

WOMEN LEADERSHIP TRAITS IN THE ERA OF PANDEMIC

Abstract

This study aims to understand how women leaders worked as frontline fighters during the crisis period of the pandemic in 2020. After facing many instances of gender biases in the qualities associated with leadership. To analyse, In this study, we began by exploring the various facets of the gender leadership gap and the distinctions between male and female leaders. Following that, we delved into the concept of adaptive leadership. Our research also involved a comprehensive review of literature concerning gender-related matters. Finally, we highlighted the remarkable resilience and courage displayed by women in embracing adaptive leadership during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Women leaders, Adaptive Leadership, Blended Approach, Leadership traits, Covid 19 pandemic and Women professionals

Authors

Dr. Barnana Bhattacharya

Assistant Professor
ICA Edu Skills Private Limited
Sister Nivedita University
Kolkata, West Bengal, India.
barnana1991@gmail.com

Dr. Gautami Chattopadhyay

Assistant Professor
ICA Edu Skills Private Limited
Sister Nivedita University
Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern fast pacing global world, to develop sustainable growth and maintain the competitive advantage every Business Firm needs to emphasize leadership traits and abilities of women. People Process Integration (PPI) requires effective Leadership Charisma and Contingency or Situational perspective of Leadership qualities.

Adaptive Leadership is mobilising the team of individuals to deal with difficult challenges and critical assignments. This is considered a practical framework that helps emphasize growth and supports the Organisation to adapt and thrive in a challenging competitive environment. It embraces critical thinking among all the members of an organization and teaches them to adapt.

Due to the breakdown of Covid-19 pandemic, many Organisations have been forced to reshape and redesign their Organisational Culture, Structure and Strategies as the way of socialising and transforming new technologies as a part of functional process. Responding to uncertainties and crisis evolved during Pandemic outbreak, each business function needs to focus on Adaptive Leadership techniques which refers to 4A's as proposed by Harvard Business Reviews i.e., Anticipation, Articulation, Adaption and Accountability.

The Covid-19 outbreak isn't only a health crisis; it's also causing challenges in the economy, society, and politics (ESP). In terms of Strategic decision-making procedure and effective coordination among Interest group (various department), Adaptive Leader has a significant role in assessing the functional Department's needs, implementing the shared objectives for collective growth, and evaluating the strategic actions across the industry.

Adaptive Leader mobilises the members of the Organisation to think, learn, rethink and evaluate the critical assignments and challenging tasks. This type of Leadership Charisma believes in Laissiez-Faire or Free Rein techniques and encourage their team members to think beyond the traditional boundaries and influence them for diversified thinking.

If we now concentrate on the female leadership component, we discovered that there isn't a significant "women's experience" of leadership. A conversation about leadership and gender prejudices without mentioning race and ethnicity is simplistic and can be deceptive because women always have a race and an ethnicity. In addition to financial position, handicap status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and age, other characteristics can significantly impact how women view the world.

This provides a challenging task for social scientists. How do we take into account each of these factors? How can we collect and analyse data to reflect vision and strategic mission focus on cohort group's collective intelligence by creating "bounce back" plans? This demonstrates a business' larger intent and commitment while also helping to develop diversified thinking of women employees by keeping their vision for future expansion and growth.

The intricacy of empirical research on the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis has been increasing. Still, difficulties with scope and methodology prevent us

