

The Role of Women in Indian Business and Management: An Analytical Perspective

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Abstract

The economic liberalization in India has produced significant employment chances, particularly for females with the required skills and aptitude. However, women in this country have historically faced disadvantages in the workplace, whether in managerial or authoritative roles. These traditional perspectives have limited their ability to fully leverage the benefits of globalization. This study aims to examine the key issues surrounding women in management in the Indian exo system through an extensive literature review. By utilizing multiple research sources, the study presents evidence and highlights the evolving dynamics of women's status in the new economic landscape. The research explores the various factors that influence women managers, including prejudices, barriers to their advancement into top managerial positions, the impact of technology progressions on women in Indian business and management, and potential future directions. The findings of this analysis have important implications for practitioners, contribute to the field of women's studies, and enhance the understanding of management in the Indian context.

Keywords: Indian business, Gender equality, Workforce participation, Career advancement, Organizational performance.

Tob Regul Sci.™ 2021;7(5-1): 4389-4394

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52783/trs.v7i5-1.1379>

Introduction

In India, a country renowned for its rich cultural heritage and diverse population, significant progress has been made in the status of women in various fields, including business and management. Historically, women in India had limited opportunities to advance their careers or assume leadership positions beyond their homes and family enterprises. However, with the increasing participation of women in the workforce, breaking through barriers and emerging as powerful leaders in diverse industries, India has witnessed a paradigm shift in recent decades. To fully understand the current landscape of women in business and management in India, it is important to consider the historical and cultural context. India has long upheld patriarchal norms that favoured male dominance in various domains, influenced by cultural practices and traditional gender roles. Women were traditionally expected to prioritize family responsibilities and often faced limited access to education and job opportunities. However, societal attitudes have gradually changed due to factors such as globalization, urbanization, and increasing

recognition of women's capabilities. Women now actively participate in multiple facets of society, including the economy, beyond the confines of their homes. Previously, women were primarily engaged in professions such as teaching, nursing, or the medical field. However, they are now actively involved in organized and unorganized sectors, spanning commerce, industry, agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fishing, sewing, clothing, pottery, and other entrepreneurial endeavours (Parasurama, 2001). This shift reflects the expanding horizons and diverse roles that women in India are now pursuing in the professional realm. It is important to acknowledge and celebrate the progress made in empowering women in business and management in India, while also recognizing the ongoing efforts needed to further advance gender equality and provide equal opportunities for women across all sectors. Traditional gender stereotypes have often confined women to domestic roles, but the concept of women as business owners is gaining recognition in recent times. It is important to note that male and female entrepreneurs are not fundamentally different from each other. Any woman or group of women who initiates or adopts an economic activity can be considered a woman entrepreneur. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape and challenges faced by women in Indian business and management, it is crucial to examine the variables that impact their career progression and how these factors influence organizational performance. Despite historical and cultural barriers, women in India are increasingly entering the workforce, signalling a shift in societal norms. However, women still encounter challenges such as cultural expectations, limited access to leadership positions, and gender biases. Their professional growth is significantly influenced by factors such as education, skill development, mentorship, and supportive organizational policies. To promote gender equality, the Indian government and private organizations have implemented initiatives, including board representation programs, affirmative action, and mentoring programs. These interventions not only foster social equity but also provide advantages for organizations, such as enhanced innovation and decision-making capabilities.

To create an inclusive environment that empowers women to actively contribute to India's economic growth and development, it is crucial to understand the role of women in Indian business and management. Increasing gender diversity in leadership positions offers numerous benefits for companies and management in India. Research indicates that gender-diverse teams and organizations often exhibit higher levels of innovation, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Diverse perspectives contribute to more effective decision-making processes and enhance overall organizational performance. Gender diversity in leadership positions also cultivates an inclusive workplace culture and attracts top talent by demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity. Figure 1 shows the benefits of women participation in business:

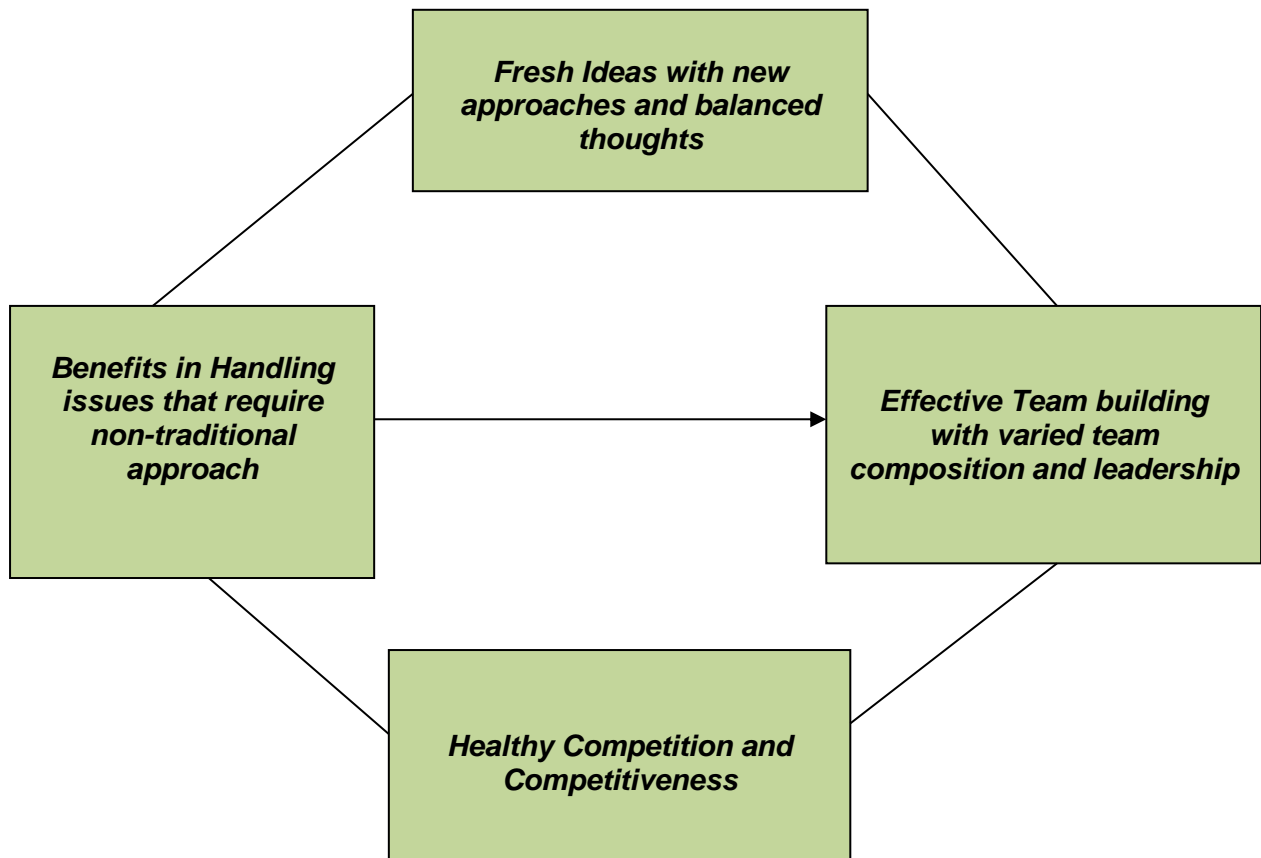


Figure 1 Benefits of Women Participation in Business

This report holds great significance for various stakeholders, including policymakers, business leaders, organizations, and women themselves. By acknowledging the importance of gender diversity and addressing gender imbalances, India can foster an environment that empowers women and maximizes the potential for economic success and societal progress (Khera and Malik, 2016). It adds to the corpus of knowledge by offering an analytical viewpoint on the position of women in Indian business and management and improves our comprehension of the difficulties and opportunities experienced by women in the workplace. Policymakers can use the study's findings as a reference when developing gender-sensitive laws and programmes to advance women's rights and gender equality. It offers perspectives on the advantages of gender diversity and tips for creating a welcoming workplace that supports women's career advancement for business executives and organisations. Additionally, by showcasing strong role models and emphasising the opportunity for growth and success in Indian business and management, this study can encourage and empower women.

