



Women in Leadership



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About the Tutorial

Women play multiple roles in a society. Women have started entering the erstwhile male dominated leadership positions. As a result of increasing globalization and the opening of new markets in developing countries, and above all, for democratization of most countries in the world, we are witnessing a new class of women leaders.

This tutorial deals at length with 'Women in Leadership'. It has been divided into several important chapters, each discussing a significant aspect of women leadership. It also provides an account of world's famous women leaders who are role models for many other women in the world.

Audience

This tutorial is useful for management students and professionals, especially those who work towards promoting women leadership in the world. The tutorial will help its readers understand the importance of women leadership in every sphere of life.

Prerequisites

The readers need to have a basic idea about what constitutes leadership. They are expected to have an understanding on who leads and who are led. They should also know the importance of women in the society and in nation building.

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Although leadership skills are acquired and shown by both men and women, there exists certain differences in the basic traits and qualities possessed by men and women leaders. Men and women mostly show distinctly different styles of leadership.

Characteristics of Women Leadership

In this section, we have highlighted some of the common characteristic features of women leaders:

Transformational Leadership Style

Women leaders are more transformational than men leaders. They function as a role model for their subordinates. They inspire their team and spend a lot of time coaching their team. They care a lot about their personal development. Women leaders emphasize teamwork and authentic communication as a key to success. For most women leaders, leadership is not meant only for accomplishing organizational goals but for transforming their followers into better people.

Task-Focused

Women leaders are invariably focused on completion of tasks assigned within deadlines. From an operational point, completing day-to-day tasks are necessary to ensure smooth functioning of the company.

Prefer to Work in Collegial Atmosphere

Women leaders generally prefer leading and creating flat organizational structures that enables all to work in a collegial atmosphere interpedently. Flat organizational structure overlooks the experience and knowledge of seasoned employees and the manager. Women leaders usually are critical of hierarchical structure of organization.

Promote Cooperation and Collaboration

To work in collaboration with others is a typical feminine characteristic. Women leaders always promote cooperation and collaboration amongst the team members. In this case, all the members of the team need to be clear of their roles and responsibilities, otherwise, it results in redundant work.

Communication Style

Women leaders tend to be participatory and possess a democratic style of leading people. They seem to abhor 'command and control style' practiced by male leaders. Women often times indirectly communicate their expectations of a given task and allow more space in accomplishing a goal. It sometimes helps the team members use their skills and expertise to complete the task, however, at other times it can be a drawback if the assigned task requires a leader to have direct communication with the members.

Self-Branding

Unlike their male counterparts, women leaders often appear to be modest or silent about their own accomplishments. They are seldom good at branding themselves. However, it is necessary that women leaders learn how to brand themselves by sharing their achievements

and skills with others. Unless people know or notice what they are capable of, they cannot recognize the leadership qualities of a women leader.

Women in Leadership – Importance

Any institution, whether it is society or organization, in the present century cannot function effectively without women's equal participation in leadership activities. Women create a perspective that brings to competition and collaboration to organizations and teams.

In today's world, organizations that are led by inclusive leadership teams make effective decisions that deliver better result. In the twenty-first century, the essential qualities required to lead include the ability to collaborate, connect, empathize and communicate. All these qualities are feminine in nature and can help build a more sustainable future.

Many statistics show that companies led by women have better financial results. Leadership by women is vital to increase the pace of societal transformation at home and in the workplace. Women leaders are likely to provide an integrated view of work and family, resulting in an engaged and promising personal and professional future.

Gender parity in leadership is important because true progress cannot happen without a diversity of perspective in leadership roles.

Representation of Women in Different Sectors

Representation of women in different sectors refer to the percentage of women employees working in various sectors. In the past, women were grossly underrepresented in politics, businesses, education, manufacturing, science and technology, etc. However, this situation is changing steadily.

In the US, women are 50.8 percent of the total population. They earn almost 60 percent of undergraduate degrees and 60 percent of all master's degrees. They do fairly well in law, medical degrees, business administration and management. Women account for 47 percent of the US labor force and 49 percent of the college-educated workforce.

Women in the US account for 52 percent of the professional-level and middle-management jobs. However, they lag substantially behind men when it comes to their representation in leadership positions. While 45 percent of the overall S&P (Standard and Poor's) and 37 percent of first or middle level officials and managers in those companies, they are only 25 percent of executive and senior-level official manager.

