ARE WOMEN LEADERS BREAKING THE GENDER-STEREOTYPE?

A STUDY ON EMERGING ANDROGYNOUS LEADERSHIP STYLE AMONG WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT:

Background and aim of the study	As an emerging market, India is yet to fully utilise its women talent pool effectively. India still continues to be a gender-stereotyped nation , especially in leadership roles. The aim of this study is to break the gender-stereotyping with regard to leadership. For that, the researchers try to bring the importance of the emerging androgynous leadership style among women and substantiate it by a sample study. This research tries to check the relationship between leadership effectiveness and the androgynous orientation of professional women in lower and middle leadership positions. The study aims to expand the empirical evidences of emerging androgynous leadership style of women in India.
Design/methodology/approach	The study was conducted among 43 women professionals, who were in lower and middle leadership roles in the state of Kerala in India. The sample consists of doctors, teachers and managers. We used two standardised psychometric tools to capture the androgynous orientation and the leadership effectiveness scores.These scores were then analysed using SPSS 17 for correlation.
Findings	It was found that majority of women who took part in the study had an androgynous orientation and also had an effective leadership style. A weak-moderate ,but significant correlation was found between the androgyny score and

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	the leadership effectiveness scores.
Research limitations/implications	A higher sample size could have improved the correlation coefficient. Since the focus was to check to female psyche with regard to leadership roles, the study was done only among women.The study could be replicated among men to check their androgynous nature as well as leadership profile, which could give a balanced outlook for the subject. Also the study could be replicated among women in other professions than the ones in this study.
Practical implications	This paper has tried to deal into the major issues behind the non-representation of women in top leadership roles and found that among the sample, gender stereotyping is the major probable cause, as the potential for effective leadership clearly exists. In this scenario, the authors propose the necessity for serious actions in this area by the Indian corporate. Similarly, the paper also tries to bring forth the necessity for training women employees in developing an androgynous orientation as it could be one way to bring out their actual leadership potential. Organisations and Educational Institutions could consider this matter in future decisions in this area.
originality	The paper brings empirical evidence on the emerging androgynous leadership style of women leaders in the Indian context, which is an under researched area.

Key words: Androgyny, Androgynous Leadership style, Glass ceiling , Leadership effectiveness ,Women leaders.

 "What the world needs today is not more competition but women's native genius for sympathetic cooperation" – (Meyer ,1953)

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1.Introduction and background:

The exponential growth of the Indian economy, kicked off with the liberalization, has led to the influx of MNCs and giant business groups. There has been a sea change in the composition of workforce and more women are entering managerial roles. However women still face hindrances in their career advancement of women managers so as to take them towards organisational leadership roles due negative perception of women's professional capability/commitment, stereotypical attitudes and absence of family friendly programs. Mavoothu (2011) comments that women represent underutilized talent pool that could be employed more adequately to enhance national economic growth and that their employment has important implications for organizational performance and growth of the nation especially in a country like India. Thus management of gender differences and expectations is an important issue in India. Women are still clustered in lower and to a lesser extent middle management positions. A mixture of social, cultural, organisational and personal biases have contributed towards confining women to lower management positions. Though India boasts of achievements of Ms.Nainalal Kidwai(CEO,HSBC), Ms.Indra Nooyi (CEO,PepsiCo) and a few others in the Corporate world and Smt.Prathiba Patil and Ms.Sonia Gandhi in the Political world (Zakkariya & Edward, 2011) , it is very evident that most middle and top leadership positions are still held by men, even though qualified women exist to occupy them. Globally, women comprise only around 10 per cent of the senior management positions in Fortune 500 companies (Chadha, 2002). In India, their presence is known to range between a high of 5.8 per cent (Kulkarni, 2002) to a low of roughly 3 per cent (Chadha, 2002; Mehra, 2002; Singh, 2003) of all administrative positions. In a recent study conducted by IIM (B), Kurup et al (2011) found that the percentage of women directorships in the total number of directorships in corporate India in 2007 was only 3.63% which is a far cry from the 33% or even the 50% women representation that is much talked about in India. Reality is that women are no less in aspects of leadership if given an opportunity. This has become evident from the success of 33 % reservation for women in local governance in Kerala (a southern state in India) ,as per study on Women in Panchayats,2008 .

