

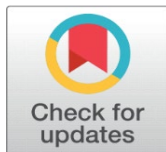
# BARRIERS FACED BY WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES IN CBSE SCHOOLS OF VADODARA CITY

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## ABSTRACT

Women, who make up half of the global population, continue to face inequality in various sectors, both governmental and non-governmental, especially when it comes to leadership roles. Achieving equality for women in top corporate positions is often a long and challenging process, requiring the commitment of the entire organization, particularly its leadership. According to United Nations reports, women constitute half of the world's population and perform two-thirds of the world's work but receive only one-tenth of its income and own less than one percent of its property. Over 40% of the global labor force is made up of women, yet they remain underrepresented in leadership roles. In developing countries, especially in rural areas, women are responsible for producing more than 55% of the food. Despite studies showing that women are successful business owners and managers, they represent only 16% at junior management levels, 4% at middle and senior levels, and just 1% in leadership positions. This paper, based on secondary data, explores the challenges women face in leadership and management in India.

**Keywords:** Gender Inequality, Women Leadership, Educational Institutions, Empowerment

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of underrepresentation of women in leadership roles extends beyond the corporate world and is evident in various sectors, including education. Leaders in educational institutions, particularly CBSE schools in Vadodara, India, face similar gender disparities. While women have made significant strides in education and professional participation, they still struggle to break through the barriers to leadership. The Indian government has taken several steps to address these disparities through policies like the Kothari Commission, National Policy of Education (NPE) 1968 and 1986, and the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001). Furthermore, initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

and Stand-Up India aim to enhance women's economic and educational participation. Despite these efforts, Kapoor (2026) stated that India's low ranking on the Gender Inequality Index emphasizes the persistent challenges in achieving gender equality and empowering women in leadership. This connection between societal gender disparities and leadership underrepresentation highlights the need for systemic change across both corporate and educational institutions in India.

The introduction illustrates the widespread nature of gender inequality, from corporate boardrooms to educational institutions, underscoring the need for comprehensive and sustained efforts to close the gender gap in leadership.

## **2. FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:**

Indian women have historically faced significant barriers to employment and leadership roles due to societal norms that prioritized household responsibilities over professional aspirations. Traditional gender roles within the home further limited women's opportunities by imposing unequal responsibilities and restricting their time and energy for career advancement. Female educational leaders often encountered systemic barriers, including gender bias, discrimination, and the challenge of balancing leadership responsibilities with family duties, exacerbated by a lack of work-life support. Addressing these challenges requires systemic change, including policies that promote gender equality and challenge harmful stereotypes. Despite these obstacles, Indian women have made significant strides, moving from domestic roles to leadership positions across various sectors.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized a descriptive survey method to explore the barriers faced by women in educational leadership in Vadodara City. The research aimed to identify the leadership traits preferred among women leaders in CBSE schools and the challenges they face. The planning phase involved outlining the steps necessary to achieve the research objectives.

### **1) Objectives**

- Identify the barriers women face in leadership positions within CBSE schools in Vadodara city, including personal, educational, familial, and societal aspects.
- Identify the leadership styles of women leaders in CBSE schools in Vadodara city.
- Suggest strategies to enhance women's participation in leadership positions.

### **2) Method of Study**

The descriptive survey method was chosen for its effectiveness in identifying current trends and addressing practical problems, contributing to the advancement of knowledge.

### **3) Population of the Study**

The population comprised women educational leaders in CBSE schools in Vadodara city, specifically principals.

### **4) Sample**

From 34 CBSE schools in Vadodara, 18 schools with women leaders were selected. The sample included 30 leaders, comprising 15 principals, coordinators, and supervisors, representing 50% of the total population. Snowball sampling was used.

### **5) Tool**

A questionnaire with 32 questions (24 closed-ended and 8 open-ended) was developed to gather insights on the challenges faced by women leaders.