In the legal field, they are 45 percent of associates but only 20 percent of partners and 17 percent of equity partners. In the medicine sector, women comprise 35.5 percent of all physicians and 26 percent of permanent medical school deans. In case of academia, women are only 30 percent of full professors and 26 percent of college presidents. In politics, women represent only 6.2 percent of the total members of Congress, whereas in the UK 19.4 percent of Members of Parliament are women. They are only 12 percent of governors and only 17 percent of the mayors of the 100 largest American cities. In the UK, 30.8 percent of local councilors are women.

The above-mentioned facts and figures, though indicate a rise in women representation in different sectors, it shows that women representation in decision-making positions is far from being satisfactory. Much remains to be done to increase the number of women at strategic and decision-making positions.

2. WIL – Benefits

Women constitute half of the working-age population in the world. Companies led by women seem to have traditionally fared better than their counterparts during times of financial crisis. A study carried out by Pew Research Center on women and leadership suggests that there is little difference between men and women in key leadership traits such as the ability to innovate and intelligence, while many observe that they are even better than men when it comes to being compassionate and organized.

Benefits of women leadership in different sectors are manifold and they are as significant as those from male leadership. Women leadership is found to be good for financial health of an organization. Organizations having females as board members show significantly better financial performance than those having low female representation.

Better financial health of the organization leads to better job opportunities, higher productivity, and more growth and development. Various studies have found that women are equipped with better relationship building skills. They are also found to be good at inspiring and motivating others.

Women Unify Diverse Groups

Women as such symbolize unity and cooperation. They are pivotal to the survival of a family – a basic social organization. This quality of unifying diverse minds in a family is an essential feature of successful leadership. A true leader acts as a unifying force to bind the team or the group of followers together and successfully leads them to achieve the goal. Women possess such quality substantially and this makes them great leaders.

Diversity refers to the existence of different people with different interests, characteristics, and attitudes. A woman leader sees diversity as an advantage to secure a balanced and unique relationship in a group. She continues to lead by unifying diverse interests, attitudes and desires inherent in a group. The idea of diversity also includes respect and acceptance. It means understanding every person is unique and identifying their individual distinctions.

Self-owned qualities like compassion, patience to listen to others, giving due importance to personal development of the followers, democratic approach to solve intrigues and above all womanly consideration of fellow human beings make women a preferred choice for leadership amidst diverse groups. These qualities help the women leaders bind diverse groups together for larger interest and for the realization of the ultimate goals.

Women Improve Interpersonal Relationships

To be a successful professional or a successful leader in this age of science and information technology, communication skills are an absolute necessity. An organization functions smoothly, if there is effective interpersonal, interdepartmental, and external communication system. Within the organization, both upward and downward communication needs to be operating to facilitate effective and timely communication among the employees and departments of the organization.

In matters of building relationships, female leaders are consistently rated higher than their male counterparts. Being skilled at building in-house relationship, women are also quite likely to do well at building outside relationship; for instance, creating new clients or negotiating difficult contracts for the company they lead.

Women fare brilliantly when it comes to communication at personal level. They are quite deft at communicating with others and score higher than men on this front. Ability to communicate with people is a fundamental need to become a successful leader. Women possess this skill naturally.

Women tend to be better listeners than men and this makes them an effective communicator. Good communicators are excellent listeners. Effective communication skills begin with listening. Women are comparatively better at both listening and communicating.

Women Value Accountability

Accountability is also an important leadership quality. Women seldom ignore their accountability on any issue. It is seen that women are more accountable than men. Accountability may not help in motivating others, but is highly inspiring.

A leader who understands the value of accountability never puts the onus of any loss or blunder on the individual members of a team. The leader rather shoulders the responsibility. It motivates the team members to undertake any assignment without any compunction and fear.

Women understand the value of accountability more than the rest. While leading a family, they often come forward to shoulder the accountability for any disruption with an intention to keep the family bonding intact. They contribute largely towards forging unity and cohesion among family members. Such quality of women, when put into practice while leading an organization, a society or a country, works miraculously.



It is often seen that women leaders have increasing number of followers since they start leading people. They never let down their followers and as a matter of fact, people follow them willingly.

Women Embrace Collaboration

Collaboration or being collaborative is defined to be mostly a feminine characteristic. Collaboration is to act willingly together with other members to attain a common pursuit. This makes leaders rise in their career graph because popular support remains with them as long as they are collaborative.