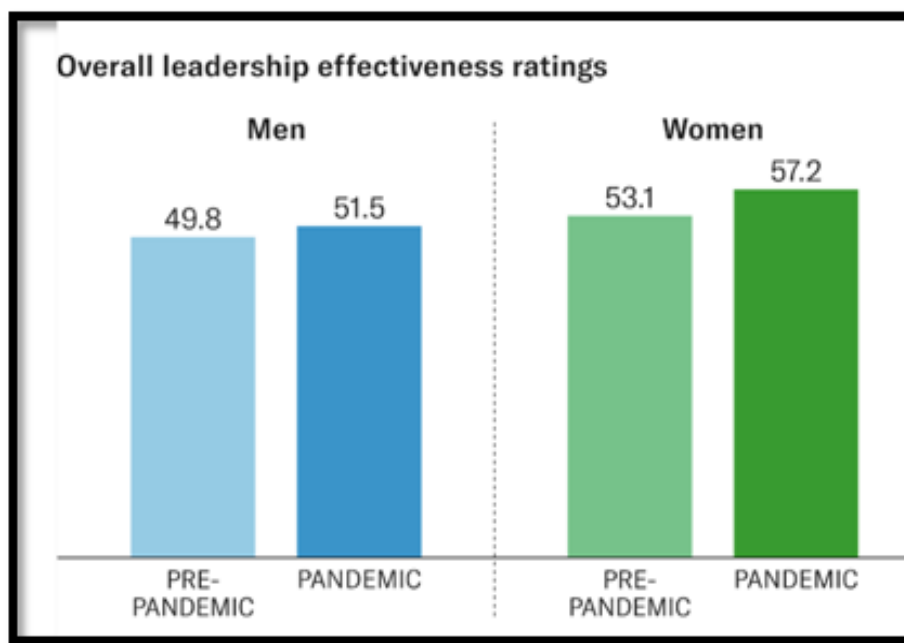
from extrapolating from many of these studies. Women as leaders must re-energise the New Normal phase to re-engineer the work stations and workforce to bring efficiency in terms of non-stereotypical notions. The Standing of Women in Leadership offers a blueprint to reach new highs.

Let's use the third and only female prime minister of India—Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi (19 November 1917–31 October 1984)—as an illustration. She was a significant figure in Indian politics and the Indian National Congress.

She was vocal and courageous during a time when women were still struggling for the right to leave their homes at will. She thus served as an example for the other ladies and demonstrated that they should speak up and be heard. She had heard about the difficulties facing a developing nation. Challenging time phase, always set a platform for leaders to transform their ideologies with progressive and adaptive strategies. Equipped with the smart-sizing and proactive uses of resources, Leader may forecast more change-ready culture and structure for task assignment. As a strategic visionary, the Leader emphasize the appropriate action plan to enable their focused-group to achieve the ladder of success even during risk and uncertainties.

Women taking the adaptive leadership concept helps the Business Enterprise respond to the recurring uncertainties. A leader with adaptive leadership trait always explores a diversified viewpoint to generate alternative for successful accomplishment. They lead with empathy, inspire their followers, boost the autonomy level and chalk out the right path for winning the solution.

According to surveys, women were seen as more successful leaders before and during the crisis. According to a review of 360-degree feedback data from March to June, their ratings were much higher during the pandemic's initial wave.



*Source: (Zenger Folkman, 2020)

II. BACKGROUND

In this research paper, it is to be observed how adaptive Leadership among women is effective in the era of Pandemic condition. Harvard Business Reviews proposed 4A's Model i.e Anticipation, Articulation, Adaption and Accountability as prime focused dimensions of Leadership Skills.

Further, it tries to explore the impact of Adaptive Leadership, which is quite different in its approach and strolls through the necessity to adopt new strategies made by women in the current scenario. Covid 19 as a Pandemic has changed the perception of Organizational culture and affected the competencies of the female leaders in their roles. Gone are the days when one heroic person generates the total outcome based on their decisions, solely enforcing their ideology.

Recently the perception on leadership has formed new dimensions where to face volatile and uncertain situations it becomes important that leaders embrace Anticipation, Articulation, Adaption and Accountability from women to bring a new transformation and thrive for success not just survive.

An Adaptive Leader identifies different skillset, mobilises every resource, organises and focus on orientation of every course of changing dynamics of business operations. The uncertainties brought on by COVID-19 requires the importance of recognizing leadership and group's perception and exploring new horizon for continuous flow of business transactions. Learning never stopped for women as leaders while they fought against the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus in every Industry as all those dynamically changed their existing Business Model in their daily activities in order to cater the target audience.

For instance, healthcare Industries redefined their curriculum as per the emerging need to support our society where women played pivotal role to fulfil adaptive leadership to handle situation better in the blended model.

