



CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS ON REDESIGNING HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN ORGANISATIONS

Col Dr. G. G. Mathews

Professor, Science and Humanities Department, Sri Vellappally Natesan College of Engineering, Kerala.

Introduction

Women receive less recognition for their accomplishments than men do, and the discrimination starts very early in their life. Teachers pay more attention to boys and they get more physical and verbal rewards. They get more direction from the teachers and are more likely to get individual instruction on how to do things. Girls have stronger verbal skills than boys do, but they continue to get less recognition than boys. Teachers praise boys more than girls, give boys more academic help and are more likely to accept their comments during classroom discussions. The subject of ambition is hidden and emotion laden for women. Woman talks calmly and cogently about a wide variety of topics, but the subject of ambition makes them uncomfortable. In fact, most women do not admit to bring ambitions, which is unlike men who consider it a necessary and desirable part of their lives. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that recognition is the motivation that drives the development of skills. Recognition is a basic human requirement, and it is not merely a peasant response. Everyone wants his or her efforts and accomplishments to be acknowledged. The desires to acquire skills and receive recognition for accomplishments are as strong in women as they are in men, but there is a dramatic difference between men and women in their attitudes toward ambition and how they create, reconfigure, realize and abandon their goals. Successful women underplay their achievements and attribute their success to luck. Women almost express fear when they personally recognize their success in newly available professions should have brought them enormous satisfaction. Instead of celebrating their success, they seek to deflect attention from themselves. They refuse to claim a central place in their own success stories, shifting the credit elsewhere and avoiding recognition. 'I was able to get good breaks and just happened'. It is not only the successful women who shun recognition-nearly all women do so.

Many CEO's who make gender diversity by setting aspirational goals for the proportion of women in leadership roles, insisting on diverse slates of candidates for senior positions as developing mentoring and training programs are frustrated. They and their organisations' spend time and money on efforts to build more robust pipeline of upwardly mobile women, and then not much happens. The problem with these leader's approaches is that they don't address the often fragile process of coming to see oneself, and to be seen by others, as a leader. Becoming a leader involves much more than being put in a leadership role and acquiring new skills. It involves a fundamental identity shift. Organisations inadvertently undermine this process when they advice women to proactively seek leadership roles without addressing policies that communicate a mismatch between how women are seen and the qualities and experiences people tend to associate with leaders. A significant body of research shows that for women, the subtle gender bias that persists in organisations and in society disrupts the learning cycle at the heart of becoming a leader. This research also points to some steps the organisations can take in order to rectify the situation. It is not enough to instill the 'right' skills as if in a social vacuum. The context must support a women's motivation to lead and also increase the likelihood that others will encourage her efforts.

Women in Leadership Roles

People's leadership capabilities grow and opportunities to demonstrate those capabilities expand, challenging assignments and other organisational endorsements become more likely. Such affirmation gives them fortitude to experiment with new ways of exercising leadership. An absence affirmation, however, diminishes self confidence and discourages them from experimenting. Leadership identity eventually withers away, along with opportunities to grow. Integrating leadership into one's core identity is particularly challenging for women, who must establish credibility in a culture that is deeply conflicted about whether, when and how they should exercise authority. Practices that equate leadership with behaviours considered more common are simply not cut out to be leaders. Despite a lack of discriminatory intent, subtle, 'second generation' forms of gender bias can obstruct the leadership identity development of an organisations entire population of women. The resulting under-representation of women in top positions reinforces entrenched beliefs and maintains the status quo. The three actions suggested supporting women's access to leadership positions are as follows:

- Educate women and men about second-generation gender bias.
- Create safe "identity work spaces" to support transitions to bigger roles.
- Anchor women's development efforts in a sense of leadership purpose.