Women leaders have the ability to collaborate with colleagues, clients and employees across teams, functions, and departments because to be collaborative is innate with them. Many studies have agreed that women are more cooperative than men.

A paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research (a non-profit organization based in Massachusetts, the USA) agrees on the fact that women are more attracted to cooperation than men. Men, often overestimate their capabilities, while downplaying those of their colleagues. Women, on the other hand, are a better judge of their abilities and therefore are not averse to suggestions and help from their team members. In short, women make better team players than men.

Women are transformational leaders in general. They understand the individual needs and aspiration of team members and interact with them on a personalized note. This personalized approach of women leaders binds the team members more strongly and they work with dedication towards realizing the goal.

Apart from the above-mentioned benefits, women leaders possess the tendency to look on the positive side of the events or conditions and continue to remain optimistic throughout. Being optimistic, women leaders on many occasions come out with favorable outcome. Optimism leads to development of confidence. At the core of confidence lies faith and trust. Women leaders show more self-confidence and have faith in the followers for good. This helps them win the willing support of the followers which in turn help them achieve success.

3. WIL – Barriers

It is established that women leadership has distinct benefits and women leaders are endowed with certain natural qualities such as collaboration, empathy, and considerateness which have become essential ingredients in present leadership trend. However, the subtle gender bias that still persists in the society, community, families, and organizations stand as a strong barrier to women leadership.

Efforts have been made by governments, corporate houses, and social organizations to enable women to give meaning and recognition to their innate leadership qualities and establish themselves as active leaders in the society. It will help build a progressive and developed human society.

However, several barriers still persist that hinder the growth of women into independent leaders. Let us discuss some significant barriers to women leadership in the present time.

The Glass Ceiling

The proverbial "glass ceiling" refers to the existence of intangible and unacknowledged impediments that obstruct the advancement of women and the weaker section of the society in professional or public life.

A host of community-specific practices and views constitute the glass ceiling. Here are some of its characteristics:

- Societies leaning heavily towards the male members of the society
- Set of socio-cultural and religious practices to deny basic freedom to women
- Priority to male members in the family and society
- General but biased perceptions that feminine qualities are inferior to those of masculine
- Perception that leadership is invariably a male prerogative

Glass ceiling as a barrier prevents woman from moving up the hierarchies in organizations, governance and other areas. From a vantage point on their career ladder, women can see the top-level positions but are kept from 'reaching the top'.

Glass ceilings as barrier are not based upon a person's inability or lack of expertise and knowledge to carry out assigned tasks. Rather, it relates to women as a community who are knowingly or unknowingly kept from advancing higher because 'they are women'.

Professional Competency

Professional competency refers to possessing abilities and skills by a person to discharge professional duties and responsibilities as efficiently and effectively as possible. The nature and characteristics of such abilities and skills vary from profession to profession.

A number of researches indicate that women and men managers don't differ largely in the competencies they possess. However, stereotypical view of gender role considers women less competent than men. As a result, there exists a gender gap in the assessment of male

and female employees. There are instances of less pay for women than that of the men for the same work and equal work hour.

Cultural biases and social arrangement overrate men and underrate women. In order to ascertain the criteria for common competencies for leadership positions, we need to value both the transformational leadership of women and transactional leadership of men. Studies have found that young women are less achieving than young men in technical subjects and areas. Subtle gender bias that persists in organizations and in the society upsets the learning cycle for acquiring new skills and expertise for women after becoming leaders.

Traditional leadership education is not sufficient to help women become successful after assuming leadership positions. Even women rate other women as incompetent. Women are studied to have lower self-confidence, dominance and need for achievement. These findings, though not fully established, create a common assumption that women are less competent than men.

However, recent studies conducted by management institutions and corporate houses reveal that the gender of the leader is less important than the role and responsibilities of the leader's position. There appears to be little difference between women and men leaders in their core competencies such as leading and motivating, mentoring and coaching, managing finances, building teamwork, communicating to employees, conducting appraisals, managing resources, etc.

Gender Disparity

Gender disparity is based on the premises that women and men are unequal and women are less powerful than men. Gender disparity or gender inequality has been a barrier to women leadership since ancient times. It still remains a major barrier to empowerment of women and development of women leadership.