Review shows that gender stereotyping is one probable issue in the path of women entering leadership roles. This paper brings into light capability of women to be effective in leadership roles, which is explored in relation to their androgynous orientation. According to the report on

Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2011,by Community Business , which surveyed 21 large MNCs in six countries in Asia- China , Hong Kong , India , Japan, Malaysia and Singapore- to see how women are doing at junior, middle and senior levels of management, it was found that India was the worst performer in terms of the percentage of women at the junior and middle levels. Another potentially disturbing finding is that India is unique in having the biggest percentage of women dropping out of the workforce, known as the ―leaking pipeline, between the junior and middle levels. The earlier the drop-off occurs, the smaller the base of people who could move up the ranks, and therefore the fewer women there will be in senior positions. The presence of such a leaking pipeline in India suggests a failure of gender equality, in particular when one considers that India fares so much more poorly than the other countries in the study.

The Catalyst (2011) report gives the following findings about the need for more women in top management.

" …..More women, fewer problems.

Analyzing 201 Norwegian firms, Sabina Nielsen and Catalyzing guest-blogger Morten Huse found that the ratio of women board directors was positively correlated with a decreased level of conflict.

More women, stronger corporate ethics.

Every year, Ethisphere recognizes companies that demonstrate "real and sustained ethical leadership within their industries." A study of the companies that make the coveted list found that they had an important factor in common: boards of directors with a high percentage of women.

More women, more effective problem-solving.

A study by researchers from MIT, Carnegie Mellon University and Union College found that the number of women in a group of people significantly predicted the ability of the group overall to effectively solve problems.

More women on top, more women in pipeline.

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Studies by the RAND Corporation and Catalyst, among others, show a clear and positive correlation between the percentage of women board directors in a company's past and the percentage of women top executives in its future. This suggests that one way to cultivate a healthy pipeline of women is to ensure that gender diversity starts on the top. The more women there—the more women everywhere…."

In this paper, the authors first review the status of gender stereotyping in leadership roles and the importance of the emerging androgynous style of leadership and its significance in the context of changing business scenario. In the subsequent section, a sample study is conducted to check the relationship between leadership effectiveness and androgynous orientation of women in lower and middle leadership positions.

2. Review Of Literature:

2.1 Concept of Glass Ceiling

Several gender studies denote the phenomenon by the term ―Glass Ceiling, which was originally coined by Wall street journal in 1986, to explain why women fail to achieve senior management roles in numbers that reflect their representation in the workforce. This theory postulates that women can achieve certain levels of success in industry, business or politics but are prevented from reaching the most senior levels of management due to an invisible barrier that is almost impossible to breach. Since then, several new terminologies has evolved in this context like ―Glass Wall, ―Glass house, ―Glass elevators, Glass cliff etc. According to Jain and Mukherji (2010) phenomenon has been extensively studied in the western context but still   remains under-researched in the Indian scenario . In their survey it was clearly found that the underlying stereotypes are well-embedded in the Indian corporate world, though the Indian men deny the same.

2.2 Gender-Stereotyping and Leadership

The core reason behind the existence of these ―Glass Phenomenon can be attributed to the gender-role stereotyping that is prevalent in the society, especially in leadership roles. Gender-

role stereotypes refer to the widely held conceptions about the genders that attribute certain sets of characteristics uniquely to one gender. Such stereotypes tend to exaggerate or distort the true degree of differences between the sexes (Cook, 1985). An important reason for relegation of women in management to certain roles and their being excluded from certain others can be attributed to this wrong assumption of bio psychological equivalence according to which sex and sex role orientation are the same. Previous research found that predominantly "communal" qualities, such as being nice or compassionate, are associated with women, and predominantly "agentic" qualities, such as being assertive or competitive, are associated with men. (Kark,Manor and Shamir, 2011) . It is these agentic qualities that are believed to be essential to successful leadership. Because men fit the cultural stereotype of leadership better than women, they have better access to leadership roles and face fewer challenges in becoming successful in them.