Blended Learning is a progressive approach that includes virtual mode of medical consultations and opened up new scope of connecting through online platform to get the best of treatments. Adaptive Leader emphasizes working with all Organisation members to elicit the changes for the growth matrix and expansion policy of Organisation. This leadership trait would also extend their support system to achieve the vision through agreed upon ideas and directions.

III. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN REGARDING LEADERSHIP

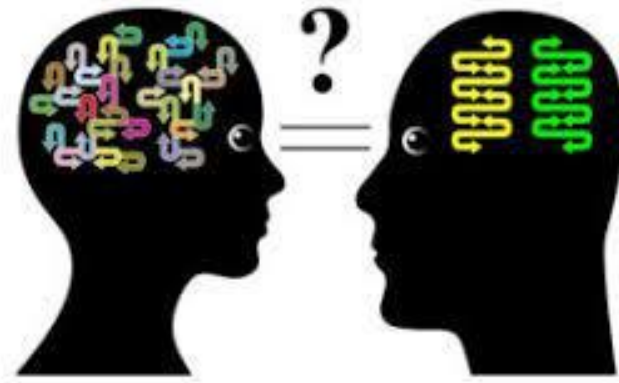
The following facts are: -

- 1. Self-Confidence and Leadership Experiences:** Men often show higher self-confidence in their leadership abilities compared to women. They tend to rate themselves as effective leaders and capable of handling management and business challenges. Around 37% of men consider themselves in the top 10% of leaders, whereas only 30% of women hold this view. Moreover, at the senior level, 63% of men see themselves as highly effective leaders, while only 49% of women feel the same way.



Furthermore, women have fewer opportunities for crucial leadership experiences. They are less likely to have engaged in tasks such as working abroad, leading geographically dispersed teams, or managing operations across multiple countries. These experiences are significant for leadership development. Having a diverse range of experiences is linked to better chances of advancing in leadership roles.

2. Business Drivers Comparing Men and Women Yield no Significant Differences.



The factors that were looked at to understand what pushes businesses forward are: creating strong, high-performing teams; getting employees involved and committed; making sure the company is centered around serving customers; making sure everyone is working together and being responsible; improving the skills and abilities of the organization; forming important partnerships and connections; leading new ways of doing things; and being more efficient.

Richard S. Wellins, Ph.D., who is the Senior Vice President at DDI and helped with the study, said, "The truth is, we often focus too much on the things that make us different, even though those differences are actually quite rare. The difference in how many men and women are in leadership positions doesn't have much to do with how skilled they are."

3. There are Noticeable differences in Personality Traits between Men and Women, Particularly in Areas like Curiosity, Sensitivity, and Impulsiveness.



Research indicates that men exhibit a 16% higher level of curiosity than women. This tendency might be connected to men's inclination to pursue STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), which emphasize inquiry and exploration. On the other hand, women display a 13% higher level of interpersonal sensitivity compared to men. This trait could be advantageous in societies where leaders are acknowledged for their behavior and interpersonal abilities. Moreover, men are rated 11% more impulsive than women. This difference could stem from societal expectations that encourage a "just do it" approach for men, while women are often advised to adopt a "don't do it unless you can do it correctly" mindset.

4. Organizations with more women in leadership roles perform better financially. Organizations in the top 20 percent of financial performers have 37 percent of their leaders as women: "When it comes to leadership, gender should not create problems, but in reality, it does affect business," stated Byham. "Promoting gender diversity among leaders brings diverse perspectives, leading to better problem-solving and greater business advantages."

Companies where women make up at least 30% of leadership roles are 12 times more likely to be among the top 20% of financial performers. On the other hand, companies in the lowest 20% have only 19% of their leaders as women. Byham pointed out, "DDI's research demonstrates that having women in top leadership positions contributes to the bottom line, resulting in increased revenue and profits."



IV. THE EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP AND FEMALE DISCRIMINATION

1. **The Effect of the Glass Ceiling:** The "glass ceiling" is a term used to describe an unseen limit that stops women from reaching higher-up roles like managers or leaders. This barrier is there because of gender stereotypes that affect how people see women's capabilities.