Here, we have highlighted a few major reasons behind the existence of gender disparity:

Discriminating Social Structure

In many societies, especially in Asia, gender discrimination has been accepted as a tradition. Men are given priority in almost every aspect social and cultural life. Women and girls are assigned negligible roles to play in decision-making process affecting family and society.

Patriarchal society, lack of legal awareness in women, considering women's household work as economically insignificant, and male child preference in society aggravate gender disparity in the society.

Low Representation in Leadership Positions

Women have achieved almost parity with men in the number of both employees in the workforce and positions in the middle management level. Women now comprise 57 percent of the total US job market and 52 percent of all management roles and professional occupations, such as physicians and attorneys.

However, the higher one climbs, the wider the gender gap one finds. Women make up only 15 percent board seats, 14 percent of executive officers and paltry 2 percent of CEOs. About 98 percent of *Fortune 500* CEO positions are held by men.

Political Apathy

Women are usually not given preference by political parties while choosing candidates for contesting elections. Women are seen as incompetent to fight elections and get elected to legislatures. Women representation in legislatures, judiciary, government and business is not very encouraging even in developed countries despite umpteen measures and a number of institutional interference in the issues of empowering women in the world.

Maintaining Work-Life Balance

Maintaining work-life balance is also a great barrier to women leadership. Women are still attending the bulk of domestic and child care responsibilities at home, even when both spouse are full-time employees. Women in this situation find themselves in dilemma as to how to maintain a perfect balance between home and workplace demands. Maintaining work-life balance is one of the most complex barriers to women leadership.

Women professionals find it quite stressful while trying to balance motherhood and working outside home. The changing nature of work environment especially at the top of the hierarchy that demand round-the-clock work schedule represent an impasse to many women who wish to extend life outside the workplace.

Further, when the women professional climb the ladder of their rising career and as their family grows, their responsibilities multiply. Time spent in the office continues to be seen as a powerful indicator of work commitment that impacts on family life, health, and productivity of men and women at work.

Most employers and businesses have put in place flexible work initiatives so as to attract talented women to the jobs. However, choosing flexibility suggests a lesser engagement with the workforce. Flexibility options are not meeting the needs of senior female talents. Yet, many successful women leaders have both a good family and an enviable career graph. They have not sacrificed either.

Apart from the above barriers to women leadership, there are other society-culture-specific impediments to women's progress into leadership positions. There is need for devising women-friendly policies to inspire women to vie for leadership positions and continue to lead independently.

4. WIL – Enablers

To promote women leadership, countries and organizations need to create a congenial environment so as to facilitate entry of women into mainstream positions. The factors and conditions which ensure smooth journey for a woman to pursue her chosen career and enable her to reach the top are called **enablers**.

There are a number of enablers that can move women on the right track to achieve their goals. They are, for instance, a supportive family, education, secure social environment, equal employment opportunity, women-friendly house policies of business organizations and public policies.

An enabling socio-cultural, political and business environment is a sine qua non for women occupying leadership positions in the society. What creates an enabling environment for women? Which factors are necessary to enable women to rise to become true leaders? In this chapter, let us discuss some important enablers for effective women leadership.

Supportive Family

Family as the basic social institution has profound influence on individuals. As the seat of the very first integration of individuals into social life, families are the major source of their members' basic personal and social identity, and capacity for love and togetherness.

A supportive family is a great enabler for women leadership. An individual's physical, emotional and psychological development takes shape first in his/her family. An individual is what a family creates him/her.

- **As a source of Inspiration:** It is the family that inspires an individual to bring out the best in him. Unless the family in which a girl is born provides her the required support, both moral and monetary, she finds it utmost difficult to shape her career as per her will and determination. Many women leaders are nipped in the bud before they come to the forefront. Their family stands on their way to the top.
- **As an Effective Enabler:** A supportive family helps women members to bring out the best in them. It enables them to hone their talent in the right perspective. When families nurture a positive attitude towards women members and provide them with moral and economic assistance at par with male members, they become an effective enabler for prompting women to leadership positions.
- **Family as an Influencing Factor:** It is found that most of the successful women leaders in the world are products of their own family. In other words, their families have helped them rise to top positions. Family values and ideals greatly influence the character building of its members, especially a girl or a woman. By providing girls and women the required space, the family enables them to bring their inherent leadership qualities to the foreground.
- **As an Empowering Social Institution:** A supportive family not only inspires a female member but also empowers her by providing moral, physical, and monetary support. Being empowered, she is spurred to activities to succeed in becoming a leader. Thus, family is the first social institution that empowers women to become what they intend to be.