Though, historically leadership has been construed as primarily a masculine enterprise and theories of leadership focused on desirability of stereotypically masculine qualities in leaders, nevertheless it is probable that stereotypically feminine qualities of cooperation , mentoring and collaboration are important to leadership as well, certainly in some context and perhaps increasingly in contemporary organisations (Eagly & Carli, 2003). In the past and in some respects even today, the ideal leader was perceived as possessing stereotypic 'masculine' qualities such as self-confidence, independence, assertiveness, dominance and rationality (Schein, 1973). Research has indicated that across different organizations and countries the ―good or successful manager was described in masculine terms by both women and men (Schein, 2007). As per his study on successful managers in 2007, the results indicated that good manager was described by both women and men in terms of masculinity across different organizations and countries.

Society has its own stereotypes and biases against women in top positions. Women are viewed as fragile and lacking in the qualities that are considered beneficial to be effective as leaders. Traditional masculine traits have higher perceived value than feminine traits in an organizational set up. A recent meta-analysis study conducted by Eagly et al (2011) shows that even today leadership continues to be viewed as culturally masculine. As per their findings, women suffer from two primary forms of prejudice. Firstly, Women are viewed as less qualified or natural in most leadership roles, the research shows, and secondly, when women adopt culturally masculine

behaviors often required by these roles, they may be viewed as inappropriate or presumptuous. Behaviors such as assertiveness which attract praise in male leaders are reinterpreted in less favorable terms when exhibited by female leaders. Gender stereotyping results in womens' leadership being seen very differently than mens' even when both genders are exhibiting exactly the same behaviour. "Assertiveness" in the male becomes "domineering" in the female and while self confidence is seen as a necessary component of leadership in the male, women may be accused of being "over-confidence". This uncertainty about what constitutes effective leadership behaviour and how it is perceived, particularly in women, can result in uncertainty and a loss of self-confidence for women in management or those aspiring to management roles.

Even when such uncertainty exists, it has been frequently observed in the past that organizational goals could not be exclusively achieved by either masculine or feminine characteristics of leaders (Park, 1997). He suggests that integration rather than a polarization becomes necessary for leaders and organizations. He further observes that there should be an integration of both feminine and masculine characteristics for successful leadership roles. This is the essence of androgynous orientation. Hence it is assumed that a leadership style based on androgynous orientation is likely to be most effective in organizational context.

2.3 Androgynous Leadership style

Androgyny is a term derived from the Greek words andro (meaning man) and gyné (meaning woman), referring to the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics (source: Wikipedia). According to Bem (1977),

> "The androgynous person is simply a female or male who has a high degree of both feminine (expressive) and masculine (instrumental) traits. A feminine individual is high on feminine (expressive) traits and low on masculine (instrumental) traits. A masculine individual is high on instrumental traits and low on expressive traits. An undifferentiated person is low on both feminine and masculine traits. Androgynous men and women are more flexible and more mentally healthy than either masculine or feminine individuals; undifferentiated individuals are less competent".

Instrumentality is defined as the co-ordination and adaptation of the family system's needs with the outside world. It also connotes a goal orientation and a general insensitivity to the responses that others have to the person's behaviour. Expressiveness involves maintenance and regulation of the family's emotional needs and interactions. Thus, expressiveness connotes sensitivity to others 'responses and a concern with interpersonal relationships.

2.4 Changing Business scenario and Androgynous Leadership Style.

Changes in organizations' economic, demographic, technological and cultural environments have given voice to this alternative perspective suggesting that traditional management styles may be less effective. Many authors (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fondas, 1997; Fletcher, 2004) have argued that in order to succeed in today's frequently changing, less hierarchical and more flexible organizations, managers have to engage in collaboration, be cooperative, demonstrate openness, interpersonal sensitivity, compassion and empathy, and invest efforts in the development of their employees.

This suggests that effective and influential leadership may not be characterized by mainly stereotypic masculine' characteristics, but rather may call for 'androgyny', a blending of culturally 'feminine' and 'masculine' types of behaviors that can give both female and male managers more flexibility and advantage as leaders (Hall, Workman and Marchioro, 1998; Koenig, et al., 2011). A meta-analytical study reports evidence for increasing 'androgyny'of the leader stereotype over the last four decades (Koeing, et al., 2011). This shift to an 'androgynous' orientation will also reduce the role incongruity problem in their leadership roles and overcome the challenge of the double bind paradox: the conflicting expectations that women leaders should behave in an agentic manner (e.g., assertive, competitive) to fulfill the leader role, but at the same time in a communal manner (e.g., compassionate, caring) to fulfill the female gender role (Kark & Eagly, 2010).

