as Beurocratic, Innovative and Supportive. In all these dimensions women managers were expressing moderate level culture.

- Organizations need to understand that an organization that is able to embrace both masculine and feminine characteristics and qualities are the most successful. This study would like to define and enhance the leadership skills and culture that work toward organizational success, not gender-categorized, but a combination that is successful and effective for male or female. In addition, it is important to recognize that the successful combination might vary by the type of the organization, as well as the situation.

- Instead of shaping a stereotypical gender-biased organizational culture we need to think about skill sets. Just as women in the past appropriated masculine leadership attributes, it is now important for men to incorporate these typically female skills into their toolkit. Many feminine attributes have often proved to be organizational effectiveness this combination will lead towards the breakdown of gender-defined attributes and help us to recognize that having a spectrum of the diverse qualities mentioned above—gender tags removed - created a women-friendly organizational culture and women managers may feel high level of organizational culture.
Decision-Making Style

Directive Decision-Making style in dominant level is used by majority women managers to take decisions. Directive Decision-Making style makes the subordinates dependent. The manager/leader will decide what she wants, when she wants it, and will find someone to execute her wish. The findings of this study are against the myth that women managers are more relationship-oriented and give importance and consider others suggestion.

- Women managers should not restrict their Decision-Making style to any particular Decision-Making behaviour. It is not advisable and result oriented to use directive Decision-Making style in all situations.

- It is found that conceptual Decision-Making style is used in the least preferable way. The other two Decision-Making styles (analytical and behavioural) are also used by majority in the back-up level and the least preferred level. Conceptual Decision-Making style is based on creativity, risk and flexibility. For avoiding risk women managers are not using conceptual Decision-Making. But risk-taking is an indispensable part of leadership/management. In some situations without taking risk they not able to make any difference to the system. This is one of the reasons the corporate world prefers male leadership. If they decide to enter in the management world it is the responsibility of women managers to train themselves to handle risky situations, instead of being risk avoiders and resort to safer options.

- This study suggested that women managers can adopt a mixed style of Decision-Making style based on their organizational demands. They should be flexible enough to take decisions with regard to their subordinates.

- Organizations could conduct special training programme on Decision-Making skills for women in management positions. They could also impart training programmes especially for women at the entry level to enable them to identify their Decision-Making style and to cope with organizational culture. These programmes should aim at providing the participant with insight into their various roles and equipping them with necessary skills to effectively perform their roles.