

Determination in Leadership: A Study on Women's Leadership in Indian Government Services and Armed Forces

Hemlata Vivek Gaikwad^{1,2*} and Suruchi Pandey³

¹Management Studies, Faculty of Management, Symbiosis International (Deemed University) (SIU), Lavale, Pune, 411057, Maharashtra, India

²Department of Management Studies, Rajarambapu Institute of Technology, Islampur 415414, Maharashtra, India

³Management Studies, Faculty of Management, Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies, Symbiosis International (Deemed University) (SIU), Lavale Pune, 411057, Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT

This article describes lived experiences of successful women leaders in government administration organizations in India. The analysis of women's experiences revealed the enablers and deterrents faced by these women in their leadership trajectories. These factors are categorized as an individual: family background and childhood experiences, self-aspiration and leadership development and work-life balance and familial support or organizational viz. workplace and sociocultural challenges and success mantras. A combination of them has influenced the progression of these women. The results present the need for a massive social change initiated by human service organizations to shift the so-called patriarchal social system. The paper has identified various dimensions like prioritizing promoting diversity, mentoring, and redesign of human resource policies which need to be focused. Also, the organizations and government can use these findings to design development programs for realistically promoting more women to higher positions.

Keywords: Armed forces, government services, India, intersectionality, leadership, women

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 11 June 2021

Accepted: 19 November 2021

Published: 07 March 2022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.30.1.06>

E-mail addresses:

hemlata.vivek@gmail.com (Hemlata Vivek Gaikwad)

suruchi.p@sims.edu (Suruchi Pandey)

* Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

Women leadership has been a topic of immense interest among researchers bringing out constraints like glass ceiling (Bell et al., 2015; Sakshi Sharma & Kaur, 2019), tokenism (Flores, 2011; Watkins et al., 2019), backlash effect (Phelan & Rudman, 2010), lack of fit perception (Heilman & Martell, 1986; Horvath &

Sczesny, 2016) and gender stereotyping or orthodoxy (Asgari & Dasgupta, 2004; Senior et al., 2014). Women are considered less competent and ambitious, more sentimental (Billing & Alvesson, 2000) than men, and are generally neglected while considering leadership positions (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). In their study, Gipson et al. (2017) confirm that women are discriminated against in the leadership selection process worldwide. These constraints and discriminations pose dire consequences for gender equality¹ and undermine women's leadership competence at every stage in their career (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Player et al., 2019). At the same time, it impacts organizational effectiveness also, as organizations with gender-diverse leadership see significant business benefits (Turban et al., 2019).

Leadership studies on Indian women have also reflected these constraints apart from the prevalence of stereotyped notions of women roles, preference towards masculine hegemony, and patriarchal attitudes in Indian society (Gandhi & Sen, 2020; Gupta & Saran, 2013; Mythili, 2017). Alsharif (2018), in his study, has identified four major factors affecting women's career advancement, viz. cultural, individual, organizational, and family. Similar challenges are reported by researchers across the globe (Kapur, 2019; Posholi, 2013; Raja, 2016). Indian Government services and Armed forces are

¹ The country's Gender Inequality Index (GII) at 0.563 is worse than the world average of 0.450, further affirming the societal discrimination towards a gender-based leadership role.

no exception to this. There are still some positions like cabinet secretary, chief of air, naval and army staff, governor of Reserve bank of India, Chairman of Securities and Exchange Board of India, etc. Women have still not been able to break the glass ceilings. The composition of the leader boards is at greater odds with the gender makeup of the society. The personal, sociocultural, or organizational factors that affect women's rise to upper echelons are alike for all women; however, few successfully break these barriers and advance to higher leadership positions. The present study intends to analyze the enablers and impediments experienced by these successful women. Studies on women's leadership in the Indian Government services and Armed forces are limited (Beniwal & James, 2019; Kabir, 2013; Misra and Singh, 2018). They also lack the application of intersectionality theory in explaining the constraints and opportunities involving discourses of opportunity, privilege, and identity. Generic studies on Indian women leaders, too, lack the application of intersectionality in analyzing their performance, perceptions, challenges, and strategies (Bhattacharya et al., 2018; Duflo & Topalova, 2004; Gupta & Saran, 2013; Vasavada, 2012).

India is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious country. This research posits that the lack of women leadership in the Indian Government services and Armed forces cannot be analyzed without considering the country's multifaceted social structure—an amalgamation of ethnic groups, castes, race, languages, cultures, and

religions. This structure defines and nurtures the identities of its women, who are not 'stable' or 'homogenous' beings (Menon, 2015). Therefore, understanding the success stories of these women leaders requires an analysis of complex social structure through the application of intersectionality theory. The intersectionality theory emphasizes the ideas and social practices of "gender, race, multiple identities and the intersection of multiple identities" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 171). The theory is still at its nascent stage, primarily applied in building gender and feminist narrative, which were, until now, majorly understood as homogenous accounts (see Haq, 2013; Mangubhai & Capraro, 2015; Menon, 2015; Mirza, 2018; Purkayastha, 2012; Raman, 2020; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Therefore, the primary thrust of the study was to use an intersectional lens to throw light on the process, which enabled the successful few to move up the ladder. The study argued that the upbringing, exposures during early childhood years, the social background and familial and organizational support, and self-aspiration at various stages of their career played a critical role in the women's success as leaders.

Women in Leadership in a Global Context

Across the globe, countries have faced challenges related not only to the leadership of women, but the roots go to the challenges with the education of women. Despite an increase in the gross enrolment ratio of women and the percentage of women in

higher education, only 36% of women occupy leadership roles across the globe (World Economic Forum, 2020). From 1960 till 2021, only 75 countries have reached and held the highest positions of executive power ("Number of countries where the de facto highest position," n.d.). Christie et al. (2017), in their study, have pointed out that women leaders are less acceptable as compared to male leaders. Naff (2001) and Guy and Newman (2004), in their studies, have found that women's representation is concentrated at lower levels in civil services. Researchers across the globe have confirmed the underrepresentation of women in leadership (Bowling et al., 2006; Maphunye, 2007). The report by the guardian (Dudman, 2016) showed that there is not a single country in G20 where 50% of women occupy top government positions.