Effects of Second Generation Bias

Second generation bias creates a context in which women fail to reach their full potential. Feeling less connected to one's male colleagues, being advised to take staff role to accommodate family, finding oneself excluded from consideration for key



positions. All these situations reflect work practices that put women at a disadvantage. It is revealed that when women recognize the subtle and pervasive effects of second generation bias, they feel empowered because they can take action to counter those effects. They can put themselves forward for leadership roles when they are qualified but have been overlooked. In the upper tiers of organisations, women become scarce, which heightens the visibility and scrutiny of those near top, who may become risk-averse and lose their sense of purpose. Thus safe space for learning and experimentation is critical in leadership development programs for women. Identifying common experiences increases women's willingness to talk openly without fearing that others will misunderstand or judge them. When they are grounded in candid assessments of the cultural, organizational and individual factors shaping them, women can construct coherent narratives about whom they are and who they want to become.

It is tempting to believe that women are intrinsically different in their needs and styles, that they are more empathetic, making it easy for them to gratify the wishes of others and relinquish coveted resources. However, it has been demonstrated that women's attitude towards success and recognition is not due to the fact of their being women. Women seek and compete for recognition openly when they are with women, and they aggressively pursue roles that complement rather than compete directly with men. Traits are mostly chosen to define femininity as being yielding, loyal, cheerful, compassionate, shy, sympathetic, affectionate, sensitive to the needs of others, succumbing to flattery, being understanding, eager to soothe lust feelings, soft spoken, warm, tender, gullible, childlike, not using harsh language, loving children and being gentle. Femininity emerges from these traits are: femininity exists only in the context of relationship. Women's sexual identity is based on qualities that cannot be expressed in isolation. Women must provide something for other person, be that person a lover, a child, a sick parent, a husband or a boss. 'Giving' is the chief activity that defines femininity. This explains why professional women are credited as being highly supportive manager and excellent team players. Women can be both business like and feminine when they focus on the 'relationship aspects' of their work.

To manage the competence-likability trade-off-the seeming choice between being respected and being liked-women are taught to downplay femininity or soften a hard-charging style. But the time and energy spent on managing these perceptions can ultimately be self-defeating. Over-investment in one's image diminishes the resources available for larger purposes. People who focus on how others perceive them are less clear about their goals and less open to learning from failure. Anchoring women in purpose enables women to redirect their attention toward shared goals and what they need to learn in order to achieve the goals. Instead of defining themselves in relation to gender stereotypes, female leaders can focus on behaving in ways that advance the purposes for which they stand. Learning how to be an effective leader is like learning any complex skill. It rarely comes naturally and usually takes a lot of practice. Successful transitions into senior management roles involve shedding previously effective professional identities and developing new, more fitting ones. Yet people often feel ambivalent about leaving the comfort of roles in which they have excelled.

Women are facing the reality that in order to be perceived as feminine, they must provide or relinquish resources, particularly recognition to others. There is an unspoken mandate that women must subordinate needs for recognition to others, particularly men. They are asked to provide personal recognition for their husbands and to relinquish recognition in the work place to the men with whom they work. Women's femininity is assailed when they speak as much as men in work situations or compete for high-visibility positions. They are caricatured as either asexual and unattractive, or promiscuous and seductive-something must be wrong with women's sexuality if she can compete as hard as men.

Social Influence and Recognition

At each historical juncture where women have achieved access to social influence and recognition, their capacity to be real women has been questioned. For example, women who pursued higher education were considered asexual. Women are expected to forfeit opportunities for recognition at home and at work and feel foolish in asking for an appropriate acknowledgement of their contributions. They find it difficult to demand appropriate support in the form of time, money and promotion to pursue their own goals. They also feel selfish when they do not subordinate their needs to those of others. This subtle, incremental dynamic works against their pursuit and attainment of goals. Women find mastery of a skill as satisfying as their male counterparts. But the personal and societal recognition that they receive for their accomplishments is poor, ambivalent, and unpredictable. Women's achievement in the academic field frequently outstrips those of male peers. But they underestimate their abilities when they move to workplace. In contrast, men have an inflated estimation of their own capabilities. Since women feel that they do not have a reasonable chance of reaching their career goals and they do not attempt to reach them. A lack of appropriate recognition for accomplishment, and threats to their sexual identity demoralize women. Therefore, early ambitions of women do not translate into achievements later in life. At many junctures in their lives, both women and men re-evaluate the meaning and value of their ambitions and decide how intensely they want to pursue them. At such critical junctures, women are likely to conclude that their goals are not rewarding enough to justify the effort required to reach them. Therefore, they abandon their ambitions.



