

## **Sex Role Orientation and Leadership Style of Women Managers**

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**Abstract:** In the “think manager-think male” mind set, leaders are viewed as possessing more masculine attributes than feminine ones. Many view managerial skills and leadership skills as more characteristics of men than women. In the present study the researcher was trying to find out sex role orientation (Feminine, Masculine and Androgynous) and leadership style (authoritarian, democratic and Laissez faire) of women managers and trying to explore the relation between sex role orientation and leadership style. The sample selected for the study was 241 women managers working in different industrial sectors in Chennai. The tools used for the study were Bem’s Sex role orientation inventory and Leadership Questionnaire by Sage publication. Three leadership styles like authoritarian, democratic and Laissez faire were used in the study. The statistical tests ANOVA was used to find out the difference between the two variables. The finding of the study showed that majority women managers were belong to Androgynous type. The difference between the variables were statistically significant.

**Key Words: Leadership Style, Sex role Orientation, Women Managers**

### **Introduction**

Traditionally the research studies exploring the sex role orientation of managers suggest that the good manager is a masculine manager. Masculinity generally defined as objective, logical, assertive and competitive whereas feminine is subjective, sophisticated and spontaneous. Hence the women were supposed to show masculine behaviour at work and their feminine parts to show in the other aspects of the life. Many women were pushed behind in managerial level for not showing masculine behaviour.

The process of sex role orientation describes the ways in which biological gender and associated cultural differentials are incorporated into an individual’s self-perception and behaviour. The terms ‘sex-role’ and ‘gender role’ can be used as synonyms. Sex role identity refers to one’s perception that one is masculine or feminine according to a personal definition of masculinity and femininity. But scholars in a number of disciplines have begun to concern themselves with the concept of psychological androgyny, a term that denotes the integration of feminity and masculinity within a single individual. The term androgyny implies that it is possible for an individual to be both compassionate and assertive, both expressive and instrumental, both feminine and masculine, depending upon the situation. (Buddhapriya.1998.P.23,24)

Leadership style is the way in which the functions of leadership carried out, and the way in which the leader typically behaves towards members of the group. Styles of leadership are often presented through different models. A number of studies focusing on gender and leadership style conclude that women often use a different leadership style than men which can be a plus point in the dynamic organizational world. Some studies reveal that they use masculine influence technique by being more assertive and task oriented. Again some studies have found androgyny to be correlated with superior leadership. So in the present study an attempt is made to study the sex role orientation and leadership style of the women managers in industrial sectors of Chennai. An attempt is also made to find out the influence of sex role orientation on the leadership style.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The present situation in India is that gender inequality in leadership positions. The main reason is lack of identity and recognition of women leaders and their leadership behaviour. The Indian organizations are unable to make use of the effective leadership practices and leadership style of women for organizational development. It is important to understand more about how stereotypical perceptions are influencing women inequality in leadership positions and the “double bind” that exists for women as leaders. Although gender related issues have stimulated much researches abroad. But in India, we have very little empirical evidence about their gender orientation and what leadership styles possess by Indian women in management. Now need to shift the focus from biological sex to sex-role orientation as

a better predictor variable for leadership style of women in management. The representation and functioning style of women managers is invisible by nature in Indian organizations. This seems to be perhaps, a lack of foresight, in not pioneering the development of new thinking concerning women's roles in the organisations. So, it is the responsibility of social scientists to find out the root cause and remove the barriers of women subordination in the management. So the invisible minority group of women in organisations gains visibility and remove inequality in leadership positions.

### Literature Reviews

**Michael Paul Wright, "Exploring the connection between a corporate executive's leadership styles and their sexual orientation" (January 1, 2009)** This qualitative research study explores the connections between sexual orientation and leadership styles. The findings suggest a leader's sexual orientation impacts the perception of their leadership style within the workplace.

**Adams & Sherer( 2010)** had studied the relationship between sex role orientation and psychological adjustment of women. Androgynous, masculine, feminine, and undifferentiated women, as determined by the Bern Sex Role Inventory, were compared on the three validity and ten clinical scales of the MMPI. Two samples of women were included: Female college students and a group of upper middle-class suburban housewives. No significant differences emerged in the housewife sample. Among college women, androgynous and masculine women did not differ in adjustment, and both groups were better adjusted (i.e., less depressed, anxious, tense, and less socially introverted) than the undifferentiated women

**Ayman & Korabik (2010)** done research from the intrapsychic perspective focuses primarily on the internal intrapsychic characteristics of the leader. Here gender encompasses such things as gender schema; gender identity; and gender-role traits, attitudes, and values that are acquired through gender-role socialization. According to the intrapsychic perspective, the leader's intrapsychic gender-role characteristics (e.g., instrumentality/masculinity/agency and expressivity/femininity/communion) matter because they affect the leader's preferred style, behavior, and outcomes regardless of whether the leader is a man or a woman.