Indian Government services, Armed forces, and Women Leadership

The present study focuses on all Indian civil services and military services. In India, the government services are categorized into All India level, Central level, and state-level services. All India services are—Indian Administrative services (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and Indian Forest Services (IFS)². The first dispatch of the Indian Government on the Indian Constitutional Reforms on 5 March 1919 marks the origin of the Public Service Commission in India. It referred to the requirement for setting up a permanent office for the regulation of service

² For details see https://web.archive.org/web/20150925101556/http://knowindia.gov.in/myindia/myindia_frame.php?id=6

matters. With some further changes year on year, the Government of India Act, 1935, envisioned a Public Service Commission for the Federation. For handling provinces and groups of provinces, a provincial Public Service Commission was put in place. On 1 April 1937, the Public Service Commission has renamed the Federal Public Service Commission. In the inauguration of the Indian Constitution on 26 January 1950, the Federal Public Service Commission was renamed again to the Union Public Service Commission. UPSC has conducted the recruitment and selection process of all India-level civil services since then.

The civil services have continued to remain a male preserve, with the percentage of women being very low due to a complex interplay between various sociocultural, ideological, and personal factors. It was exclusively for men during the pre-independence era. Post- Independence, there was a provision for women to enter civil services. Still, rule 5(3) of IAS (1954) (Department of Personnel and Training) empowered the Government to demand resignation from women officers after marriage on the grounds of efficiency. After lots of protests, the government scrapped this rule in 1972. However, the number of women in civil services is not improving.

The male-to-female ratio is at great odds comparing the gender composition of Indian society. It is not surprising that even after seven decades of independence, we do not have any women reaching the post of cabinet secretary, the top post in Indian bureaucracy (Shantanu Sharma, 2020). The scene is improving slowly, but still, there is a long way to go.

Indian armed forces consist of three professional uniformed services: the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Airforce. The first women officer was commissioned in the Indian army on 6 March 1993. The composition of the Indian armed forces is also at odds considering the gender makeup of the society they represent, showing the silence of women’s voices. The current number of women in the three-armed forces in March 2020 is as under:

The answers to these inequalities are complex and deep-rooted in the complex labyrinth of India’s sociocultural and economic systems. Indian society is male-dominated, with women being the primary caregivers in the family. In the Indian sociocultural milieu, the societal expectations for 3C’s (Cooking, Caring, and Cleaning) are very high, and 48% of the women quit their work midway to attend family commitments (Viewport,

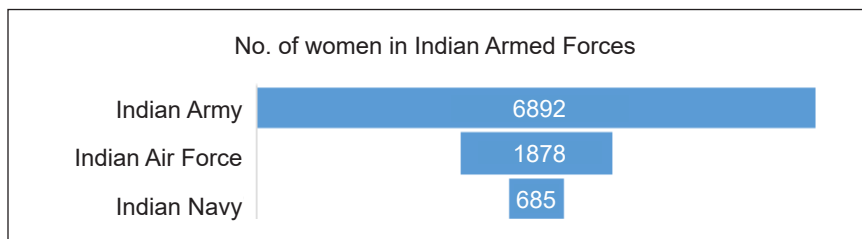


Figure 1. Number of women in armed forces

2019). Though the Indian constitution (Article 16) provides equal rights to men and women, strong patriarchal traditions prevail nationwide. Women are considered a liability since they are born and discriminated against during each life cycle stage—daughter, sister, and wife (Mohapatra, 2015). Despite all these challenges, few women have proved themselves in breaking all barriers and raising themselves to the top leadership positions they have always dreamed of. The present study contributes by identifying the enablers of their success using an intersectional lens.

Purpose

This study investigates the journey and success stories of selected women occupying top leadership positions in Indian Government Services within the Indian society. The research study focuses on the following specific research questions:

What are the major challenges women face in Government services in India, and what strategies have they used to overcome them?

What are the factors contributing positively to the career advancement of these women?

METHODS

The purpose of the present study was to explore the lived experiences of Indian women leaders at the top positions in Indian Civil Services and armed forces in their journeys of navigation to the top. As the study examined the key competencies and strategies that helped these women ascend,

the qualitative approach was necessary (Weick, 2007). The study allowed the researcher to gain insights from their experiences and understand how they overcame the challenges and rose above. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to conduct in-depth interviews using semi-structured and open-ended research instruments and understand their experiences (García-González et al., 2019). The open-ended interview questions helped capture the maximum possible unexpected themes to emerge. A protocol to guide the interview was prepared (Yin, 2013), focusing on only the psychosocial and demographic factors and organizational contexts to have a deeper understanding of the constraints and opportunities faced, contributing altogether to their success as leaders. Purposive sampling (Guest et al., 2006; Patton, 2002) was used to select the study participants. Besides, insights on success stories and associated constraints experienced by women leaders from different countries' intersections needed to be gathered.

This study took care to select the sampled population as representatives of caste (backward and general caste), race (tribals and non-tribals), region (rural and urban areas of South and North India), language, and class (lower, middle, and upper-income group). Eighteen women belonging to the top leadership positions for the study were invited, but only eight agreed to participate. The establishment of trustworthiness created a good rapport between the participants and the researchers, resulting in a frank and open exchange of

information and honesty in data sharing (Shenton, 2004). Besides, considering the cultural dimensions associated with the participants, the questions were tested with experienced peers and shared an interview guide with the participants before conducting the actual interview. At the same time, the testing of the questionnaire enabled us to take cognizance of the difficult questions which might affect the intersectional sensitivity (primarily cultural). The interview guide enabled the participants to be prepared with the nature of questions to be asked in the interview (Birt et al., 2016; Sinkovics et al., 2008).

The single broad question guiding the complete interview was “What are the lived experiences of women leaders in Indian Civil Services and Armed Forces?” The interview protocol consisted of six open-ended phenomenological questions. The questions dealt with topics of childhood trivia like school education, parental role and role of friends and society in developing their leadership skills, familial support—both of parents and in-laws towards the educational aspiration and skill-related efficacies. The further discussion involved their perception of successful leadership, ambition, role model, attitude towards society and social norms, discrimination, and emotional stability. The last part of the discussion involved organizational facilitators in career development and leadership success, the attitude of co-workers and mentors, and growth opportunities. Through these elements of discussion, the researchers gathered insights on the barriers and challenges the participants experienced and

the strategies they developed to overcome the barriers and ensure effective leadership in their organizations. As per each interview’s requirements, additional questions were asked. This study conducted the interviews using SKYPE and personal visits as per the convenience of the participants. The interviews were audio-recorded with prior permission from the participants.