Several previous studies suggested that a combination of masculinity and femininity provides the maximum benefits rather than either masculinity or femininity (Blanchard and Sargent, 1984; Chusmiar and Parker, 1991; Kent and Moss, 1993). Kaplan and Sedney(1980) also explained several premises about androgynous identity and leadership style: broad repertoire of responses;

flexibility in response to situational demands; and effectiveness. The first premise suggests that androgynous leaders will have a wider range of possible reactions for any situation. That is, androgynous leaders should be able to react according to what they feel is most appropriate for the situation. The second premise suggests that androgynous leaders will have the capacity to assess a situation and to determine the most appropriate response. The third premise suggests that androgynous leaders will have greater success in their encounters with the world than other leaders. However, this effectiveness depends on the subordinates' willingness to accept the androgynous leaders (Kaplan and Sedney, 1980). Hersey and Blanchard (1969) also made similar suggestions.

Some researchers described these premises in a more practical manner. Blanchard and Sargent (1984) described what androgynous leaders are and how they can be developed. They argued that effective leaders/managers should be able to nurture and shape employee behaviour as well as to balance a concern for people with concern for the bottom line. That is, an androgynous leader who blends a task oriented and a relations-oriented leadership style will be more appropriate and successful at achieving his or her goals in organizations. Furthermore, this concept of androgynous leadership style is similar to Blake and Mouton's (1985) ―9.9 team management style. However, the concept of androgynous leadership style is broad and overcomes the limits of attitudinal models such as Blake and Mouton's managerial grid model.

The trend towards more androgynous leadership is not only good for leaders, but also for organizations. In many contexts, top-down, command-and-control leaders no longer provide the most effective or admired type of leadership. Scholars of leadership have demonstrated that effective leaders are able to inspire, motivate, and mentor their followers. Such leaders are good role models and symbolize the best qualities of their organization. In fact, women generally manifest a relatively androgynous style that incorporates culturally masculine and feminine elements. Women are thus, somewhat more democratic than men in their leadership style and are concerned with mentoring and development needs of colleagues. (Eagly and Carli, 2009)

3. Research Questions:

Given the background and the necessity of androgynous leadership style in the emerging business scenario, it would be imperative to check the status of sex-role orientation of Indian women who are in middle management positions and their potential for undertaking higher leadership. Hence it is supposed that if they possess androgynous quality they are likely to have an effective leadership style and these women can be considered as having potential for taking up higher challenges in their respective profession. Hence we propose to address the following research questions in this paper.

1. Which is the most prominent sex-role orientation that women leaders possess? (Feminine, Masculine or Androgyny?)
2. Do women leaders possess effective leadership style?
3. Is there any relationship between sex-role orientation and effective leadership style?

4. Research Methodology:

In order to address the research questions, a sample survey was conducted by administering psychometric tools among women leaders.

4.1 Population and Respondents of the study

The population of the study includes women professionals in the field of education, management and health in the state of Kerala. The state of Kerala has the highest literacy rates in the whole of India and more number of women are entering managerial roles these days. The state also has a very good Gender Development Index and Human Development Index. As the objective is to study the female psyche, only women respondents were included. Since the purpose of the study is to examine any relation between androgynous quality and leadership style, only teachers, managers and doctors in lower and middle level positions with decision making capacity were considered.

4.2 Sampling technique and Sample size

Judgment sampling technique was used for the study. 50 questionnaires were distributed of which 43 valid questionnaires were received which were used for the analysis. A minimum service

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period of one year in the present organization and atleast six months experience in a leading /managerial role was   set   as selection criteria for the sampling units. The final sample consisted of 13 Doctors, 17 Teachers and 13 Managers, who were working in a leading role in prominent institutions in Kerala.

4.3 Measurement Tools

We have used two validated instruments for this study. The Androgyny Scale and the Leadership Profile Indicator (LPI) , which are both psychometric tools , constructed and validated in the Indian context.

 Androgyny scale developed by Udai Pareek and Debdas Ray is meant to measure the respondent's level of androgynous orientation. The scale contains 20 pairs. The respondent is required to distribute 4 marks between two items of each pair. The developers claim a high internal consistency of the instrument and the reliability was found as following. Coefficient of parallel forms is 0.70, equal length Spearman-Brown is 0.82 and unequal length Brown coefficient is 0.82. The developers have also arrived at a norm, based on a sample study of girls, boys and teachers from India. Based on the norm, five categories of orientation are given ranging from High Masculine to High Feminine. The scores which fall in the mean level in the norm is said to be androgynous.