**Hee (2011)** conducted a study on the influence of gender and gender roles can be both predictors of leadership emergence, is examined utilizing expectation states theory and role congruity theory. When it comes to gender, men are most likely to emerge as leaders across masculine and gender-neutral tasks, whereas women are more likely to emerge as leaders on feminine tasks. This process can be explained by the performance expectations that people have for men and women when working on a specific task. Regarding gender roles, masculine and androgynous individuals are most likely to emerge as leaders across all tasks. Leadership emergence should incorporate both gender and gender role to examine which variable is a stronger predictor of leader emergence.

**Krinzman (2015)** in his review of gender leadership styles had given some characteristics of female leadership styles. Female leaders tend to be extremely focused on completing a task assigned. Completing day-to-day tasks are necessary to ensure a company is running smoothly from an operational perspective. While a task-focused leadership style helps an organization run properly, employees working for a leader employing this type of leadership style may not understand the context of why the task is important to the organization from a strategic perspective.

### Theoretical Foundation

Kurt Lewin is considered to be the father of social psychology. In 1939 Lewin conducted a classic study of leadership, and this involved three styles of leadership: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire.

**1. Autocratic:** Tight control over the group and its activities; decisions made by the leader. **2. Democratic:** Group participation and majority rule. **3. Laissez-faire:** Low levels of any kind of activity by the leader. The strengths of Lewin's leadership theory is that it is one of the theories to identify behaviors and represents a shift away from the "Great Man" sensibility that provided a more mystical and vague description of leadership as individual traits. It is also a relatively simple theory on which one can build a set of competencies through behavioural change and reflection. This makes it valuable for executive and leadership coaching

## **Methodology**

### **Research Objectives**

An extensive review of the literature made by the researcher gave an in depth insight into the research gaps in the area of leadership and decision making styles of women managers in the Indian industries. Keeping this in mind, researcher has formulated the following objectives.

### **General Objective**

To study the Leadership Style and Sex role Orientation of women managers in the industrial sectors of Chennai city.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To study the career profile of the women managers in the manufacturing, IT and service industries.
2. To measure the level of leadership style of the women managers.
3. To analyse the sex role orientation of women managers.
4. To examine the sex role orientation as a predictor of leadership styles of women managers.

### **Hypothesis**

1. There is no significant difference between sex role orientation and level leadership styles.
2. There is no influence of sex role orientation on level of leadership style.

### **Research Design**

The research design of this study is descriptive. The researcher attempts to describe the style and sex role orientation among the women managers and explain the relationships among the variables. As a descriptive study, the research study describes the profile of the women managers such as age, education, experience, type of industry, department, promotion, managerial level. The research study describes the level of leadership styles and sex role orientation of women managers who are working in different type of industries in Chennai.

### **Universe of the Study**

All women managers working in manufacturing, IT and service industries under the membership directory of The Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) forms the universe of the study. There were 370 industries under MCCI which consist Women Managers. In that 80 Manufacturing, 110 IT and 180 Service sector Industries respectively. There are 550 women managers found out from first analysis. In that in manufacturing sector 115 women managers, in IT 172 and in service sector 263 women managers were found respectively.

### **Sample**

Proportional to the size of the type of the industry and the size of the managers from the universe 50% of the companies from each sector randomly selected as the sample. So 40 manufacturing, 55 IT and 90 service industries respectively chosen by adopting proportionate stratified random sample. From women managers 57 women managers from manufacturing, from IT 86 and 131 women managers from service sector selected by systematic random sampling. After distributing the questionnaire the return rate was 53 women managers from manufacturing, 81 from IT and 107 from service sector.

### **Tools for data collection**

The questionnaire is made up of two parts. The first part seeks to collect data concerning career profile of the respondents. The second part employs two tools (Psychological instruments), which are; Bem's Sex-role Inventory, Leadership Style scale.

**Leadership Styles Questionnaire:** The Leadership Questionnaire of Peter Northouse by Sage Publications was used to determine the leadership style of the women managers. The questionnaire contains 18 statements that identify and measure the key aspects of leadership behavior and each statement in the questionnaire relates to either Autocratic or Democratic or Laissez-faire leadership factors. The respondent is required to judge how frequently the behavior described in the statement is exhibited by her. The Questionnaire uses a scale of 1 to 5, with the five numbers representing the following meanings - of the behavior described in the statements. The choice of „1“ indicates – Strongly Disagree, The choice of „2“ indicates – Disagree, The choice of „3“ indicates – Neutral, The choice of „4“ indicates – Agree and The choice of „5“ indicates - Strongly agree. This questionnaire is designed to

measure three common styles of leadership: authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. By comparing the scores, one can determine which styles are most dominant and least dominant in style of leadership.