2. **The Effect of the Glass Cliff -** The term "glass cliff" talks about how when women get leadership roles, they often end up in risky and uncertain situations. These positions are more likely to fail and get criticized. Interestingly, the idea that "leaders should be male" doesn't seem to matter when the leadership role involves dealing with risky things.



3. Here are the benefits of gender equality in leadership presented in a list:

- Enhanced Economic Performance
- Improved Productivity
- Increased Innovation and Growth
- Embracing Diversity
- Flexible Work Arrangements
- Boosted Creativity

4. The objective of this study is:

- To find out how women embraced Adaptive Leadership -Supporting system in adversity
- To understand Why Flexible and Adaptive Leadership is essential for society.
- To understand how women can be a good leader by accepting adaptive leadership approach during the Pandemic emergencies.

In regular situations, both male and female leaders in any organization face uncertainties and challenges regularly. However, the pandemic has introduced a significant shift, impacting men and women differently, in the level of unpredictability in the workplace. Leaders now need to come up with fresh strategies to navigate this situation and ensure their organization survives challenges without making mistakes.

This is where 4 As of Adaptive Leadership gets to be verified to understand the traits of women leaders and how these assemble to face existential crisis and unfamiliar consequences. One such example could be embracing technology in every sphere to maintain up and running without creating defective innards.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Literature Review of Adaptive Leadership

- **Ramalingam et al., (2020)** Underlined the importance of building Adaptive Leadership to tackle this corona and why is it important? It further states that decision making needs to be agile at operational and leadership levels, which will benefit the planning process by making it dynamic.
 - **Ahern and Loh, (2020)** highlighted trust-confidence and cooperation framework in times of Covid 19 and emphasised collective action for leaders to instil in their followers with its adaptation.
 - **Berjaoui and Karami-Akkary, (2019)** Stated about distributed leadership skills high teacher and their commitment to organization using case study research. Their conclusion suggests that for schools to undergo a transformation and for professional communities to embrace a new kind of leadership, it's important to adopt a distributed model where teachers have a voice and influence.
 - **Yukl and Mahsud, (2010)** examined various types of flexible and adaptive leadership and explained their significance in today's organizations. The research centers on original research techniques and presents key discoveries. It also offers practical advice to leaders on enhancing their flexibility and adaptability.
 - **Heifetz et al. (2009)** defined Adaptive leadership as “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle through challenges and thrive” (p. 14). Practicing adaptive leadership is not equivalent to working on daily tasks or routine activities with fewer uncertainties.
- 2. Literature Review of Leadership Traits and Gender Biases:** Women face a considerable challenge in being recognized as leaders compared to men. In 2015, only 5% of the companies listed in the Standard and Poor's 500 index had female chief executive officers. This gender-based leadership gap is not confined to the business sector alone. Even in the non-profit sector, where women hold leadership positions, their representation remains notably lower.

As an illustration, a study conducted in Massachusetts in 2015 revealed that out of 151 non-profit organizations, only 21 had boards comprising a minimum of 50% women (Boston Club, 2015). Only one in five members of the U.S. Congress are women, and merely six states currently have female governors (New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, and South Carolina) currently have female governors (Centre for American Women and Politics, 2016). Not only in business and politics; but also, in unions (Bryant-Anderson & Roby, 2012), religious institutions (Christ, 2014), the legal profession (Rikleen, 2015), academia (American Council on Education, 2012), and many other institutions exhibit this leadership gap. The problem is even more acute for the Asian, black, and Hispanic women. Less than 3% of board directors within Fortune 500 companies are women from these demographic groups. This inequality is also reflected at the staff level. Although Asian, black, and Latino women constitute 17% of the workforce in S&P 500 companies, their representation drops to fewer than 4% among executive officials and managers (Catalyst, 2014). In the legal profession, where only 8% of equity partners are people of colour, women account for just 29% of Asian equity partners, 33% of black equity partners, and 24% of Latino equity partners (Rikleen, 2015). Statistics about lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LBT) women leaders are not

readily available, but a recent study found that women whose résumés indicated they were LBT received 30% fewer call backs than other women, which suggests that LBT status may further limit leadership opportunities (Mishel, 2016).