However, two participants did not permit the recording and only took written notes. This capturing of data was the first step called Horizontalization as per Moustakas’s (1994) gap method of inductive research data analysis. The interviews were transcribed to associate the meanings with the non-verbal signs and block personal bias and judgments. Considering the nuances of the intersectional identities of the participants and maintaining the trustworthiness of the data, we collected the participants’ validation of the data by debriefing the analytical results with them for agreement (Creswell, 2013; McGrath et al., 2019). We funneled the data to avoid redundancy and repetition and the emergence of post-epoch themes. Coding was completed in four phases. Initial codes were developed by identifying fascinating features across the entire dataset. The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used wherein a new dataset was compared with previous data and coded. Potential themes were developed by collating codes and collecting all data relevant to each potential theme. The entire dataset and themes were then reviewed to confirm that themes reflect the richness of data address the research question accurately (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The data saturation occurred after the sixth interview, but all eight interviews were completed to ensure richness of data. The demographic profile of the participants is presented in Table 1.

RESULTS

An analysis of the data gathered from the interviews (Table 2) was categorized into five themes viz Family Background and Childhood Experiences, Self-aspiration and leadership development, Work-life balance and Familial support, Workplace and Sociocultural Challenges, and strategies adopted for overcoming barriers. The

themes represent the lived experiences of these women leaders from childhood to the professional roles they currently fill.

Family Background and Childhood Experiences

This theme reflected that the family background and childhood experiences played an important role in developing confidence and leadership qualities. All participants revealed that their parents and their grandparents were educated. It provided them with a supportive environment for education at home. The experiences were similar irrespective of the regions (rural and

Table 1
Participant's profile

Participant ID	Age	Marital Status	Service Sector**	Location (till education)	Position*
1	31–40	Married	Civil Service	Semi-Rural	Top
2	41–50	Married	Civil Service	Semi-Urban	Middle
3	51–60	Married	Armed Forces	Urban	Top
4	41–50	Married	Armed Forces	Rural	Top
5	31–40	Single	Civil Service	Semi-Urban	Middle
6	61–70	Married	Civil Service	Urban	Top
7	51–60	Married	Civil Service (Retired)	Urban	Top
8	51–60	Married	Civil Service	Rural	Middle

*Top refers to the higher-level leadership positions, Middle refers to the middle-level leadership positions.

**The civil service and armed forces sector are not specified as IPS, IAS or IFS / Army, Airforce, Navy to avoid identification of the participants.

Table 2
Analysis of the interviews

Themes	Example Quotes	No. of Instances
Family Background and Childhood Experiences	My parents and grandparents were highly educated. Great people like Jyotiba Phule used to come to our house to meet my grandfather (P8). I belong to a well-educated family with high ethical values. My parents always encouraged me to do something for society (P7).	24

Table 2 (continue)

Themes	Example Quotes	No. of Instances
Self-aspiration and leadership development	<p>I always wanted to lead, and I did the same from my school days, taking initiatives in my classroom in my school events, and it continued in my college days too. You don't need a position to be a leader, you know (P2). To enter the armed forces, you need to clear an SSB interview, a five-day-long process, which tests your leadership qualities. I had always prepared myself for it. I kept reading lots of articles on leadership development, and I continue to do so. And yes, I could do it, because I always wanted to become a leader (P3).</p> <p>I played badminton during my school and college days and represented my state at the national level. I was house captain in the school for many years. I also participated in dance and other cultural activities during school. All of these allowed me to taste the leadership skills throughout my school days (P6).</p>	21
Work-life balance and Familial support	<p>I must go on training often. Many times, emergencies come when I must go early in the morning or at night. It gets very late to come back. Also, my family members support me during such times. I have a small daughter, and during such times my family members cooperate a lot (P4). The biggest hurdle that women face is juggling between managing kids and careers. Though men also must balance between career and personal life, women shoulder the major portion of managing the house and children, but I am really lucky to have Ashish (Pseudo Name); he always supported me (P3).</p>	26
Workplace and Sociocultural Challenges	<p>Today women possess higher educational qualifications. Together with it, we observe they have simultaneously developed self-confidence and sometimes arrogance; Few men have learned to accept the educated woman and voluntarily lend the required support as a part of your team. However, not men have changed, and society has not changed its expectations from women (P8).</p> <p>Police Services is a Man's world. People at first instance never believe that a woman can handle this job effectively. She must prove herself to win the trust (P6).</p>	23
Success Mantras	<p>Women usually focus on administrative tasks as they believe doing is more important, whereas men spend more time networking and skill upgrades. They do all the talk and women do a lot of walks. Women should also get into perception building, be abreast with current affairs and technology, keep upgrading skills. I always focused on developing my network (P8).</p> <p>I always felt that every challenge has hidden an opportunity. I have developed a habit not to see the challenge but the hidden opportunity. And I could avail the same with the help of my mentor. P2</p> <p>Since women need to manage work and personal lives, they need to be confident not feel guilty when they need to leave the office early—Voice out their opinions. Like men ask for their promotions, be more responsible for their careers and not expect their bosses to build their careers (P5).</p>	29

*All participants had mentioned each theme at least 2-3 times during their interview.

urban areas of Deccan, North or South³) or religion or caste. Eccles' expectancy-value theory also emphasizes that parents play an important role in providing achievement experiences during childhood. It further states that parents' values and gender-related stereotypes influence children's self-perception about their abilities and motivation levels (Eccles, 1987). Six of the seven participants iterated that their parents never discriminated among them and their brothers. One participant attributed the same to her grandparents. They shared that their parents made sure that they faced no gender discrimination from relatives or anyone else in society. It made a big impact on increasing their confidence level and helped them develop leadership qualities.