Literature Review

In India, a country celebrated for its cultural heritage and diverse populace, substantial progress has been made in empowering women in various sectors, including business and management. Historically, women in India faced limited prospects for career advancement and leadership roles beyond their involvement in domestic and family enterprises. However, as more women have entered the workforce, shattered barriers, and emerged as influential leaders in diverse industries, India has experienced a transformative shift in recent decades.

To comprehend the current landscape of women in business and management in India, it is crucial to consider the historical and cultural context. India has traditionally upheld patriarchal norms that favoured male dominance in various spheres, reflecting its diverse cultural practices and entrenched gender roles (Gothoskar, 2000). Women were traditionally expected to prioritize family responsibilities, and access to education and employment opportunities was often restricted. Nevertheless, evolving factors such as globalization, urbanization, and a growing recognition of women's capabilities have gradually brought about changes in societal attitudes.

The representation of women in India's economic sectors has shown progress since the country's independence in 1947, and this trend is expected to continue in the coming years. The economic reforms implemented in the early 1990s have resulted in significant macro-level changes in Indian organizations. While the liberalized Indian economy has created numerous career opportunities for women, these opportunities are primarily accessible to educated women residing in urban areas. Businesses operating in India now recognize the need to revise their long-standing attitudes towards the recruitment of female employees to thrive in the dynamic business environment (Budhwar & Boyne, 2004). Women in India are primarily concentrated in roles related to human resources, information technology, and service operations, while their representation in marketing, production, and strategic decision-making positions remains comparatively low. Despite claims of women holding important positions in organizations, their representation at higher levels remains limited. In India, various initiatives have been implemented to empower women, incorporated into successive Five-Year Plans and supported by international organizations such as the United Nations, the Beijing World Conference on Women, and the International Labour Organization.

These efforts have led to the development of strategies for women's empowerment, typically taking one of three approaches: (a) establishing dedicated units within sector-specific planning and development agencies, (b) allocating resources for investments in women, and (c) promoting rural employment and development through grassroots women's organizations. Additionally, several business organizations have established women's wings to elevate the status of women in management. These wings are present in prominent business entities such as the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM), and the Indian Merchants' Chamber (IMC).

The responsibilities of these wings include maintaining databases of female business owners and managers, providing training and development programs, offering counselling services, and establishing information networks (Tambunan, 2009). In the public sector, women managers have formed the Women in the Public Sector (WIPS) forum to pursue similar objectives, while the Standing Conference on Public Enterprises (SCOPE) provides training, development, and counselling support (Jain & Venkata Ratnam, 2002). Furthermore, various non-governmental organizations, such as SEWA (Self-employed Women's Association) based in Ahmedabad, play a crucial role in mobilizing women in management, entrepreneurship, and related endeavours. The Indian government has also taken proactive measures to promote gender equality in business and management, including regulations mandating board representation, affirmative action policies, and skill development programs.

Researchers have extensively studied the impact of these regulations and initiatives, examining their effectiveness and outcomes. Additionally, government initiatives aimed at promoting female entrepreneurship and facilitating access to capital have been examined (Jhabvala and Sinha, 2002). Academic studies in the Indian context have investigated the influence of gender diversity on organizational effectiveness. Research suggests that gender-diverse teams and leadership can enhance decision-making, foster innovation, and improve financial performance. Moreover, studies have explored the positive correlation between gender diversity and corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, highlighting the broader societal benefits of inclusive work environments.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there has been a tremendous transition in the position of women in Indian business and management, with women becoming key leaders in a variety of sectors. Women's engagement in the workforce is increasing, defying social norms and paving the path for a more inclusive and equal business environment even though cultural and socioeconomic barriers still exist. This study aims to add to the existing conversation on gender equality and women's empowerment in Indian business and management by looking at effective interventions and highlighting the advantages of gender diversity. In the end, encouraging an inclusive atmosphere that gives women the tools they need to succeed professionally will not only spur economic growth but also advance Indian society as a whole.

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