Fact is that the organisations are using traditional and antiquated motivating tactics that are principally male-oriented. Marked gender differences have been perceived in personal motivating factors as well. What can inculcate a strong desire to put in one's best and produce results in a male employee can very well drive his female counterpart to the brink of quitting the job. Work place needs and preferences vary broadly with gender. What is important to men is not necessarily important to women and vice-versa. Yet, most of the organisations use the same strategies across the table without taking personal motivational factors into consideration. Men have greater anticipation for financial rewards, power and ability to impact organisation. Women like bonuses and career growth too. But they respond more positively to soft issues like improved interpersonal relationships, respect, courtesy, recognition, freedom, flexibility and above all, work-life balance for obvious reasons. To the extent that they are willing to take a cut in pay cheque or even forgo a promotion, for say, a friendlier, stress-free work environment or telecommute option. A female executive working in IT sector comments, 'with long working hours and pressure from the home front, she used to get completely drained out at the end of the day'. She was on the verge of quitting her job. Her organisation realized her difficulty and offered her work from home option up to three days in a week. She was so motivated by this gesture that it has been three years and she is still with the organisation.

Women continue to receive less favourable treatment than their male counterparts throughout their childhood and adolescence, but the discrepancy has narrowed. Young women experiencing shift toward more equal opportunities right up to their early careers and marriages. Hardly does anyone claim today that women lack the native ability to become doctors or politicians. They do not face significant obstacles in college, and in the first few years of their careers. They experience the most powerful social and institutional discrimination during their twenties and early thirties, after they have left the educational system and started pursuing their ambitions. At the age when women marry and have children, they have to decide whether to hold on to their ambitions, or downsize and abandon them. Young women must make this decision at that time when she is just learning to be a mother, with all its attendant fears, pleasures, insecurities, and around the clock work.

Women must decide how much of the stress that goes with ambition are they willing to tolerate. Women who pursue careers must cope with jobs which are structured to accommodate the life cycles of men with wives who do not have full time careers, and they must face the social pressure of fulfilling more traditional feminine roles. When the choice has to be made between pursuing ambitions and nurturing a family, most women choose to downsize their ambitions or abandon them altogether. Women develop a new resilience and energy after their children have grown up. They let loose their strength when they are old enough to have done with the business of being a 'women'. Their sexual identity is no longer available because they are now successful wives and mothers, and no one can now blame them that they are promoting themselves at the expense of others who need their care.

Most successful men are not interested in marrying equally successful and ambitious women. Therefore, as women advances in her career and as she ages, she has a smaller pool of peers from which to choose her spouse, while successful man has a larger pool of younger women who are willing to marry him. The stark reality is that as a woman becomes more successful, there are larger numbers of successful men who are willing to marry her. When a successful woman manages to get married, she does not have much time to nurture relationship. The grueling schedule of professional woman makes it difficult for them to maintain relationships. Policies have to be developed in the workplace, and in the society as a whole, that support the working mothers. Women are not able to clone the male competitive model because husbands have not picked up a significant share of women's traditional responsibilities at home. When women fail to become mothers despite their wanting desperately to become one, they regret it and become apologetic for their decision to put their share of work involved in having both career and family. They want the choices in personal and professional lives that men are able to exercise.

Meaningful Work Life Policies

Women are denied the choice to live their personal and professional lives because they operate in a society where motherhood carries severe economic penalties. Mothers can do less than other women do. Giving birth to one child produces a penalty of 6% of earnings, while having children produces 13%. Despite this huge distinctive, women persist in trying to have it all because they are happier when they have both career and family. Employers have to craft more meaningful work life policies. Following work life policies would make it easier paths and then rejoin that at a later date.