Attaining gender equality in leadership stands as a paramount issue of justice. Leaders hold significant influence, and excluding women from top leadership denies them the ability to make impactful changes in the world. Leadership positions are associated with elevated status and advantages, which in turn unlock doors to additional opportunities, further magnifying the appeal of leadership roles. Moreover, leadership often comes with financial rewards. In many organizations, top leaders enjoy the highest compensation, and managers and supervisors tend to command higher salaries compared to those who are not in leadership positions.

Addressing equity concerns alone provides ample rationale to bridge the gender gap, yet there are equally compelling factors at play. While researchers may not universally concur on the nature and extent of gender disparities in leadership styles (Kellogg Insight, 2013), they have identified noteworthy advantages linked to gender-integrated leadership.

The inclusion of women leaders can contribute positively to the financial results; a study by Credit Suisse (2012) indicated that companies with at least one woman on their board exhibited a higher return on investment compared to those without. Additionally, a 2007 Catalyst report focusing on S&P 500 companies established a connection between women's representation on boards and notably increased returns on equity, sales, and invested capital. However, the advantages of diversity extend beyond financial metrics. Research involving private firms demonstrates a link between gender-diverse management teams and favorable performance outcomes (Menguc & Auh, 2006). Moreover, an analysis of 126 firms within the S&P 500 unveiled a significant correlation between board gender diversity and enhanced corporate social responsibility (Boulouta, 2013). Furthermore, a separate study highlighted that leadership teams balanced in terms of gender appear to be less susceptible to problems arising from "groupthink" (Opstrup & Villadsen, 2015).

Women in leadership positions can bring another advantage for employees. A study conducted during the Great Recession found that female CEOs were notably less inclined than their male counterparts to implement staff layoffs. This discrepancy was substantial; while male-owned firms experienced workforce reductions twice as frequently as female-owned firms (14 percent vs. 6 percent), more employees were affected at the former (Matsa & Miller, 2014). While retaining staff might lead to lower short-term profits, it can also uphold employee morale and curtail future hiring and training expenses (Matsa & Miller, 2014). Further research indicates that organizations with a higher proportion of women in leadership roles may exhibit narrower pay gaps between men and women with comparable work experience and similar entry circumstances (Tate & Yang, 2015). Interestingly, a larger presence of women on boards is correlated with a greater likelihood of firms adopting a comprehensive set of LGBT-friendly policies (Cook & Glass, 2016).

The extent to which gender parity in leadership profoundly transforms institutions may be open for debate, but it's unquestionable that maintaining the status quo brings neither benefit nor inevitability. When women are excluded from leadership positions, it not only affects their well-being and that of their families but also has wider repercussions in domains such as philanthropy, politics, venture capitalism, and various unforeseen areas. While greater gender diversity in leadership isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, it's important to note that it isn't a magical solution either. Indeed, diversity in top management roles can at times pose challenges to effective teamwork due to differences in values, perceptions, and cognitive styles. Nevertheless, it has also been demonstrated to ignite creativity and cultivate diverse knowledge and perspectives, ultimately fostering the generation of new ideas (Opstrup & Villadsen, 2015).

- 3. Literature Review of Women as Adaptive Leader during Csovid 19:** The COVID-19 pandemic has had adverse effects on global health, social dynamics, and economies, and according to OECD (2020), women are disproportionately affected. Initially, women took the lead in the health response as they constitute around 70% of healthcare workers, placing them at a higher risk of infection. Simultaneously, due to school and daycare closures and existing gender imbalances in unpaid labor, women are shouldering a substantial share of domestic responsibilities. During times of crisis and quarantine, women also face a higher risk of job loss and financial difficulties. Moreover, they are more susceptible to incidents of assault, exploitation, abuse, or harassment.

In a study by **CH Mayer (2021)**, the article delves into speeches delivered by three prominent women during the Covid-19 pandemic, utilizing a positive psychology perspective. The focus of the study is to analyze how female world leaders, such as Tsai Ing-Wen, Jacinda Ardern, and Angela Merkel of Germany, addressed and managed the pandemic. The research explores the leadership behaviors and responses of these international women leaders in the context of the pandemic.