A supportive family, therefore, provides the basic platform to women to pursue their career goals and establishes themselves as leaders.

Good Education

Education is a great liberator. It liberates women from the shackles of age-old superstitions, traditions, and beliefs that exist in a society. It is rightly said, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family".

- Education helps women acquire knowledge, understand gender relations, develop a sense of self-worth, a belief in their ability, etc. It enables them to bring out the best in them and make them accepted as a mass leader.
- Education enables women to free themselves from the bondage of ignorance and orthodox beliefs, social evils, gender discrimination, and domestic as well as social violence.
- It creates in them fortitude and self-confidence to fight against every odd on their way to achieve success in life.
- It enlightens them about the larger world and world views. It also acquaints them with women leaders of different countries and their leadership styles. It exposes them to the world and helps them know the conditions of women in different countries and different societies.

Good education brings out the inherent leadership qualities in women and enables them to establish themselves as great leaders.

Secure Social Environment

An enabling social environment is a necessary precondition for growth of sustainable women leadership. For the all-round growth of women and for making them fit for leadership position, a congenial and secure social environment is an utmost necessity. She needs the unconditional support of family, and the society in which she lives in to realize her potentials to the full.

Communities where women are given due recognition, provided with opportunities and allowed to express themselves, have seen the rise of many women leaders in the passage of time.

- **Enable women to become effective leaders:** If a favorable secure social environment is provided and women are provided the position to lead, they will prove themselves as effective and successful as or more than that of their male counterparts.
- **Encourage and build trust:** When a woman feels safe and secure in a given society, she is encouraged to participate in leadership activities in the society. A secure social environment help women build trust in themselves.
- **Enhance self-confidence:** A secure socio-cultural environment enhances self-confidence in women. It drives away fears and insecurity from them and makes realize their full potential.
- **Provide Opportunities:** A secure social environment provides multiple opportunities for women to grow and show their leadership qualities. A community, where women are to move, to express themselves and to take part in community building activities, is destined to realize progress and prosperity.

Factors for Building a Secure Social Environment

- Change in the attitude of a male-dominated society towards women.
- Necessary constitutional and legal measures to build a secure social environment.
- Equal consideration of girls and women at par with boys and men in family and society.
- Change in organizational and corporate policies to allow women to reach the top.
- Stringent laws and their effective implementation against women abusers.
- Design an education system suitable for women.
- Inculcate a spirit of co-habitation through peace and order in social members.

There is a need to build a progressive society. Changes need to take place in the attitudes of the majority of the society in which women's progress is hindered. A secure social environment provides ample space to women to grow as leaders. Thus, the society where women realize their full potential and contribute to the task of social building is, indeed, a progressive and democratic society.

5. WIL – How to Promote?

The need for promoting women leadership is as important as creating an enabling environment for women to hone their leadership qualities. Despite umpteen measures to empower women and see them in leadership positions, the representation of women in such positions across the globe is quite upsetting. Women make up just 4 percent of CEOs in the world's 500 top companies, even a lesser percent of heads of government at national level belongs to women and the least percent of international leadership positions is occupied by women in the world today.

Absence of gender equality in leadership positions not only hampers the due progress in every sphere but also costs the global economy substantially. Hence, there is a need to promote women leadership. Corporate houses or companies need the best of leaders and it will not be fulfilled if the recruitment pool excludes women. Statistics show that women have not yet reached their full potential in leadership positions.



There are several factors that help in promoting women leadership. Following are some of the important measures that can be taken to promote women leadership.

Recruit Women Employees Actively

Recruiting women in various leadership positions by corporate houses and companies on the premises of equal opportunity provisions is the first step to help women rise to important positions. Organizations and sectors hiring people to work for them should issue meaningful equality plans to absorb women members in proportion to men.

Organizations should carry out a thorough analysis of their manpower composition and take immediate measures to maintain gender equality. Employee survey should be used to detect inequalities. Equal opportunity planning should be based on concrete goals and measures as well as the follow-up on their success.

Organizations should look for requisite talents in women to occupy any positions. Gender should not be the sole criteria in selecting or rejecting a person while making appointment to decision-making positions. Emphasis should be laid on the skills and abilities the person possesses and if such skills and abilities are in tune with the requirements of the position.

Organizations should take active interest in treating women applicants at par with the men applicants while selecting persons for higher positions. Women should not be ignored only because they are women.