### **6) Procedure of Data Collection**

Data was obtained from the District Education Office, focusing on the 18 CBSE schools led by female principals. The questionnaire was used to collect data through google form.

### **7) Procedure of Data Analysis**

Data from closed-ended questions was analyzed quantitatively using percentage analysis. Qualitative analysis, specifically content analysis, was applied to the open-ended questions, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the insights provided by women leaders.

## 4. ANALYSIS OF OBJECTIVES

### 4.1. PERSONAL

Section 1 provides an in-depth demographic analysis of 30 women leaders, covering their educational qualifications, marital status, family structure, and number of children. It reveals that most leaders have pursued professional degrees, are married, and manage work-life balance in nuclear families. The data suggests that smaller families allow women leaders to dedicate more time to their careers, indicating that strong determination, rather than just professional qualifications, plays a key role in achieving leadership positions.

### 4.2. FAMILY

Section 2 examines the personal and social aspects of 30 women leaders, focusing on family dynamics, social support, and challenges faced in their education and careers. It reveals that 73% of these leaders received strong family support, with only a small percentage facing opposition or lacking support. The data also highlights the burden of family responsibilities during school and college, which increased as the women aged. Additionally, the role of in-laws was significant, with 60% supporting their job pursuits after marriage whereas the remaining 40% of women leaders were not supported by their family. Despite varying levels of support, the majority of women managed to balance their careers and family lives effectively.

Here are some positive direct responses of respondents

#### **Husband's support to lead a professional life**

L 3: "He was always keen on me studying further and being of help to society".

L 10: "Always stood with me in all ups and downs".

L 2: "Always let me do what I deem right."

L 19: "When I was jobless, he always bought a newspaper and told me to apply."

L 11: "He helped me with household chores and looked after my daughter."

### 4.3. LEADERSHIP ROLE AND BARRIERS

Section 3 explores the professional journeys of 30 women leaders, emphasizing their determination, leadership styles, and the challenges they faced. Most leaders (57%) were highly determined to pursue their careers, and 77% received support from colleagues. Democratic leadership was the most favored style, with 73% involving team members in decision-making. Despite facing challenges, particularly in having their decisions accepted, these women leaders were largely inspired by family members and mentors, which played a significant role in shaping their leadership paths.

### 4.4. HERE ARE THE INTERPRETATIONS AND DIRECT VERBATIMS OF RESPONDENTS:

#### **1) Being a woman leader requires sacrifices**

Out of the total 30 women leaders, 5 women leaders (L 8, L 14, L 19, L 24, L 25) suggest that no sacrifices are required to do leadership roles. (L 4, L 11, L 22) said that sacrifices are required.

L 1: "Yes, there is no time for family life at times. Responsibility is high.

L 2: "Yes, I feel men and women both need to sacrifice in order to do well in life both personally, and professionally.

L 3: "Personal sacrifices yes!! You many times don't meet up to social commitments and have to forgo a few things.

L 5 "Yes, sacrificed good quality time with family"

L 6: "Not at all times. Sometimes when children were small as mother, I had to devote my time

*to my children's education."*

*L 7: "Yes, extra time at the professional front."*

*L 9: "At the same time you have to be present on both function."*

*L 10: "Yeah, they are lots."*

*L 12: Yes. Personal- not able to spend much time with your children."*

*L 13: "We need to sacrifice our rest if we want to balance personal and professional lives."*

*L 15: "Yes. We have to sacrifice ourselves fully to the institution."*

*L 16: "Can't take care of kids."*

*L 17: "No, it depends upon how you can balance both things."*

*L 18: "Yes, Giving more time to her work to reach her goal."*

*L 20: "Due to lots of responsibility."*

*L 21: "Professional life should always be there in women's life."*

*L 23: "Yes. Always we have to think about family time, about choosing the family comes first."*

*L 26: "Yes, more time to be given to profession"*

*L 27: "Yes, As you have to manage home and work both so have to adjust and sacrifice a lot."*

*L 28: "Yes, compromising many times for social visits, vacations, etc."*

*L 29: "Yes, to become a leader you have to adjust so many ups and downs."*

*L 30: "Yes, As being a woman you may sacrifice your particular time."*

## **2) Difficulties faced in a male-dominated world as a leader**

Out of 30 women leaders, 7 (L1, L5, L7, L13, L 17, L 20, L 24, L 25, L 28) women leaders did not face any difficulty as being a woman.