AS Aldrich (2020) in an effort to understand whether and how countries led by women adopted distinct approaches to the pandemic, the researcher of this study examined empirical data from the Coronavirus Government Response Tracker. The study analyzed the correlation between the gender of legislators and leaders and the timing of measures like stay-at-home directives, school closures, and coordinated public awareness campaigns. Despite the prevalent media claims, the study did not find significant statistical evidence supporting such assertions. However, there is some indication that decisions like school closures, which have gender-specific implications, may be influenced by the level of gender equality in legislative bodies. These findings mark a crucial initial step in comprehending the potentially gender-related aspects of crisis responses and pinpointing new avenues for further research.

According to CARE (2020), the humanitarian response to COVID-19 is not centered around local involvement or led by women. CARE's Rapid Gender Analyses have revealed that women are frequently marginalized from decision-making processes related to response efforts at the local and community levels. Unfortunately, the crisis is exacerbating these exclusions, impeding their active participation. This situation hampers the efficiency of the response and prevents women from influencing decisions that significantly impact them. The presence of women's leadership is crucial to ensure that

response efforts don't overlook substantial gaps that jeopardize the lives, livelihoods, and overall well-being of at least half of the affected individuals.

The composition of most national-level committees addressing COVID-19 lacks equal representation of females and males. However, evidence suggests that female leaders often exhibit higher levels of compassion and empathy. Diverse viewpoints stemming from a range of perspectives tend to foster smoother and more innovative solutions, particularly in times of urgency. Notably, women tend to excel in diverse thinking, making them adept at generating innovative ideas as compared to men. According to **CARE (2021)**, laws, policies, public decisions, budget allocations, services, and programmes fail to appropriately or even account for women's experiences, needs, and rights when a range of women are excluded from political and public decision-making.

In a study by **JJV Bavel (2020)**, various aspects of pandemics were examined based on data from different research studies. The subjects covered a range of topics including risk management, societal and cultural influences on behavior, science communication, ethical decision-making, leadership, stress management, and coping mechanisms. Within each section, the study delved into the nature and quality of previous research, highlighting areas of uncertainty and unresolved issues. The study identified several significant insights that can contribute to an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on the role of women in adaptive leadership positions during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. While it's widely recognized that women often face more barriers than men in attaining leadership roles, especially in male-dominated fields, there's less consensus on the specifics of how women lead.

Even the impact of a single woman can be remarkable. By offering support, education, or a small loan to a woman, her entire family and community can benefit. When this impact is multiplied by hundreds or thousands, it has the potential to touch millions of lives.

Women possess various qualities that make them excellent leaders. They prioritize collaboration, value work-life balance, excel in listening, multitasking, and communication. During crises like the pandemic, women tend to exhibit decisive and wise leadership, creating a more cooperative and familial atmosphere within teams. This positively affects the overall culture of an organization and promotes collaboration.

The study's findings underscore the importance of effective adaptive leadership, particularly in the context of the digital transformations taking place across various industries.

From a medical perspective, COVID-19 initially seemed to affect men more severely. However, as the pandemic spread, its impact on women became more pronounced. As women constitute around 70% of healthcare workers and remain underrepresented in

leadership and decision-making roles within the industry, they are at the forefront of the battle against the pandemic. Consequently, they face an increased risk of infection. Furthermore, women's jobs, businesses, incomes, and overall well-being are more susceptible to the anticipated economic repercussions due to existing gender inequalities.

Women often shoulder a disproportionate burden of care work, performing up to ten times more care tasks than men according to the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). Even when both women and their partners are working from home due to lockdowns, the additional responsibilities stemming from travel restrictions, home quarantines, school closures, and caring for elderly family members can further weigh on women. The lockdown measures also heighten the risk of women experiencing abuse, exploitation, or harassment.

However, despite these challenges, women's voices remain underrepresented in the media. Their insights and opinions might be overlooked in policy responses to the crisis. This situation highlights the need to avoid generalizations about women's or men's leadership during this critical time. It also emphasizes the ongoing requirement for gender-sensitive research and nuanced policy decision-making in addressing the pandemic's impact.

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