To quote:

"Whatever I am today is because of my family's support. Without that, I would not have reached the position where I am today. My parents were the mentors and role models for me. They always supported me whenever I had any up or down."

Another experience:

"My parents always encouraged me to play outdoor games like football and volleyball ...my favorites, unlike my friends, who had to struggle even for coming out of their home for playing. These games helped

develop my team spirit. I was the best runner hence I used to take part in relay also. I strongly feel that it was the time qualities like team building and conflict handling started developing in me." (P3)

Other participants' views also supported the same by indicating that they had the full support of their parents, and they were always promoted to take part in all events, including sports. These findings indicate a strong impact of their childhood and upbringing on the women's self-confidence and leadership development.

Participant P3 affectionately shared,

"My father was a school principal. At various events, he used to invite eminent motivational speakers. As I was also studying in the same school, I used to get a lucky chance to meet them in person. I used to get so inspired that I used to get on with my studies with double the efforts to become like them one day."

Self-Aspiration and Leadership Development

Women in the workforce have lower aspirations to secure top positions and less confidence in their leadership qualities than men. A survey conducted by Deloitte (2015) found that only 57% of millennial women have ambitions to reach senior management positions. Only 21% rated themselves "Strong" on their leadership skills. Contrarily, all participants perceived that their strong aspiration for acquiring

³ While South India here meant the four southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka, North India was represented by the rest of the Indian states, including the Deccan and North-Eastern States.

senior positions played a very important role in their leadership journey. Participant P4 expressed,

“Since my school days, I aspired to lead all activities and did my best to get such opportunities. I always wanted to be a leader, and thus I prepared well for the public service commission examination and came out in flying colors.”

Participant P5 endorsed the same:

“An important aspect of leadership is believing in that you can be a leader. I strongly believed in my capabilities and kept on seeing myself as a leader and retained my aspirations in adverse times also.”

Participant P7 stressed,

“People talk about glass ceilings, but I say it is a sticky floor; women have self-doubts on their capabilities and hence hesitate to take the step forward. They lack the aspirations to engage in senior leadership roles.”

The participants expressed that they should develop their leadership skills formally or informally with a strong belief in themselves, a high aspiration.

Participant P1 mentioned,

“I was fortunate that the Government organizes leadership development programs for the successful civil aspirants. It allowed me to sharpen my leadership skills.”

Participant P7 shared,

“I had completed a Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science. I believe the soft skills programs and my active participation in extracurricular during these four years taught me critical thinking and decision making, which were crucial in my first leadership position. Early on, I learned effective habits from Steven Covey’s Book.” which has helped me progress to date.

I feel my communication skills are good (laughs - praising myself). I had worked hard to develop them during my initial college days. It always helped me in building good teams and rapport”. (P4)

It shows that gender, socioeconomic status, parents’ occupation, level of education, and expectations impact career aspirations (Khallad, 2000). The participants also endorsed and reflected self-aspiration and belief in their competence proved to be the keys to success in achieving the leadership positions.

Work-Life Balance and Familial Support

In Indian society, a woman is expected to wear multiple hats of a mother, daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, and her role at the workplace. Hence, it is often challenging for them to balance their work lives. Six of the seven participants mentioned facing

challenges balancing their personal and work life, while one could do it easily because of her joint family. Participant P2 commented,

“My husband and I are in the same profession, and it was hardly a few years when we were posted together. I stayed at my station with my kids, taking their school assignments, running alone during their illnesses, and performing my duties. But I enjoyed my personal life and work-life too. Though my husband was posted at a different place, his support always motivated me to move ahead in my career.”

She happily added,

“I have realized the importance of teamwork, both at home and workplace. I need to be replaced by “WE” to step from “Illness” to “Wellness.” We must dedicate time to building a team and giving due credit to each member. Collective competency should support Individual intelligence. Moreover, focus, balance, and time management are essential.”

On a similar note, Participant P6 shared,

“I have to move out on duty ant time. There is no day and night. Thanks to my husband and my parents, they are there with my daughter, so I can do my work without tension. Today, I had left home at 4 a.m. because

of a critical incident in a nearby village. I returned around 10 a.m. and immediately changed and went to my kid’s parent-teacher’s meeting, which was possible only because someone was there at home for the kids.”

All participants mentioned having a supporting spouse and mother-in-law. Interestingly one of the participants had a lot of mental support from her kids also, which she mentioned very emphatically,

“I asked my kids that if you want, I can resign and stay back. But they said (satisfactory laugh), we do not want a full-time mom.” (P3)

Participant P7 expressed,

“Due to my career requirements, I’ve moved my family; this was probably my fourth move, and each time I talked to my spouse, and he agreed, though he had to start developing his clients every time all over again. One must have the spousal support specifically to handle the work-life balance effectively.”

Participant P1 staying in a joint family said,

“I never faced any challenge balancing my work and personal life. Family members were always there at home to take care of my spouse and my kids. My sister-in-

law also works, so we help each other, you know that's how it is. ..."

Although it was tough balancing the work and personal life, all the participants did justice at both places; as participant P3 mentioned,

"Any person who needs to wear multiple hats should be tough to scale the heights of success."

Workplace and Sociocultural Challenges

All the participants stated that navigating higher was difficult in this field due to the gendered outlook and resistance they faced from men in their fields. The participants perceived a lack of women in their fields, especially at the higher ranks. Five of them personally experienced a negative attitude towards women, three of them being the first movers in their areas. They unanimously agreed that it is not easy to be a woman in the Men's world. The majority of participants faced negative remarks from their society also.

Relating to this participant, P6 added,

"Police Services is a Man's world. People at first instance never believe that a woman can handle this job effectively. She must prove herself to win the trust. However, it is the opposite for men. They are being trusted first, and if maybe if they are unable to handle some issue, then people talk about their incapability. My male subordinates

didn't even want to salute me, Though I was their boss. They used to find shortcuts like coming to my cabin without putting on a cap, as to salute, you must have your cap on. They used to think, what does she know about the police?"

Participant P4 commented,

"My biggest challenge was being a woman in a male-dominated society. Each move was monitored with a lens. At every posting I went, I used to be the first woman there. This posed all the more challenges that I had to prove my worth every time."

She added,

"Most of the time, I used to be the only woman in the board room. The field is not women-friendly."