For measuring Leadership style and effectiveness, we used the Leadership Profile Indicator-Management (LPI-M), Leadership Profile Indicator –Education (LPI-E) and the Leadership Profile Indicator –Health (LPI-HA), which is meant for managers, teachers and doctors respectively. The instrument is based on the theory of situational leadership by Hersey and Blanchard. The instrument consists of 12 situations, each posing a problem for action. Four alternatives are given for each situation, and the respondent is required to select one of them that she would use if she were the leader in that situation. Based on the answers, a score for leadership effectiveness is arrived using the scoring methodology given in the key. The range will be 0 to 100. The developers claim Guttman-Split half reliability coefficient to be 0.59 and Equal and unequal-length Spearman-Brown coefficient to be 0.60 .The developers also conducted validity tests and the correlation between Hersey and Blanchard's four LEAD and the LPI styles were found as 0.88,0.88, 0.89 and 0.65 which indicates high validity.

5. Data Analysis And Interpretations:

The following section deals with the analysis of the data collected from the sample size of 43 women professionals which includes doctors, teachers and managers in lower and middle level positions with decision making power. Their scores of Androgyny and leadership effectiveness were entered into SPSS 17   for the purpose of data analysis. Important sections of analysis like frequency tables, chart showing an emerging androgynous leadership style and the Pearson's correlation table showing a positive relationship between androgynous orientation and leadership effectiveness are included.

5.1 Frequency distribution tables

The following tables give the frequency distribution of the variables of study

Table 1 Androgyny Score

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid **High masculine**	1	2.3	2.3	2.3
Masculine	3	7.0	7.0	9.3
Androgynous	25	58.1	58.1	67.4
Feminine	12	27.9	27.9	95.3
Highly Feminine	2	4.7	4.7	100.0
Total	**43**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

(Source :survey data)

 be observed from the table above   that a majority of 58.1% of the respondents in the study shows androgynous orientation. Percentage of respondents showing feminine orientation was found to be 27.9 % and those with highly feminine nature were as small as 4.7%. The cumulative percentage of masculine scores was 9.3%.

Table :2 Leadership effectiveness Score

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid **Ineffective**	1	2.3	2.3	2.3
Moderately Effective	10	23.3	23.3	25.6
Effective	20	46.5	46.5	72.1

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Highly Effective	12	27.9	27.9	100.0
Total	**43**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

(Source :survey data)

Considering the leadership effectiveness of the sample it is evident from Table 2 that most women (46.5 %) were categorized as effective leaders and nearly 28% were highly effective and percentage of ineffective women leaders were found to be only 2.3%.To make it more clear, if we are to take cumulative percentage a majority of 74.4 % women belong to the category of effective leaders ie., combining both effective and highly effective leadership groups.

5.2Androgyny –Leadership effectiveness chart

The Androgyny-leadership effectiveness chart gives an integrated picture of androgynous orientation and leadership effectiveness of the women leaders that has been chosen for the study. It can be seen that most of the effective leaders i.e., by considering both effective and highly effective leaders, has an androgynous orientation. Least leadership effectiveness was observed in either extremes of highly masculine and highly feminine. It is a typical case of the emerging androgynous leadership style in the new business scenario.

Fig:1

Androgyny -Leadership Effectiveness chart
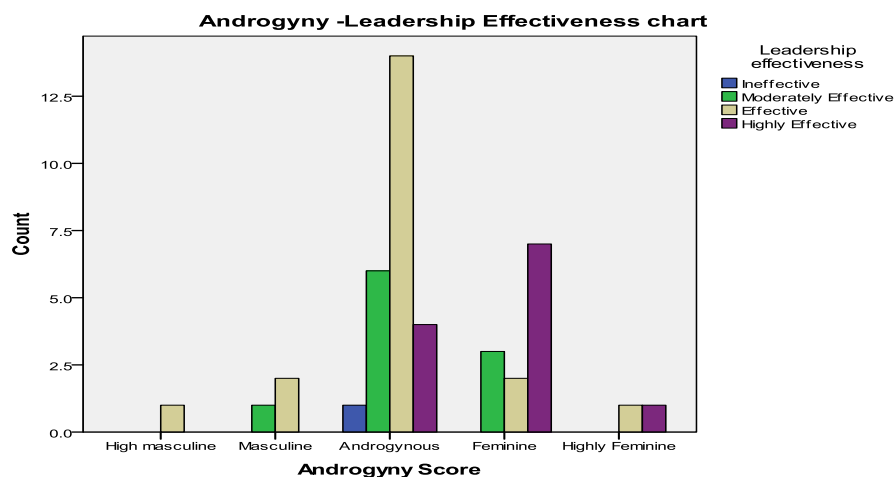
(Source :survey data)