*L 2: "They tend to look down upon women and don't provide the required support. They try to pull down as much as they can but if you are on the right track and have good management none of these restrict you from converting your vision into reality."*

*L 3: "I was the lucky one. I did not face any male domination. But, yes lot of politics between the female staff."*

*L 4: "Emotional, honestly working with perfection"*

*L 6: "Since I am in school I did not face any such difficulties. I was always respected."*

*L 8: "Male Ego"*

*L 9: "Many times they underestimate our efficiency and talent."*

*L 10: "Many times male ego clashes"*

*L 11: "Make teachers don't like female bosses."*

*L 12: "Male doesn't want to take orders from a woman. They think we women are not capable of being good leaders. They try to put you down."*

*L 14: "Freedom"*

*L 15: "At times they will be against what we are telling. Abusing at the back of us."*

*L 16: "Negative comments."*

*L 18: "Prove yourself"*

*L 19: "Being a female leader, It's difficult for males to accept."*

*L 21: "Males are stronger and braver compared to girls. They are genius."*

*L 22: "Home responsibilities"*

L23: *"Now we have a habit of living in this male-dominated world, we have to make sacrifices."*

L 26: *"Time"*

L 27: *"Ego problem"*

L 29: *"It's very hard for a man to accept that women are equal or more deserving than them."*

L 30: *"Women should raise their voice for themselves"*

### **3) Qualities of Women leaders:**

All the respondents have given different views. They are as below.

L 1: *"Create more leaders, and support everyone to grow. Be like a mother to all someone who shows affection when needed and reprimands when needed."*

L 2: *"They are empathetic, multi-tasking and have immense patience."*

L 3: *"Women leaders are more honest and very focused in doing the good work. And their empathetic nature makes the school atmosphere a healthy one."*

L 4: *"Strong, humble humanist, creative and visionary."*

L 5: *"Patience and dedication"*

L 6: *"Patience, assertiveness, problem solver"*

L 7: *"Humility, Empathy, Resilience, Integrity, Emotional Intelligence and a visionary."*

L 8: *"Honest, sensitive, kind"*

L 9: *"They are honest and hardworking"*

L 10: *"Clear-cut vision"*

L 11: *"To make fair and strong decisions and be firm to observe them"*

L 12: *"Women understand any issues from a personal point of view. Women think of other people."*

L 13: *"They decide after careful consideration and can solve any problem with the best solution."*

L 14: *"Kind-hearted and understanding"*

L 15: *"Self-confidence and proving the skills"*

L 16: *"Good understanding"*

L 17: *"Listening skills"*

L 18: *"Leadership, understanding, respecting colleagues"*

L 19: *"Knowing and understanding of problems"*

L 20: *"Equality"*

L 21: *"Responsible, optimistic, brave, talkative, generous, realistic"*

L 22: *"She can manage all the things at one time."*

L 23: *"Wise nature, always supporting and understanding leader"*

L 24: *"Positive communication with every person"*

L 25: *"Kind, supportive, loving, caring, empathetic"*

L 26: *"Determined"*

L 27: *"Vision, Teamwork, empathy, confidence, positivity, decisiveness, communication skill, etc."*

L 28: *"Confidence, time management courage, commitment"*

L 29: *"Discipline and perfection with dedication"*

L 30: *"She understands the situation rather than the male as she is more emotional"*