Participant P3 smilingly expressed,

"The challenges were phenomenal. Every place I started performing well, these male officers used to feel insecure, and the results were 'Transfers.' This time also, I had brought immense changes at my unit. Suddenly my superior called me and said, you are being transferred. He was expecting me to resist as the place of posting was a very tough place. But I said yes, I am fine. You know, I took this also an opportunity."

She added,

“At my new posting also, men were not ready to accept a woman in combat uniform and that she is intelligent enough to give solutions to big problems and will always relegate you. Usually, people do not accept females in leadership positions and try to counter the decisions simply because they come from a lady. But slowly, that trend is changing for good.”

At the societal front also, she expressed, that

“when I joined army one of my aunts said- oh! I had thought she is a very intelligent girl; didn't she get any other job?”

A similar view was expressed by participant P1,

“My parents were very supportive. I changed my field of education many times, but they always encouraged me by saying, do whatever interests you. But the neighbors and my relatives were always nagging and giving advice to them; that it is high time, she is not stable anywhere. You should get her married now.”

Participant P7 had something different to add, she said,

“The intake of civil services itself is very skewed with around 10-15% of women in every batch, and though a

lot of women officers are qualified, they are side-lined in promotions.”

Participant P6 expressed,

“For earning promotions, your informal network should be very good. At the same time, you need to promote yourself. Though I have a good network, a male prefers a male when it comes to having a boss. You know it is like this everywhere, and civil services are no exception.”

An article in a national daily also reported such biases against women officers (Dhingra, 2019). It mentioned the voices of some senior women civil servants saying that they had seen many competent women being side-lined for the post of cabinet secretary even when they were adequately qualified.

The experiences of these women are only a few examples in their fields. The government offices are all male-dominated posing immense challenges to women working there, even more if the boss is a male.

Success Mantras

Many participants mentioned having a mentor in their personal or professional lives. At the personal level, six participants had their mother or father as the mentor, whereas the seventh participant had her grandfather. On the organizational front also, five of them agreed to have a mentor. At the same time, all of them believed that two

things are very important for advancing in their career, one networking and the second voicing out opinions. They all had varied experiences of mentoring, networking, and voicing opinions. The views expressed by the participants are as follows:

Participant P1 Mentioned,

“My mother always mentored me. She advised and hand holded me whenever I was stuck up. Though she was a primary school teacher, her suggestions for my field were remarkable. One more thing I want to stress is that networking is essential. I used to think that going to various events as a guest, giving bytes on media is just a show-off. But later, I realized that people listen to your advice if they know you and that you are an authority.”

She added,

“Also, learn to ask things for yourself- be it promotion or postings, or staying at the same post. If you will not speak, how do you expect them to understand what you want?”

Participant P4 expressed,

“I had a mentor in the initial stages of my career. She truly guided, mentored, and honed my leadership skills. She had taught me leadership in difficult times. In our field, there is a huge impact on politicians. I used to observe her leadership

skills and tried to emulate them many times.” As far as networking is concerned, it is very important in our field. For implementing our ideas, we need to garner political and budgetary support, which I could get because of the support of my network.

Participant P7 also added a similar experience,

“I had my senior as my mentor. He did not mentor me directly, but he used to support me and my strategies and suggestions whenever we had senior management meetings. He used to say that we will try this also, which was a piece of indirect advice to me. Also, for you to advance, networking is a must. You must develop your network to make people speak for you.”

Participant P4 shared an experience of voicing out opinion,

“In my first posting, during an important meeting, where I was the only woman (which was so most of the time), the chairman took opinion from everyone except me. When he was announcing his final decision, I interrupted him, saying that I want to put forth my point of view, which is very different from what others have presented. Although he looked a little annoyed, he asked me to go ahead. After listening to me, he agreed to discuss the same

with higher authorities, which was finally implemented. Believe me; if I had kept quiet that day, it would have become the routine.”

These experiences reveal that the success mantras for the progression consist of networking, mentoring, and voicing opinions for these women.

DISCUSSION

There is a vast disparity of women compared to men in the government sector in India, specifically in leadership roles. Seven decades after independence, there are positions where women have not been able to break the glass ceilings yet like cabinet secretary, chairman of Indian Space Research Organization, Chairperson of Securities exchange board of India, Governor of Reserve bank of India, to name a few. Although owing to their position and power, women leaders are privileged yet, they experience marginalization (Poltera & Schreiner, 2019). While several factors influence the progression of women in Indian government organizations, most of them can be attributed to the social norms prevalent in Indian society (Chapman & Mishra, 2019). However, the participants' narratives revealed that though difficult, it is not impossible to break these barriers. The study concludes that Indian women leaders face unique challenges in their leadership trajectory due to the social structure of Indian society and the orthodox patriarchal mindset. However, if women have aspirations and are backed by familial

support, they cannot be stopped from achieving their dreams.

The intersectional perspective of this study highlights the fact that if women are supported at the personal and organizational fronts, complemented with their self-aspiration for achieving leadership roles, they can break any barrier and rise higher. The participants faced many challenges like workplace stereotyping and sociocultural challenges prevalent in the discussion. They also juggled to take due care of their work and home responsibilities, but they emphasized that these also could not stop them from moving ahead. Now and then, the participants emphasized that the challenges were phenomenal, but their determination, commitment, and spirit to perform paved the way for advancement; the same is in confirmation with the findings of Grady et al. (2008), Stam et al. (2018) and Javadi et al. (2016). Most of them perceived that their childhood experiences and upbringing played a major role in shaping their leadership aspirations and skills in conformity with the study carried out by Jodl et al. (2001). The same is lacking in the extant literature on Indian women's leadership research. Brought up in different locations (rural /urban), religions (Hindu/Christian), caste (Brahmin/Maratha/Shudra), and race (Tribal/Non-tribal), the participants commonly identified their parents support (privilege) in childhood years, safeguarding them from societal pressures of gender discrimination (oppression). The study has shown that the self-aspiration of women and their efforts in developing their leadership

skills acted as the most important enabler in their leadership journeys. It contradicts the findings of Chaturvedi and Sahai (2019). They found that women belonging to peri-urban areas realize their aspirations more confidently than those in rural areas and that educational outcomes are low in tribal compared to non-tribal. Research also suggests that women belonging to lower caste face a higher level of discrimination than upper-caste women (Anne et al., 2013; Patel et al., 2020). This study has highlighted that such discriminations have not influenced the leadership trajectories of the participants indicating the necessity of using an intersectional lens than a unitary lens. The participants agreed to hear negative remarks from their male counterparts, seniors, and society. In common parlance, they reflected that it was difficult to perform in men's world. Being women, they had to prove themselves to earn trust and respect (Challenge). Irrespective of the locations, the challenges were similar. Such challenges have continued to stymie women's progress to higher positions (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013; Saadin et al., 2016).