Provide Training Opportunities

Providing training for women members is a powerful promoter of women leadership. Training for gender equality is a transformative process and it aims to provide knowledge, techniques and tools to develop skills and changes in attitude and behavior.

A recent study on Women Leadership, on more than 3,000 professional women in United States, identified confidence building and leadership training, along with the ability to network with women leaders, as key elements to expanding women's leadership in the years ahead.

Comprehensive training modules for women empowerment and women leadership help build an inclusive business environment and promote gender equality. Training helps women and men to understand the role gender plays and to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for advancing gender equality in their daily lives.

Formal training such as structured training course and workshops should be regularly organized and informal training through existing employees sharing knowledge and experience should be undertaken periodically to enable women to become fit for higher positions.

Targeted women development programs conducted in women-only environment enables women to increase their ability to navigate their own careers successfully. It also helps them identify and overcome personal and professional challenges and take responsibility for their growth and development.

Training should be included in the annual performance review of the employees and when opportunities arise. It is also important to offer flexibility in the time and location of training (e.g. during work hours) to make it accessible to employees who have family responsibilities.

Mentoring program for new employees is also essential to develop the required skills and knowledge for personal and professional growth.

Encourage Women-friendly Culture

There is a need to develop a women-friendly culture in the society and business environment. An inclusive and collaborative culture calls for pro-women changes in the old system of recruitment, training, performance appraisal, promotion, wages, etc. Unless women are treated equally and assessed not on the basis of gender but on the basis of their talents and skills, they cannot make it to leadership positions.

The following measures can help create a women-friendly culture:

Flexible Work Schedules

Organizations should have flexible work programs to suit women employees. Flexibility in work schedule such as providing some days of remote work to employees is quite encouraging. In this case, when an employee needs to stay home to spend time with her children or family or sick parents, the company trusts that they will still get their work done.

Equal Opportunity

Difference in wages between men and women is a challenge specific to women. It is found that women still earn less than men. Discrimination exist in the workplace in various ways. Sexual harassment at workplace is not a thing of the past. Women employees are still falling prey to it. There is a very low representation of women in boardrooms or top paying executive positions.

Organizations should make provisions for ensuring an equal status to women employees at par with their male counterparts. There should be no discrimination on the basis of gender in the organization.

An Effective Career Mapping for Women Employees

Organizations should have an effective career mapping for its employees after they complete their probation period. Development plans, stretch assignments, promotions, and networking opportunities should be equal for men and women who have been rated with similar capabilities. This enables women employees to become aware of opportunities for their development at higher levels and sharpens the visibility to rise to top leadership.

Provisions for Self-care

Organizations employing women should have provisions for self-care. For instance, multinational oil company, Chevron, offers full-fitness and self-care facilities onsite at their global locations. Employees have the opportunity to take care of themselves by working out during the day and getting massages or facials without having to leave their worksite. This enables women to find balance and stay healthy. It encourages women to take up higher responsibilities.

Provisions for Family Support

The most difficult thing for a working woman is to maintain a good balance between her life at home and workplace. Some women being unable to adjust to the stress of both leave to look after their families. In this case, the organization makes suitable provisions to create a stress-free environment for women.

For instance, provisions for offering after school programs beyond day care for children of the women employees such as science camps, math sessions, and other activities in the evening enable women employees with families to retain demanding positions without the worry of leaving their children at home. It reduces the choice women often make between family and work.

Policy Changes to Promote Women Leadership

- High quality and affordable childcare and elder care
- Paid maternity and paternity leave
- A right to request part-time work
- Comprehensive job protection for pregnant workers
- Higher wages and training for paid caregivers
- Reforms at elementary and secondary school schedules to meet the needs of digital workplaces

Ways to Promote Women Business Leaders

- Corporate houses and companies should make high-level decisions to promote women's advancement in the career pipeline and the progress of the situation
- There should be meaningful equality plans
- Recruitment processes should promote both genders to seek all kinds of jobs
- Talent potential among the employees should be recognized and it should be ensured that women are fully considered in the talent management process
- Men and women should be offered equal training
- Women should be allowed to experience business operations leadership and line management
- Provision of proper mentoring for women in their career path.

Gender Equality through Legislations

Gender equality refers to the state of equal access to resources and opportunities irrespective of the gender. It suggests that both men and women are free to develop their personal

abilities and make choices without limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Different behaviors, aspirations, and needs of women and men need to be considered, valued, and favored equally.