- Three months of paid leave every year, which can be taken as needed, until the child turns eighteen years of age.
- There should not be any penalties for career interruptions.
- Career breaks should be permitted. Such an unpaid leave of absence may be extended up to three years, but with the assurance of a job when the employee decides to return.
- High-level jobs should be created that permit reduced hours and workloads on an ongoing basis but still offer the possibility of promotion.



- Former employees should have alumni status helping women who have left or are not active in their careers, to stay in the loop. They may be tapped for advice and guidance and the organisation should continue to pay their dues and certification fees, so that they can maintain their professional standing.

Redesign for the Empowerment of Women

A change in mindset is equally important and accordingly Human Resource Management policies are required to redesign for the empowerment of women employee's in organisations. Organisations should not presume that women will tarnish her professional image by taking advantage of such policies. It is common belief in business that a woman who allows her to be accommodated on the family front does not want to be seen as a serious career woman. Organisations have to discard this belief. Women who took for organisations with inadequate work benefits are forced out of their careers. Women who want both career and family should do the following:

- She should figure out what she wants her life to look like when she is 45 years old. If she wants children, she needs to act immediately.
- It is easier for high-achieving women to find partners in their twenties and thirties. Therefore, a woman should give up priority to finding a partner.
- Child bearing is a fraught condition with risk and failure later in life. Therefore, she should have her first child before she is 35 years of age.
- Certain careers provide more flexibility and are more forgiving of interruptions. Woman should look for careers that require less commitment of time. The idea is to avoid professions with rigid career trajectories. She should choose a company that will allow work life balance. It is important that the company has policies such as reduced hour schedules and Job-Protected leave.

Barriers Experienced by Women

Women face the following barriers on their way to the top in organisations:

- There is an overall gender bias in the workplace. Promotions come more slowly for woman than for men with equivalent qualifications. General bias operates against woman with approximately the equal amount of strength at all levels. Scarcity of woman CEO is the discrimination that has operated at all ranks. Marriage and parenthood are associated with higher wages for men but not for women.
- Set of widely shared conscious and unconscious mental associations about men, women and leaders are behind the discrimination against women. Long history of male domination of leadership roles has made it difficult to separate the leader associations from male associations. It is a clash of assumptions when people confront women in a leadership position. They suspect that such highly effective women must not be very likeable and nice. This is the reason why successful female managers are considered more deceitful, pushy, selfish and abrasive than successful male managers.
- Due to the double bind, women leaders' struggle to cultivate a leadership style that reconciles the communal qualities people expect in them with the agentic qualities people think leaders need to succeed. Female leadership style is more effective than male leadership style. Women adopt a collaborative approach because collaboration gets them results without seeming particularly masculine. They seek to project authority without relying on the autocratic behaviours that people find so jarring in women, and available method is to bring others into decision-making and to lead as an encouraging teacher and a positive role model.
- Under the pressure of family responsibilities, women interrupt their careers, take more days off and work part time. As a result, they have fewer years of job experience, which slows their career progress and reduces their earnings.
- Due to family responsibilities, women have little time for socializing with colleagues and building professional networks.
- Legal remedies are elusive when gender inequality results from norms embedded in organizational structure and culture.

Measures to be Taken by the Organisations

The solution to inequalities or the right approach to appreciate the subtlety and complexity of the problems the organisation should take adequate measures on following:

- Increase people's awareness of the psychological drivers of prejudice against women leaders and work to dispel those perceptions. Diversity training initiatives are helpful, but they are undermined if their lessons are not underscored by what managers say and do in the course of day to day work.
- Stereotypically, women are more emotionally motivated and crave simple, day-to-day acknowledgements. Simple gestures like a flower bouquet, fruit basket or gift vouchers on special occasions, an e-mail with birthday wishes or even a verbal or written 'You are doing a great job', will work wonders for a women employee.