**.The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI):** It is a measure of masculinity-femininity and gender roles. It assesses how people identify themselves psychologically. The test is formatted with 60 different personality traits which participants rate themselves based on a 7-point Likert scale. Traits are evenly dispersed, 20 masculine, 20 feminine, and 20 filler traits thought to be gender neutral. Participants are asked to rate themselves on each trait using a Likert scale. One indicates never or almost never true, while a seven would indicate always or almost always true. Originally for androgyny score utilized a split median technique for more accurate scoring. The Bem Sex-Role Inventory offers four different possible resulting categorizations: masculine, feminine, androgynous and undifferentiated.

### **Data Collection**

The questionnaire was distributed to respondents. Fifteen days time was given to the respondents to fill up the questionnaire and then they were collected personally. Before final data collection a pilot study was conducted to judge the appropriateness and adaptability of the questionnaire. Thirty respondents, including women managers from each level were included in the pilot study. Data collection through questionnaire and interviews were done simultaneously.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20th version. Researcher used the descriptive statistical methods such as frequency tables, cross tabulation and percentages to describe the profile of the women managers. To explain the relationship among the variables researcher used the inferential statistical tests such, regression, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

### **Major Findings**

The major findings of the data analysis are highlighted briefly. The career profile (age, education, experience, department and type of industry,) of Women managers who were working in different industrial sectors Chennai city had analysed. Their level of leadership style and sex role orientation was assessed and pointed out the relation between leadership styles and sex role orientation of women managers.

### **Career profile**

- Among respondents, 31.5 per cent women managers were in the age group of 39-44.
- 29.9 per cent in the 33-38 age group, 29.5 per cent in the age group of 27-32, while 7.9 per cent in the age group of 45-50. A very few 1.2 per cent above 50 years.
- The educational background of the respondent more than half of them (77%) had post graduate degree,
- Among women managers (44.4) per cent were working in service sectors. (33.6) per cent in IT sector and (22) per cent in manufacturing sector.
- In human resource department (22.4) percent women managers were working. In packing and production section (16.6) percent were working. In administrative and business operation equally (14.5) percent women managers were working. While (13.3) per cent were working in training section. The (8) percent women managers were working in purchase section. In sales (6.6) percent, finance 5 per cent, marketing (4.6) percent and accounts (1.7) per cent were working respectively.
- Among respondents (38.6) percent had more than 8 years experience. (17.8) per cent had (4-6) percent experience and (16.6) per cent had 6-8 years experience. While (16.2) percent were having 2-4 years experience and (10.8) percent had 1-2 years experience.
- Most of the women managers (51) per cent were belong to middle level management. (32) per cent got in to senior level and (17) per cent were in junior level management.

## **Leadership Style**

- Of the total sample, (49.4)per cent of the women managers had adopted moderate level of autocratic leadership style.
- More than half of the ( 51.5) per cent women managers were practicing high level of democratic leadership style
- Less than half of the women managers were following high level of Laissez faire leadership style.

## **Sex Role Orientation**

A large number of respondents (48.1) fall in the Androgynous sex role type followed by feminine (32.8) masculine (13.3) and undifferentiated (5.8) categories.

### **Sex Role Orientation and Authoritarian Leadership Style:**

- Among women managers 48.1 per cent were coming under the Androgynous category. In that 24.9 per cent moderate level, 17 per cent high level, 3.7 per cent low level, 2.5 per cent very high level of Level of Authoritarian Leadership Style had adopted.
- Women managers who were coming under Feminine were 32.8 per cent. Among them 17.4 per cent had moderate Level of Authoritarian Leadership Style, while 8.7 per cent low level and 6.6 per cent high Level of Authoritarian Leadership Style showing.
- 13.3 per cent of women managers were in masculine. In that 4.6 per cent equally showing moderate and low level, 4.1 per cent showing high Level of Authoritarian Leadership Style.

### **Sex Role Orientation and Democratic Leadership Style:**

- Among women managers 48.1 per cent were coming under the Androgynous category. In that 22.4 per cent high level, 16.2 per cent moderate level, 8.3 per cent very high level, 1.2 per cent low Level of Democratic Leadership Style had adopted.
- Women managers who were coming under Feminine were 32.8 per cent. Among them 14.1 per cent had moderate Level of Democratic Leadership Style, while 13.7 per cent high level , 2.9 per cent low level,1.2 per cent very low level and 0.8 per cent very high Level of Democratic Leadership Style showing.
- 13.3 per cent of women managers were in masculine. In that 12.4 per cent showing high level, and 0.2 per cent showing very high Level of Democratic Leadership Style.