#### **4) Need of Woman Leader in Educational Institutions:**

L 1: *"To be the mother figure in an institution who knows when to get soft or strict."*

L 2: *"In today's world both men and women can do whatever they set their minds to. Hence every institution requires both men and women to strike a balance."*

L 3: *"Empathetic nature towards staff and students, has a clearer vision and ability to multitask."*

L 4: *"Human Resources dealing with emotion."*

L 5: *"They have multi-tasking skills."*

L 6: *"They are mother first so they can handle students in a better way as they know child Psychology better than anyone."*

L 7: *"Having women in leadership positions provides representation and role models for students, especially young girls. Seeing women in positions of authority can inspire them to pursue leadership roles themselves and challenge traditional gender stereotypes. Women leaders bring unique perspectives and experiences to the table enriching the decision-making process and fostering a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to addressing the diverse needs of students, faculty and staff."*

L 8: *"They treat others with respect and they are more focused as well as create a positive environment."*

L 9: *"She is more disciplined and at the same time very tender too."*

L 10: *"They can be good motherly figures and good administrators too."*

L 11: *"The necessity in this field is because one needs to think emotionally as well which males can't justify."*

L 12: *"A woman can better understand another woman."*

L 13: *"Women are visionary leaders and can think of the betterment of both genders without being biased, unlike men. They are empathetic, the best caretakers, and can patiently think and bring resolutions to any problems that persist."*

L 14: *"For the girls to study well without disturbance."*

L 15: *"Because we are trying to struggle to achieve something with love and skill."*

L 16: *"Patience."*

L 17: *"As they are more patient."*

L 18: *"Equal rights"*

L 19: *"Women leaders are good at communication."*

L 20: *"For safety"*

L 21: *"Women can take the shape of education in children's achievement."*

L 22: *"Because she handles all the challenges."*

L 23: *"Women also have to stand on their legs job oriented"*

L 24: *"Being independent in everything she wants to do"*

L 25: *"Because she can create a supportive and inclusive environment."*

L 26: *"Women understand more what a child requires."*

L 27: *"Safety for girls, loving caring, and more understanding. Women leaders can be powerful mentors and role models. Create a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture."*

L 28: *"Women understand children's psychology very well."*

L 29: *"Because of the nature of caring and nurturing evenly."*

L 30: *"She can handle the profession both ways."*

### **5) Inspiration and Motivation to other women of the Society:**

The respondents gave different answers and encouraging messages. They are as below.

L 1: *"Stay strong. Stay committed. It's never easy. No role is easy only giving up is easy. Stay convinced you matter to many and stay positive."*

L 2: *"Be strong and just."*

L 3: *"My message to other women is that each one of us has to trust ourselves first and remember that it's not always our duty to please everyone all the time.. be it family or professionally. Enjoy your work and the work will reward you. Make yourself first."*

L 4: *"Strong"*

L 5: *"Live your life. Be independent."*

L 6: *"Be always positive while tackling any problem. Be strong and deal with problems with an open mind and wisdom."*

L 7: *"We are capable of achieving greatness, breaking barriers and creating meaningful change in the world. As women are stronger when we lift each other up, support one another and champion each other's success. Seek out mentors, allies and a community that will support and empower you."*

L 8: *"Everyone has one or other qualities so not to waste the same and need to be independent."*

L 9: *"Be alert and never allow anybody to underestimate you."*

L 10: *"Always support each other."*

L 11: *"Be confident in your decisions and move ahead."*

L 12: *"Never compare yourself with others. Try to bring change in yourself and change your perspective for others."*

L 13: *"Be yourself, the world will adjust."*

L 14: *"To understand the other person."*

L 15: *"Honestly be bold and proceed in a positive way which will be good to all including our family and ourselves."*

L 16: *"Be brave be bold we can achieve."*

L 17: *"Achieve your dreams."*

L 18: *"Be confident and be always motivated."*

L 19: *"Be courageous and be an inspiration of real woman empowerment."*

L 20: *"Do your best."*

L 21: *"Stand in your own support and whatever knowledge you have just shower to the world to prove women can do anything."*