Nonetheless, the participants utilized various strategies like networking, support from their mentors, and voicing out their opinions to overcome them. Networking is argued as an important tool for career progression (Yukl, 2006) and that formal networks are more important for overcoming obstacles and advancing professionally (Helmer et al., 2010). Helmer et al. (2010) further emphasize that having a mentor is crucial at higher positions for garnering

support and enhancing information sharing (Bushee et al., 2010; Hart, 2009; Pinto, 2007). In their study, Smith and Wrynn (2010) also noted that mentoring is an opportunity for the professional development of women to support their career advancement. Concerning work-life balance, the participants again had similar experiences. Most of them considered themselves lucky to have familial support, especially spousal (Privilege). They agreed that their jobs are harsh with their presence required any time irrespective of day/night (see. Experience of P4 quoted) (Challenge); however, their families always stood by them and their kids. The present study supports the importance of a supportive spouse and in-laws in the leadership trajectories of women. Valk and Srinivasan (2011) and Quesenberry et al. (2006) also found that a supportive husband plays a crucial role in achieving work-life balance. The women in India continue to struggle wearing multiple hats. Often, they feel guilt for their inability to spend time with their kids and families (Slaughter, 2012), in contrast to the women in western countries, where they get organizational support in terms of women-friendly policies (Straub, 2007).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this qualitative study focusing on women leaders in Indian government organizations contributes significantly to the existing literature by identifying the themes that impact the leadership trajectory of successful women leaders irrespective of their race, caste, location, or religion.

While their parents were educated, they were privileged to be brought up in a gender-neutral environment and access to education. Despite the challenges they faced from their male colleagues, bosses or subordinates, and society, they could overcome them through their networks and mentors. They were strong enough to speak up wherever they felt neglected or discriminated. They also thought that this was possible because of the familial support they received consistently. An implication is that men (at home, spouses) must change their mindset and work for women's advancement. At the same time, it sends a message to aspiring women that if their aspirations are strong and they take efforts to develop their leadership skills, they can move up the career ladder. An implication for organizations is to design women-friendly policies like flextime, unpaid family leaves, onsite childcare facilities, etc., as in western countries to make the work for women easier.

The participants' experiences raised brainstorming issues at the family, society, and governmental levels. Indian Government should think about redesigning HR policies to make more and more women enter the workforce and rise higher to leadership positions. The identified dimensions can work as a platform for the redesign.

Practice Implications

Lived experiences of successful women leaders were studied using thematic analysis to identify the factors influencing their career advancement. The study found that

irrespective of their intersectional identities, the women can shatter the barriers and rise above with their determination, self-aspiration, and familial support. These findings may help policymakers in the Indian Government and armed forces design women-friendly policies and make armed forces and civil services more attractive to women. This research has shown that though the constitution gives equal opportunity to all with rules and regulations related to it in organizations, the real picture is different. It indicates that Government needs to place more priority on promoting diversity. Civil Services and armed forces do not have reservations or quotas for women or any caste. Hence, only changing mindset and making the organizational environment more friendly could be the solutions. Also, women should be mentored by senior leaders for career advancement. It can be planned strategically to monitor, evaluate and mentor aspiring women leaders.

Familial support and upbringing are other vital aspects requiring a change in societal mindset. Bringing reform from the perspective of families and social groups can be a long-term goal for human service organizations. To be successful in their career and for a consistent rise in the leadership roles, younger aspiring women should remember that if their self-aspiration is high, they will be able to overcome the challenges as these women had done. They can start by heading small committees whenever opportunities are available and should practice metacognition while dealing with a difficult situation. They should

evaluate the pitfalls as well as the victories and can use that information in building their self-confidence and go on to head larger committees and lead bigger events.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All participants were acknowledged for their time and trust in us and for sharing their personal information.

REFERENCES

- Akpinar-Sposito, C. (2013). Career barriers for women executives and the glass ceiling syndrome: The case study comparison between French and Turkish women executives. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 75, 488-497. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.04.053>
- Alsharif, S. A. (2018). The challenges associated with women career development at the state universities in Saudi Arabia: A ground theory approach. *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies*, 6(2), 18-30. <http://doi.org/10.15640/ijgws.v6n2a3>
- Anne, M., Callahan, J., & Kang, H. (2013). Gender and caste intersectionality in the Indian context. *Human Resource Management*, 2013(6), 31-48. <https://researchportal.northumbria.ac.uk/en/publications/gender-and-caste-intersectionality-in-the-indian-context>
- Bell, M. P., Girdauskiene, L., & Eyvazzade, F. (2015). The profile of an effective female leadership in multicultural context peer-review under responsibility of 4th International Conference on Leadership, Technology, Innovation and Business Management. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 210, 11-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.323>
- Beniwal, V. S., & James, B. D. (2019). Women in Indian public administration: Prospects and challenges. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 9(3), 210-224. <https://ideas.repec.org/a/mth/jpag88/v9y2019i3p210-224.html>
- Bhattacharya, S., Mohapatra, S., & Bhattacharya, S. (2018). Women advancing to leadership positions: A qualitative study of women leaders in IT and ITES sector in India. *South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management*, 5(2), 150-172.
- Billing, Y. D., & Alvesson, M. (2000). Questioning the notion of feminine leadership: A critical perspective on the gender labelling of leadership. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 7(3), 144-157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0432.00103>
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1802-1811.
- Bowling, C. J., Kelleher, C. A., Jones, J., & Wright, D. S. (2006). Cracked ceilings, firmer floors, and weakening walls: Trends and patterns in gender representation among executives leading American State Agencies, 1970–2000. *Public Administration Review*, 66(6), 823-836. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1540-6210.2006.00651.X>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bushee, B. J., Core, J. E., Guay, W., & Hamm, S. J. W. (2010). The role of the business press as an information intermediary. *Journal of Accounting Research*, 48(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-679X.2009.00357.x>
- Chapman, T., & Mishra, V. (2019). *Rewriting the rules: Women and work in India* (ORF Special Report No. 80). Observer Research Foundation.
- Chaturvedi, G., & Sahai, G. (2019). Understanding women's aspirations: A study in three Indian states. *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 4(1), 70-91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455632719831828>