5.3 Correlation between androgyny and leadership effectiveness

Table 3 shows that there is a moderate correlation between androgynous orientation and leadership style. The Pearson's correlation coefficient at 5% significance level was calculated as 27.9.Thus the relationship appears to be positive.

Table 3: Correlation Table of Androgyny Scores and Leadership Effectiveness Scores

		Androgyny score	Leadership Effectiveness Score
Androgyny Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.279[*]
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.035
	N	43	43
Leadership effectiveness score	Pearson Correlation	.279[*]	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.035	
	N	43	43

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

6. Findings:

In the present study, it has been found that majority of the women leaders surveyed has an androgynous orientation. It has also been found that they were effective as leaders, as nearly 75% of these women possessed a leadership effectiveness score of above 60. In arriving at the 75%, a strict standard was set and eliminated the group of moderately effective leaders. However, if we include them also, we get a 97% effective leadership style. Interestingly, most of the respondents who were effective leaders belonged to the androgynous category.

The most important outcome of this study is the finding that there is a significant correlation between leadership effectiveness and androgynous orientation. This is a positive sign as far as women leaders are concerned. This is especially significant in the context of the study of Karen

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Korabik (2007), who stated that adopting an androgynous management style may help women to overcome the negative effects of sex-stereotyping in the workplace

7. Significance And Implications:

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it throws light at the leadership potential of women in Kerala in an indirect way. The sample studied consists of women who have reached a lower and middle managerial position in the state, either by passion or by chance. However, in the process, they have probably undergone changes in their sex-role orientation and acquired a more balanced androgynous orientation. Similarly majority possess an effective leadership style too. There can be two sides: either that, they came into a leadership position because they were androgynous or their leadership role made them androgynous. Whatever the cause, the outcome is promising. This just means that training women employees in developing an androgynous orientation could be one way to bring out their actual leadership potential. Organisations and Educational Institutions could consider this matter in future decisions in this area.

8. Discussions And Conclusions:

This paper has tried to deal with non-representation of women in leadership roles. Review of related literature shows that gender stereotyping still exists. The paper explored leadership effectiveness in relation to androgynous orientation .Among the sample of women studied majority were found to be effective leaders ,which was significantly related to their androgynous orientation.

The gender stereotyping is the major probable cause, as the potential for leadership clearly exists. In this scenario, the authors propose the necessity for serious actions in this area by the Indian corporate. This may require radical changes in the corporate policies, which can be initiated by the corporate themselves or by legal provisions.

In India, with a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of approximately 7 per cent, and a projected talent gap, or a shortage of skilled labour to sustain this growth, of more than 5 million

by the end of 2012, it is alarming that India Inc continues to under utilize its female talent pool. Inspite of several previous studies confirming the potentials and capabilities of the fairer sex, the Indian corporate are yet to realize this factor.

9. Limitations And Scope For Further Research:

Due to time and resource constraints, the authors have not included women in senior management positions in this study, which could have influenced the interpretations. However, since our focus was to identify any positive trend of women in the lower and middle level, which may be better-utilized, the study only among such category. The authors also acknowledge the small size of the sample and do appreciate the fact that a higher sample could have lead to better generalisability.

The study could be replicated among men to check their androgynous nature as well as leadership profile, which could give a balanced outlook for the subject. Similarly, this study can be replicated across varied leadership profiles, other than the three categories mentioned.

The authors also acknowledge the fact that the Human Development Index is the highest in Kerala, (the 2011 census shows Kerala's HDI to be 0.920 which is higher than that of most developed countries) which could have influenced the study and hence the results may vary when conducted in other parts of India.

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