L 22: *"Be self-confident. Achieve your goal whatever challenges come in your path."*

L 23: *"Always give your best and have faith in God."*

L 24: *"Never judge any profession."*

L 25: *"Challenges will come but face them bravely and wisely. No one can help you better than you."*

L 26: *"Always believe in yourself."*

L 27: *"Women can achieve anything if they believe in themselves. Dream and then go for it."*

*Be always financially independent."*

*L 28: "Respect yourself, and have confidence and faith in whatever you do."*

*L 29: "You can do it!"*

*L 30: "Prove yourself that you can perform as well as you can."*

## **5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1. FINDINGS**

This chapter encompasses inquiries into various aspects of the personal lives of women leaders, including their qualifications, marital status, family structure, familial responsibilities, professional lives, societal role, the kind of leadership style the leaders followed

- 1) Analysis of the leaders' qualifications reveals a diverse landscape, indicating that some leaders have achieved their positions through determination and hard work despite lacking formal professional qualifications this highlights the importance of providing opportunities for those without such qualifications to attain them.
- 2) Despite being predominantly married, women leaders demonstrate adeptness in balancing their professional and personal lives, often residing in nuclear families. While many leaders benefit from having smaller families, others manage leadership roles alongside larger familial responsibilities.
- 3) The data underscores the crucial support provided by families, with some leaders also receiving support from their husbands for further education. However, challenges persist, as evidenced by instances where women had family responsibilities during their schooling and college years. This underscores the need for societal awakening to prioritize female education and subsequent empowerment.
- 4) Furthermore, the data reflects varied career trajectories, with some women commencing work before marriage, while others embark on professional journeys post-marriage, often contingent upon spousal support.
- 5) Nonetheless, the ability to spend quality time with children can be compromised by professional commitments, posing challenges for some women leaders.
- 6) Society significantly influences an individual's development, particularly through rules established by various groups. These societal norms can both promote welfare and pose obstacles, especially for girls and women.
- 7) Our findings reveal that many women began earning for their families and achieving self-reliance before marriage. However, some women faced societal barriers that prevented them from accessing similar opportunities.
- 8) Support from in-laws enabled some women to pursue further education post-marriage. Unfortunately, this is not universal, as many women lack the necessary support from their husbands, families, or society to realize their dreams and achieve their goals.
- 9) Women in leadership roles often have to compromise their aspirations because of familial expectations that they prioritize time with their children. Despite this, our findings show that over 70% of women successfully provide quality time to their children. Conversely, some women struggle to balance their professional and family responsibilities, underscoring the need for family support to achieve work-life balance. Encouragingly, many women do receive support from their husbands, who act as understanding partners, recognizing their challenges and offering assistance.
- 10) Our findings indicate that only half of the population was strongly determined to pursue their jobs with a clear vision of becoming self-reliant. In contrast, some women did not have personal goals because their family responsibilities were so overwhelming that they couldn't focus on establishing their own identities.
- 11) 77% of women received support from their colleagues, which helped them progress in their careers. However, 23% did not receive such support, which can significantly hinder their professional advancement.
- 12) The condition of women has improved over time. Post-independence, many women lived in very poor conditions, but social reformers' efforts have gradually uplifted their status, leading to increased participation in economic activities. Women are now eager to drive societal change in fields like science, commerce, education, child development, and culture. They aspire to leadership roles and set their minds to achieve them. Despite this

progress, some women still face significant emotional, mental, and physical barriers that prevent them from developing this mindset and achieving their full potential.