### **Sex Role Orientation and Laissez Faire Leadership Style:**

- Among women managers 48.1 per cent were coming under the Androgynous category. In that 21.2 per cent moderate level, 17.8 per cent high level, 6.2 per cent very high level, 2.5 per cent low level and 0.4 per cent very low Level of Laissez Faire Leadership Style had adopted.
- Women managers who were coming under Feminine were 32.8 per cent. Among them 14.9 per cent had moderate Level of Laissez Faire Leadership Style, while 10.4 per cent high level, 5.8 per cent low level, 1.7 per cent very high Level of Laissez Faire Leadership Style showing.
- 13.3 per cent of women managers were in masculine. In that 9.1 per cent showing high level, 2.1 per cent showing very high, 1.7 per cent moderate level and 0.4 per cent low Level of Laissez Faire Leadership Style.

## **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

### **One Way Analysis of Variance**

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was done to analyse the difference between Sex role Orientation and the Level of Authoritarian Democratic and Laissez Faire Leadership styles.

**1. Null Hypothesis:** There is no significant difference between sex role orientation and level of Authoritarian leadership styles.

F-value is **7.596** and the correspondent p-value is  $< 0.05$ . It is found that the difference between these scores were statistically significant ( $F=7.596$ ,  $df=2\&237$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Therefore the null hypothesis has been rejected and concluded that there is a significant difference between the Sex role Orientation of women managers and the Level of Authoritarian Leadership Styles.

**2. Null Hypothesis:** There is no significant difference between sex role orientation and level of Democratic leadership styles.

F-value is **10.751** and the correspondent p-value is  $< 0.05$ . It is found that the difference between these scores were statistically significant ( $F=10.751$ ,  $df=2 \& 237$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Therefore the null hypothesis has been rejected. It shows that there is a significant difference between the Sex role orientation of the women managers and the Level of Democratic Leadership Styles.

**3. Null Hypothesis:** There is no significant difference between sex role orientation and level of Laissez Faire leadership styles.

F-value is **6.931** and the correspondent p-value is  $< 0.05$ . It is found that the difference between these scores were statistically significant ( $F=6.931$ ,  $df=4 \& 237$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Therefore the null hypothesis has been rejected and concluded that there is a significant difference between the Sex role Orientation of the women managers and the Level of Laissez Faire Leadership Styles.

### Multiple Regression Analysis for the Dependent Variable of Level of Leadership Styles

Researcher introduced the following variables in the regression model: age, experience, type of industry, managerial level, sex role orientation. In the initial screening procedure under stepwise regression method eliminated the experience, type of industry, managerial level from the regression model since their "t" value were not significant. The remaining variables were fitted into multiple regression model. The level of Laissez faire leadership style was considered as the dependent variable. The following independent variables-sex role orientation and age of the respondents were used in the model to predict the dependent variable.

The following multiple regression model was considered.

$$Y = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2$$

Y=Level of Laissez Faire Leadership Style

X<sub>1</sub>=Sex Role Orientation

X<sub>2</sub>=Age of the Respondents

The regression equation obtained was

$$Y = 1.361 + .243X_1 + .182X_2$$

Sex Role Orientation plays a predominant role in predicting the level of laissezfaire leadership styles of women managers. The 't' value is 4.712 and Beta value .287. Both the values are higher. So sex role orientation is the strongest predictor of the two variables introduced. The second variable age of the respondent's' value is above +2 and so also strong in predicating the level.

The F value is significant ( $F=16.651$ ,  $df=240$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and this indicates that the regression equation predicts the dependent variable at greater than chance level. The constant value 1.361 is also statistically significant ( $t=6.722$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The values of R square is 0.123 and it implies that independent variables in the equation have 12.3 percent variance upon the dependent variable. The result indicates that higher the scores of the respective independent variables, the higher would be the leadership level. In conclusion it is said, that sex role orientation of the women managers have high influence on adopting level of laissez faire leadership styles of women managers.

### Conclusion

In this study, Bem's Sex -role inventory is used to measure the sex role orientation of the women managers. The analysis reveals that a large number of women managers are Androgynous. Women in managerial position usually prefer to have high occupation attainment, self esteem and work satisfaction. Androgynous subjects having high level of occupational attainment are found to have higher level of self esteem and greater degree of work satisfaction than those with other type of sex role identity. So this may be one of the reasons why women managers prefer to be

androgynous.(Buddhapriya,1998,Chow,1987).In leadership style ,in this study three forms (Authoritarian, Democratic and laissez faire) of leadership styles has been used. Among the three leadership styles, Democratic and Laissez faire leadership styles are in high level followed by women managers and authoritarian leadership in moderate level endorsed by the women managers. There is no particular style predominant among women managers. The study reveals that sex role orientation has high influence on leadership styles of women managers and one of the strong predictor in adopting laissez faire leadership styles. Management of career and family, changing social values, attitudinal changes might be some of the factors influencing the sex role orientation of women managers. With the emergence of a set of new roles, women managers are trying to adopt themselves to such changes, by becoming more androgynous.

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