- Must change long-hours norms. If the organisation shifts the focus to objective measures of productivity, woman with family demands on their time, but highly productive work habits will receive the rewards and encouragement they deserve.
- Reduce the subjectivity of performance evaluation. Greater objectivity in evaluation combats the effects of lingering prejudice in hiring the promotion.
- Thinking along the lines of relaxation CDs, meditation areas, and aromatherapy are small additions that many organisations have learned can greatly increase effectiveness in productivity among female employees.
- Use open-recruitment tools such as advertising and employment agencies rather than relying on informal social networks and referrals to fill positions. Recruitment from within the organisation is also transparent, with postings of open positions in appropriate venues. Such personnel practices increase the numbers of women in managerial positions.
- Ensure a critical mass of women in executive positions, as having just a few of them makes it easier to slot them into narrow stereotypical roles such as Seductress, mother, iron lady, icy maiden and such slotting limits women's options and makes it difficult for them to rise to positions of responsibility. When women are substantial in number, their identity as women becomes less important, and colleagues are more likely to react to them in terms of their individual competencies.
- Avoid having just a single women member in any team. Most companies divide their small population of women managers among many projects in the interest of introducing diversity in all of them. However, when women are outnumbered, men tend to ignore them and their ideas are overlooked. As women reach positions of higher power and authority, they increasingly find themselves in gender-imbalanced groups and are seriously marginalized.
- Help its women executives to build their social capital. Women under invest in networking because of the call of family responsibilities. When time is scarce, networking is the first thing to go by the wayside. Organisation helps women to appreciate why networking deserves more attention. It also provides strong and supportive mentoring relationships and connections with powerful networks. When a well placed executive take an interest in a woman's career, her efforts to build her social capital succeeds.
- Prepare its women executives for line management with approximately demanding assignments. Like men, women must have the benefit of developmental job experiences, if they are to qualify for promotions. However, they are often shunted into support areas, and do not get enough experience in line jobs. The result is that only a small number of women are trained to assume leadership positions in any organisation. Good organisations put women in line jobs when they enter their workforce.
- Organisation should establish family-friendly human resources practices, which include flexi time, job sharing, telecommuting, elder care positions, adoption benefits, dependent child care options and employee-sponsored on-site child care. Such support allows women to stay in their jobs during the most demanding years of child caring, build their social capital, keep up to date in their fields, and eventually compete for higher positions.
- Allow women executives who have significant parental responsibility, more time to prove themselves worthy promotion. Many mothers are fully capable of reaching a high level of achievement, but they need extra time to get these, when an organisation forces its women executives off the promotion path, it reduces number of women reaching senior management positions and is not able to capitalize on its early investment in them.
- Give high-performing women executives, who step away from the work force an opportunity to return to responsible positions when their circumstance changes. Some organisations have established alumni programmes because they see former employees as potential employees for few businesses.
- Encourage male participation in family-friendly benefits. Exercising options such as generous parental leave and part time work shows down the career of women executives. However, when men also exercise such options, they are perceived as normal, and the penalty is less severe for women who exercise these options.
- Apart from family-friendly initiatives and flexible work arrangements like flexi time, work from home, on-site day care for children, and leniency in time-off for family commitments, women also hanker after greater workplace security. For instance, pick up and drop facilities, especially for those working night shifts.

Conclusion

Finding solution for meeting the needs of women and for creating women friendly environment following factors are required to be considered and incorporated in the administration of an organisation:

- Flexibility in work hours.
- Reduced job hours.
- Flexibility in career path.
- No stigma attached to flexible work arrangements.



- Women who leave are welcome to rejoin.

Fresh approach in dealing the female employees is to be designed after due deliberation and required to be made effective in all organisations. Second generation gender bias can make these transitions more challenging for women, and focusing exclusively on acquiring new skills isn't sufficient; the learning must be accompanied by a growing sense of identity of a leader. Greater understanding of second generation bias, safe spaces for leadership identity development and encouraging women to anchor in their leadership purpose will get better results than the paths most organisations currently pursue. Conceptual analysis is to be carried out on the existing policies and practices of Human Resource Management for improvement and for the empowerment of women employee's of the organisations. Gender discrimination is rooted in organisation's culture. Persistent campaign of incremental change discovers and destroys the everyday practices that support gender discrimination. Foremost requirement is to realize that women are being held back and that the organisations need to do something about it.