- 13) When women strive to overcome obstacles and achieve success, they often face challenges in a male-dominated world. Some men with ingrained male egos resist seeing women in leadership positions.
- 14) Despite these difficulties, many women persist and succeed in maintaining their leadership roles. It has been observed that the most preferred leadership style among women is democratic. This style involves considering suggestions from all team members, and fostering a collaborative environment.
- 15) As a result, decisions made by democratic leaders are generally accepted by the majority of the team. In contrast, leaders who do not adopt this inclusive approach may struggle to get their decisions implemented effectively.

## 5.2. SUGGESTIONS

**When the leaders were asked to write the qualities needed in women leaders the following Suggestions came up**

The provided thoughts collectively describe qualities and attributes of effective leadership, particularly focusing on characteristics often associated with women leaders.

Effective leaders are supportive and nurturing, creating more leaders and encouraging everyone's growth. They balance affection with necessary reprimands. Empathy, multitasking, and patience are crucial traits. Women leaders are often honest and focused, fostering a healthy environment through their empathetic nature. Strength, humility, creativity, and vision are essential qualities. Patience, dedication, assertiveness, and problem-solving abilities are key. Core values such as resilience, integrity, and emotional intelligence are important, along with honesty, sensitivity, and kindness. Hard work and having a clear vision are crucial. Effective leaders make fair, strong decisions and consider issues from a personal perspective. They are good listeners, understand problems, and emphasize equality. Positive traits like responsibility, optimism, bravery, and generosity are highlighted. Multitasking, determination, confidence, time management, and discipline are vital, as is emotional understanding. Effective communication, supportive leadership, and comprehensive skills are essential for success.

**The leaders highlighted several reasons why women leaders are important for an educational institution**

Effective leadership, particularly by women, involves a balance of nurturing and discipline, embodying a motherly figure who knows when to be soft or strict. Both men and women are essential in institutions to maintain balance and leverage their unique abilities. Women are praised for their empathy, multitasking skills, and clear vision, which are crucial in handling human resources and emotions.

Women leaders, with their understanding of child psychology, often manage students better and serve as role models, inspiring young girls to pursue leadership roles. Their presence enriches decision-making with diverse perspectives and fosters inclusivity. Women are known for treating others with respect, being disciplined yet tender, and creating positive environments.

They bring a unique emotional intelligence to leadership, understanding the needs of others, especially other women. Visionary and unbiased, women leaders think of the betterment of both genders and resolve problems patiently. They excel in communication and are more patient, ensuring equal rights and safety, particularly for girls.

Women leaders are independent, handle challenges effectively, and create supportive, inclusive environments. Their nurturing nature and understanding of children's needs contribute significantly to educational success and a positive workplace culture. They also act as powerful mentors and role models, emphasizing the importance of safety, care, and understanding in leadership.

## 5.3. CONCLUSION

The research highlights the multifaceted roles of women leaders in educational institutions and their significant impact on both professional and personal spheres. Women leaders bring a unique blend of empathy, multitasking abilities, and emotional intelligence to their roles, which are crucial for fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Despite varied qualifications and family responsibilities, they demonstrate a remarkable ability to balance professional and personal lives, often with the support of their families and colleagues.

Women in leadership positions serve as powerful role models, especially for young girls, inspiring them to pursue leadership roles and challenging traditional gender stereotypes. Their understanding of child psychology, respect for others, and ability to create positive environments contribute significantly to the well-being and success of students and staff. The preferred democratic leadership style among women leaders fosters collaboration and inclusivity, leading to widely accepted and effectively implemented decisions.

While societal norms and family responsibilities can pose challenges, the determination and resilience of women leaders enable them to overcome these obstacles. Support from family, colleagues, and society is essential in helping women achieve work-life balance and reach their full potential. The findings emphasize the importance of providing opportunities for women to attain professional qualifications and the need for societal awakening to prioritize female education and empowerment.

In summary, women leaders are vital to educational institutions, bringing diverse perspectives, nurturing capabilities, and a commitment to equality and excellence. Their leadership not only enhances the decision-making process but also creates a more inclusive and supportive environment for all members of the institution.

## **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

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