- Christie, M., O'Neill, M., Rutter, K., Young, G., & Medland, A. (2017). Understanding why women are under-represented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) within higher education: A regional case study. *Production*, 27(Special issue). <https://doi.org/10.1590/0103-6513.220516>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Dasgupta, N., & Asgari, S. (2004). Seeing is believing: Exposure to counterstereotypic women leaders and its effect on the malleability of automatic gender stereotyping. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 40(5), 642-658.
- Deloitte. (2015). *Mind the gaps: The 2015 Deloitte Millennial survey Executive summary*. <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/gx-wef-2015-millennial-survey-executivesummary.pdf>
- Department of Personnel and Training. (n.d.). *Revised AIS Rule*. Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Government of India. https://dopt.gov.in/sites/default/files/Revised_AIS_Rule_Vol_II_IAS_Rule_01_0.pdf
- Dhingra, S. (2019, October 18). How the Indian civil services continue to remain a boys' club. *The Print*. <https://theprint.in/india/governance/how-the-indian-civil-services-continue-to-remain-a-boys-club/307370/>
- Dudman, J. (2016, January 26). Women still denied fair share of top jobs in civil service worldwide. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/26/women-still-denied-fair-share-top-jobs-civil-service>
- Duflo, E., & Topalova, P. (2004). Unappreciated service: Performance, perceptions, and women. *Framed Field Experiments*. <http://www.fieldexperiments.com/paper/2264/>
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders (Center for Public Leadership)*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573-598. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573>
- Eccles, J. S. (1987). Gender roles and women's achievement-related decisions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 11(2), 135-172. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1987.tb00781.x>
- Flores, G. M. (2011). Racialized tokens: Latina teachers negotiating, surviving and thriving in a White Woman's profession. *Qualitative Sociology*, 34(2), 313-335. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11133-011-9189-X>
- Gandhi, M., & Sen, K. (2020). Missing women in Indian university leadership: Barriers and facilitators. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(2), 352-369. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143219896048>
- García-González, J., Forcén, P., & Jimenez-Sanchez, M. (2019). Men and women differ in their perception of gender bias in research institutions. *PLOS ONE*, 14(2), Article e0225763. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0225763>
- Gipson, A. N., Pfaff, D. L., Mendelsohn, D. B., Catenacci, L. T., & Burke, W. W. (2017). Women and leadership: Selection, Development, leadership style, and performance. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 53(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886316687247>
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Aldine.
- Grady, M. L., Russell Curley, V., LaCost, B., & Russell, V. (2008). Women leaders tell their stories. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 6(4), 65. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/jwel/65/>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment

- with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Gupta, V., & Saran, A. (2013). Making of the trendsetter generation of women leaders in India: Dimensionalizing the impact of economic liberation. *The IUP Journal of Business Strategy*, 10(2), 7-21.
- Guy, M. E., & Newman, M. A. (2004). Women's jobs, men's jobs: Sex segregation and emotional labor. *Public Administration Review*, 64, 289-298. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2004.00373.x>
- Haq, R. (2013). Intersectionality of gender and other forms of identity: Dilemmas and challenges facing women in India. *Gender in Management*, 28(3), 171-184. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-01-2013-0010>
- Hart, E. W. (2009). In focus/ mentoring -Nurturing relationships provide many benefits. *Leadership in Action*, 29(1), 17-20. <https://doi.org/10.1002/LIA.1279/ABSTRACT>
- Heilman, M. E., & Martell, R. F. (1986). Exposure to successful women: Antidote to sex discrimination in applicant screening decisions? *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 37(3), 376-390. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(86\)90036-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(86)90036-1)
- Helmer, E., Hjlmmner, T., & Stener, F. (2010). *Female career development*. Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Horvath, L. K., & Sczesny, S. (2016). Reducing women's lack of fit with leadership positions? Effects of the wording of job advertisements. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 25(2), 316-328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2015.1067611>
- Javadi, D., Vega, J., Etienne, C., Wandira, S., Doyle, Y., & Nishtar, S. (2016). Women who lead: Successes and challenges of five health leaders. *Health Systems & Reform*, 2(3), 229-240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23288604.2016.1225471>
- Jodl, K. M., Michael, A., Malanchuk, O., Eccles, J. S., & Sameroff, A. (2001). Parents' roles in shaping early adolescents' occupational aspirations. *Child Development*, 72(4), 1247-1265. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1132440>
- Kabir, S. L. (2013). Key issues in women's representation in bureaucracy: Lessons from South Asia. *Public Organization Review*, 13(4), 427-442. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-013-0261-8>
- Kapur, R. (2019). Challenges experienced by women employees in career development in India. *ACTA Scientific Women's Health*, 1(4), 26-36. <https://actascientific.com/ASWH/pdf/ASWH-01-0024.pdf>
- Khallad, Y. (2000). Education and career aspirations of Palestinian and U.S. youth. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 140(6), 78-791. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224540009600517>
- Mangubhai, J. P., & Capraro, C. (2015). 'Leave no one behind' and the challenge of intersectionality: Christian aid's experience of working with single and Dalit women in India. *Gender & Development*, 23(2), 261-277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2015.1054206>
- Maphunye, K. (2007). Towards redressing historical inequities? *Public Management Review*, 8(2), 297-311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030600587646>
- McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J., & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, 41(9), 1002-1006. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149>
- Menon, N. (2015). A critical view on intersectionality from India is feminism about "women"? *Economic & Political Weekly*, 50(17). <https://www.epw.in/journal/2015/17/perspectives/feminism-about-women.html>