Organizations are stronger when its leadership has diverse perspectives and experience to draw from. Leadership positions should not be filled solely on the basis of gender. Every organization should look at the challenges women often face in the workplace and take necessary measures to set the track right for talented and dynamic leaders to rise and inspire new generations.

Need for Legislations for Gender Equality

Gender equality is an inseparable part of human rights and fundamental towards building a just, secure, and democratic society. In order to eliminate barriers to establish gender equality, legislations are being made to provide equal rights and opportunities for women and men in laws and policies and equal access to resources and services within families, communities, governments, and society at large.

Legislations for Gender Equality should aim at:

- Providing equal political and economic rights to women such as the right to vote, right to equal pay for equal work, etc.
- Ensuring equal status to women in business or corporate policies. For instance, women should be given equal consideration in recruitment, training, promotion, and performance appraisal. Organizations must grant a certain period of leave for expecting employees and for those who want to take leave or remain home to care for a sick family member.
- Allowing women to have access to both general and technical education, public and private services.
- Making a secure social environment where women are free from fear or threats to their physical and mental well-being.
- Enabling them to fight against domestic violence in any form and lead a safe family life.
- Making way for whistleblower protection. A whistleblower is defined as an individual who reveals alleged dishonest or illegal activities concerning an employer to the public.

However, legislations cannot serve the purpose of promoting women leadership unless they are properly implemented. In some countries the percentage of women in leadership positions is quite low despite several legislations framed.

6. WIL – Role Models

In this chapter, we will discuss some trend-setting and successful leading women leaders of current times.

Indra Nooyi

Indra Nooyi is currently serving as the Chairperson and CEO of PepsiCo, which is one of the world's largest food and beverage companies based in the US. Indian by birth, Nooyi is one of the most successful top female executives in the United States and is consistently ranked among the world's 100 Most Powerful Women. She is widely acknowledged as the chief architect of PepsiCo's unprecedented growth and reach.

Nooyi has taken PepsiCo's fortunes to a new height and made it into a food and drink empire. She reshaped its brand identity and bought many established brands including Tropicana in 1998 and Quaker Oats in 2001 to merge with it. The latter was one of the biggest food deals in corporate history and added a huge range of cereals and snack-food products to the PepsiCo empire.

Indra Nooyi has recently joined Donald Trump's Strategic and Policy Forum that aims to assist the president in implementing his economic agenda. The sixty-one-year old Nooyi, is the only Indian-origin executive in the 19-member President's Strategic and Policy Forum.

Arundhati Bhattacharya

Arundhati Bhattacharya is the living replica of women leadership in India today. She is the first woman Chairperson of State Bank of India, the largest commercial bank in the country, and is one of few powerful women who have made it to the top of Indian banks. For her exceptional leadership qualities, she was listed as the 25th most powerful woman in the world by Forbes Asian Women Power List in 2016.

According to the Times of India, Bhattacharya is the first woman to ever lead a *Fortune 500* company in India, and the only woman banker on that list of giants anywhere in the world. She was also ranked among the FTP Top 100 Global Thinkers by Foreign Policy magazine. India Today ranked her as the 19th in India's 50 Most Powerful People List of 2017.

When Bhattacharya took the rein of the banking behemoth (SBI) in India in October 2013, SBI was overburdened with huge non-performing assets (NPAs) which stood at Rs 65, 000 cr. As a leader, she took well-planned measures to deal with bad loans, and bring improvement in several areas such as risk management and customer delivery channel. She adopted a six-pronged strategy to deal with the scenario, and the strategy was popular as 'Super Six' among the State Bank employees. The six-pronged strategy includes - Improving Asset Excellence, cost normalization, managing the risk, digitalization, fast approach to customers, and relocating Human Resources.

Theresa May

Theresa May is the woman who was the ultimate choice of the Conservative Party in the UK to the office of the Prime Minister in a politically-charged Britain and a time of national uncertainty after the historic Brexit in June 2016. She is the second female Prime Minister of the UK, after Margaret Thatcher. She is also the first to lead the country out of the European Union after its historic Brexit referendum.

May took charge during one of the most turbulent times in the recent political history. By her ascension to the highest office in the UK, a G8 Member country, has established the fact that women leadership is as powerful and trendsetting as male leadership. She has set an example to follow for women in the world today.