- Managers together to talk about the work culture and determine which every day practices are holding women back.
- Managers should launch several small initiatives to eradicate practices that produce gender discrimination and replace them with practices that work for every one different everyday practices hold back women in different organisations, and each organisation has to identify for itself. The organisation then has to start a sustained campaign to this time around-it is simple hard work.
- Customizing intrinsic and extrinsic rewards based on what different employees desire the most is what will lead to a high-performing and productive work place with improving professional ethics, morale, retention, and success in tow.

References

1. Alice H. Eagly, and Linda L. Carli, 'Women and the labyrinth of Leadership', Harvard Business Review, September 2007, Vol 85, Issue 9, PP 63-71.
2. Anna Fels, 'Do Women Lack Ambition? Harvard Business Review, April 2004, Vol 82, Issue 4, PP 50-60.
3. Col Dr Mathews, G. G and Sreeranganadhan, K., Management Styles in Industries of Kerala, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2012, PP 39-46.
4. Debra E Meyesson and Joyce K Fletcher, 'A modest Manifesto for Shattering the Glass Ceiling', Harvard Business Review, January-February 2000, Vol 81, Issue 1, PP 126- 136.
5. Fiona Greig, 'Propensity to Negotiate and Career Advancement; Evidence from an Investment Bank that Woman are on a " Slow Elevator"', Negotiation Journal, October 2008, Vol 24, issue 4, PP 495-500.
6. Grossman, M. And Wood, W., 'Sex Difference in Intensity of Emotional Experience: A social Interpretation', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, November 1992.
7. Heather Hopfi and Sumolion Matilal, 'The Lady Vanishes', Some Thoughts as Women and Leadership, Journal of Organisational change Management, 2007, Vol 20, Issue 2, PP 198-208.
8. Iris Aaltion, and Jichua Huang, 'Women Managers Careers in Information Technology in China; High Flyers with Emotional Costs', Journal of Organisational Change Management', 2007, Vol 20, Issue 2, PP 227-244.
9. Judith G Oakley, 'Gender- based Barriers to Senior Management Positions: Undertaking the Scarcity of Female CEO's', Journal of Business Ethics, October 2000, Part 2, Vol 27, Issue 4, PP 321-334, 14.
10. Leslve E. Tower, and Mohamed G. Alkadry, 'The Social Costs of Career Success for Women', Review of the Public Personnel Administration, January 2008, Vol 28, Issue 2, PP 144-165.
11. Linda Babcock, Sara Laschever, Michele Gelfand, and Deborah Small, 'Nice Girls Don't Ask', Harvard Business Review, October 2003, Vol 81, Issue 10, PP 14-16.
12. Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever, 'First you have to Ask' Negotiation, January 2004, PP 3-5.
13. Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever, 'Is talent Going Waste in Your Company? Harvard Management Update, July 2008, Vol 13, Issue 7, PP 3-4.
14. Nancy J. Adler, 'Women joining Men as Global Leaders in the New Economy', Blackwell Handbook of Cross Cultural Management 2002, PP 236-249.
15. Norma Jeen Mattei, and Lisa Jennings, 'Pit Stops and Science Routes: How to aid Women to Stay on Track Their Careers', Leadership and Management in Engineering, January 2008, Vol 8, Issue 1, PP 27-31.
16. Scheele, A., 'How ambitious are you? Working women, March 1992, Vol 17, Issue 3, P 30.
17. Shoba V. Arun, Thankom G., Arun, and Vani k. Borooh, ' The effects of Career breaks on the Working Lives of Women', Feminist Economics, March 2004, Vol 10, Issue 1, PP 65-84.
18. Uma D. Jogulu, and Glenice J. Wood, 'The role of Leadership Theory in Rising the Profile of Women in Management', Equal Opportunities International, 2006, Vol 25, Issue 4, PP 236-250.