- Mirza, H. S. (2018). Decolonizing higher education: Black feminism and the intersectionality of race and gender. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 7(Fall), 1-12. <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jfs/vol7/iss7/3>
- Misra, P. K., & Singh, G. (2018). Indian women's leadership in the government sector. In R. Ghosh & G. N. McLean, *Indian women in leadership* (pp. 171-189). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68816-9_10
- Mohapatra, H. (2015). Status of women in Indian society. *Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 3(6), 33-36.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications.
- Mythili, N. (2017). *Representation of women in school leadership positions in India* (NUEPA Occasional Paper 51). National University of Educational Planning and Administration. http://niepa.ac.in/New/download/Publications/Occasional_Paper_51_N_Mythili.pdf
- Naff, K. C. (2001). *To look like America: Dismantling barriers for women and minorities in government*. Westview Press.
- Number of countries where the de facto highest position of executive power was held by a woman from 1960 to 2022*. (n.d.). *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1058345/countries-with-women-highest-position-executive-power-since-1960/>
- Patel, P. C., Lenka, S., & Parida, V. (2020). Caste-based discrimination, Microfinance credit scores, and microfinance loan approvals among females in India. *Business & Society*, 000765032098260. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650320982609>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1(3), 261-283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325002001003636>
- Phelan, J., & Rudman, L. (2010). Prejudice toward female leaders: Backlash effects and women's impression management dilemma. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 4, 807-820. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00306.x>
- Pinto, J. (2007). Women in engineering. *PACE - Process and Control Engineering*, 60(7), 10.
- Player, A., Randsley de Moura, G., Leite, A. C., Abrams, D., & Tresh, F. (2019). Overlooked leadership potential: The preference for leadership potential in job candidates who are men vs. women. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, Article 755. <https://doi.org/10.3389/FPSYG.2019.00755>
- Poltera, J., & Schreiner, J. (2019). Problematising women's leadership in the African context. *Agenda*, 33(1), 9-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/130950.2019.1613057>
- Posholi, M. R. (2013). An examination of factors affecting career advancement of women into senior positions in selected parastatals in Lesotho. *African Journal of Business Management*, 7(35), 3343-3357. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM12.521>
- Purkayastha, B. (2012). Intersectionality in a transnational world. *Gender & Society*, 26(1), 55-66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211426725>
- Quesenberry, J. L., Trauth, E. M., & Morgan, A. J. (2006). Understanding the "mommy tracks": A framework for analyzing work-family balance in the IT workforce. *Information Resources Management Journal*, 19(2), 37-53. <https://doi.org/10.4018/irmj.2006040103>
- Raja, B. I. (2016). Social factors and women's career advancement to senior management position in Pakistan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Contemporary Education and Communication Technology*, 2(1), 134-145.
- Raman, K. R. (2020). Can the Dalit woman speak? How 'intersectionality' helps advance postcolonial

- organization studies. *Organization*, 27(2), 272-290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508419888899>
- Saadin, I., Ramli, K., Johari, H., & Harin, N. (2016). Women and barriers for upward career advancement – A survey at Perak State Secretariat, Ipoh, Perak. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 35, 574-581. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(16\)00070-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(16)00070-8)
- Sanchez-Hucles, J. V., & Davis, D. D. (2010). Women and women of color in leadership: Complexity, identity and intersectionality. *American Psychologist*, 65(3), 171-181. <https://doi.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0017459>
- Senior, C., Howard, C., & Senior, R. (2014). The future and the female academic leader: Advancing student engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 377. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00377>
- Sharma, S. [Sakshi], & Kaur, R. (2019). Glass ceiling for women and work engagement: The moderating effect of marital status: *FIIB Business Review*, 8(2), 132-146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2319714519845770>
- Sharma, S. [Shantanu]. (2020). Missing at the top: Why aren't there more women bureaucrats at the top? *The Economics Times*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/missing-at-the-top-why-arent-there-more-women-bureaucrats-at-the-top/articleshow/74530959.cms>
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75. <http://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201>
- Sinkovics, R. R., Penz, E., & Ghauri, P. N. (2008). Enhancing the trustworthiness of qualitative research in international business. *Management International Review*, 48, 689-714. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-008-0103-z>
- Slaughter, A.-M. (2012, July). Why women still can't have it all. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>
- Smith, M., & Wrynn, A. M. (2010). *Women in the 2002, 2006 and 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games: An Analysis of Participation and Leadership Opportunities* (A Women's Sports Foundation Research Report). Women's Sports Foundation. https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2010_olympic_report.pdf
- Stam, D., van Knippenberg, D., Wisse, B., & Nederveen Pieterse, A. (2018). Motivation in words: Promotion- and prevention-oriented leader communication in times of crisis. *Journal of Management*, 44(7), 2859-2887. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316654543>
- Straub, C. (2007). A comparative analysis of the use of work-life balance practices in Europe Do practices enhance females' career advancement? *Women in Management Review*, 22(4), 289-304. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420710754246>
- Turban, S., Wu, D., & Zhang, L. (2019, February 11). Research: When gender diversity makes firms more productive. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2019/02/research-when-gender-diversity-makes-firms-more-productive>
- Valk, R., & Srinivasan, V. (2011). Work-family balance of Indian women software professionals: A qualitative study. *IIMB Management Review*, 23(1), 39-50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iimb.2010.10.010>
- Vasavada, T. (2012). A cultural feminist perspective on leadership in non-profit organisations: A case of women leaders in India. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 36(4), 462-503.
- Viewport. (2019). Second careers of women professionals. *Avtar*. <https://avtarinc.com/resources/reports/second-careers-of-women-professionals/#>
- Watkins, M. B., Simmons, A., & Umphress, E. (2019). It's not black and white: Toward a

- contingency perspective on the consequences of being a token. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 33(3), 334-365. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMP.2015.0154>
- Weick, K. E. (2007). The generative properties of richness. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 14-19. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2007.24160637>
- World Economic Forum. (2020). *Insight Report Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf
- Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods*. SAGE Publications.
- Yukl, G. A. (2006). *Leadership in organizations*. Pearson Prentice Hall.