Even before becoming the Prime Minister of the UK, she made history by becoming the second longest serving home secretary in the past 100 years. She is known for her work on police reform and pursuing stricter drug and immigration policies.

One of Westminster's shrewdest as well as toughest operators, May's decision to campaign for the UK to remain in the EU, but to do so in an understated way and to frame her argument in relatively narrow security terms reaped dividends after the divisive campaign.

As a leader, she displays judgment and reliability in a time of crisis. Although she has a tough task ahead, she is all set to play her part as the Prime Minister in a country still driven by divisions over the EU Referendum and anxiety over the future.

Hillary Clinton

No other woman in American History has ever caught the public attention and faced more scrutiny and coverage than Hilary Clinton. She is the most glaring woman face of the USA in the current time. She has been the First Lady of Arkansas, First Lady of the United States of America (USA), U.S. Senator from New York, U.S. Secretary of State, candidate for Democratic Party presidential nomination in 2008 and presidential candidate from Democratic Party for 2016 Presidential Election.

As the First Lady of the USA, she played her part with commitment and innovation. She championed various ambitious efforts to bring improvement in different sector, especially health and education.

Clinton is a widely travelled person. During her travels, she takes her message on human rights, healthcare, and economic empowerment of women across the globe. She has also been a leading voice for democracy building, for women's rights, etc.

Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey is a popular name in the western entertainment world today. She is a talk show host, actress, producer, and philanthropist at a stretch. Her talk show on television has received wide recognition and popularity. Hers is a rise from rags to riches. She was able to overcome terrible experiences in the past to reach the pinnacle of success in her career.

Her production house, Harpo, Inc. came up in August 1986. She launched the Oprah Winfrey Show in 1986. This show earned her huge income. Now syndicated, the show is seen on nearly 212 U.S. stations and in more than 100 countries worldwide. She has produced many popular TV serials with Harpo Inc.

The media giant, as Winfrey is often called, contributed immensely to the publishing world by launching 'Oprah's Book Club' as a part of her talk show. She co-founded a company called Oxygen Media (cable television) in 1999. The Company is dedicated to producing cable and Internet programming for women. With this venture, Winfrey carved out a place in the forefront of the media industry.

Out of her hectic life, Oprah is deeply involved in humanitarian activities. She undertakes a great number of charitable activities and collects funds for such through her organization. She also dedicates herself toward promoting education.

Chanda Kochhar

Chanda Kochhar is the current boss of the country's largest private-sector lender, the ICICI (Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India) Ltd. She has often been featured in *Fortune* magazine's annual lists of the most powerful business women across the world. She was also ranked in the list of *Forbes'* 100 most powerful women in the world in 2014.

Kochhar has been instrumental in setting up and scaling up the retail business for ICICI Bank. She oversees about USD 125 billion in assets as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of ICICI (Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India) Bank.

Kochhar is also associated with national and international financial and business forums. She is the President of the International Monetary Conference, an organization that annually brings together the chief executives of approximately 70 of the world's largest financial institutions from 30 countries, along with officials from government institutions. For her constructive contributions in the banking sector, she was conferred with Padma Bhusan, one of India's highest civilian awards, in 2011.

Kiran Mazumdar Shaw

Kiran Mazumdar Shaw is globally recognized for her pioneering role in raising a world-class biotechnology industry in India. She is the founder of India's leading biotechnology enterprise, Biocon. She is termed as an iconic Indian business woman and 'Czarina of Indian biotech' for her enviable leadership, which has transformed Biocon from a humble start-up into a billion-dollar business.

She founded Biocon in India with an initial capital of Rupees 10,000 in 1978. She was only 25 then. Having been driven by unparalleled spirit to create a business that would leverage science for the benefit of society through affordable innovation, she concentrated on introducing affordable biopharmaceuticals for patients who needed them the most.

She received the Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur, France's highest civilian honor, for her outstanding contribution to bioscience in 2016. This self-made billionaire serves as member of the Governing body of the Indian Pharmacopoeial Commission and as a member of the Board of Trustees of the US Pharmacopoeial Convention.

Apart from being a highly successful entrepreneur of global repute, she is a philanthropist to the core of her heart. The Mazumdar Shaw Cancer Center in Bangalore provides affordable world-class cancer care services to patients from all sections of society. Her philanthropic efforts have led her to be featured in the *Forbes'* List of 'Heroes of Philanthropy'.