

Women's Leadership in Decision Making

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Abstract

In a democratic system, Leadership assumes greater significance and wider proportions. Leadership has been a topic of great significance in social science and scholars have shown considerable interest in it, thus every aspect of leadership has been the subject of some degree of subject. Leadership is an important factor for making any type of organization successful. Without effective leadership, an organization is quite inactive. Democracy can be truly democratic and in such a case leadership will most effectively be a true reflection of a pluralistic and equal society if opportunity is provided to all sections of the society to participate in the political processes..The possibility for all citizens to participate in the management of public affair is at the very heart of democracy. In the majority of countries, however, the political arena remains largely dominated by men, and is even an exclusively male bastion in some countries.

KEYWORDS: Political, Leadership and Women

INTRODUCTION:

Political development, democratic growth, administrative capability depends, largely, on the quality of leadership at various levels – centre, state and local. In a democratic system, leadership assumes greater significance and wider proportion. The plural character of society and the emergence of complex and multi-dimensional socio-political organizations have worked as catalyst to the added significance of leadership. Politico-administrative organizations require integration of organizational and individual goals and achievements for a systematic and well-directed process of social change which usually occurs as a result of or along with political development and modernisation. Leadership not only facilitates this process, but also helps in filling the latent gaps present in the social, political and administrative organization. Socio-economic change being a slow but continuous process, especially in a democratic political system, requires different suitable patterns of leadership as the environment may demand.

Theories or Approaches of Leadership

There are number of theories which provide explanations regarding various aspects of leadership phenomena. Hence, some of the important theory discussing.

1. The Trait Approach:

The trait approach is the earliest approach adopted by scholars during the early part of the twentieth century for the study of leadership.¹ This theory advocates that leadership qualities and traits are not inborn but can be acquired by an individual through education, training and other forms of learning.² Trait theory is based on following assumption:

1. Leadership is a trait that resides, within an individual personality.
2. An individual brings leadership, that is, traits residing within personality, to the group.
3. Leadership, that is, these traits residing within the personality, produces the same results through situation or group may differ.³

In other words, the protagonists of the approach consider the leader “as an entity possessed of characteristics traits and occupying, rather inertly, a status position, relative to other individuals who are not related to him.”⁴ Trait is defined as relatively enduring quality of an individual. The trait approach seeks to determine ‘what makes a successful leader’ from the leader’s own personal characteristics. This approach shows that all the leaders are not born but through their experiences training they acquire the qualities of leader.

2. Situational Theory:

Situational leadership approach was applied, for first time in 1920 in the aimed forces of Germany with the objective to get good general under different situation. Situational theory of leadership is given to the situation in which leadership is exercised.⁵ By situation is meant the characteristics of the group itself, the characteristics of the context the group function and other group tasks. Hence the situation includes:

1. Characteristics of a group such as its dimensions and the structure of interpersonal relation within the group.
2. The physical and cultural characteristics of the context in which the group functions.
3. The task such as reasoning, intellectual constructions or mechanical assembly with which group is confronted.⁶

The situationists do not abandon the search for significant personality characters but they attempt to look for them in situations containing common elements. It believes that there is a situation that helps developing leadership and from which leaders emerge. A person may be good leader in a particular situation or set of circumstances but it may be quite ineffective in a different situation.

Thus, the situational theory is based on some qualities, characteristics and skills required in the leaders in a particular situation to solve problems of their group.

3. Behavioural or Group Approach of Leadership:

This theory emphasizes that strong leadership is result of effective role behaviour. This theory emphasis, how they communicated with others and tried to motivate subordinates.⁷ According to this theory, leadership is shown by a person’s acts more than by the traits. It emphasis how a leader of the team solve the problems of his group, his creates a co-ordination between the different members of his group.⁸

1. Leadership is a group property.

2. Leadership, that is, a group property, resides neither exclusively nor primarily in an individual.

3. Leadership, that is, a group property, is a function of group structure.⁹

Groupists view leadership more as a structure than as a person believing that the interpersonal relations within a group are determined more by the structure of a group than by the personality traits of the person involved.

The behaviour approach of leadership emphasis the behaviour of leader of the group, his relationship with other members and the way he treats other persons.

4. Greatman Theory:

One of the early notions of leadership, which is still popular in certain circle, is that leadership is an inborn quality. One may describe this as “great man approach” to leadership. This approach emphasized that leader in general and great leaders in particular are born and not made. According to this theory, leadership calls for certain qualities like commanding personality, charm, courage, intelligence, persuasiveness and aggressiveness. These qualities are of such a nature that they cannot be taught or learnt in a formal sense. Leadership qualities are carried in the genes.¹⁰

5. Charismatic Leadership Theory:

Charisma is ‘non-rational’, non-traditional and non-bureaucratic. This leadership model involves motivating and directing followers through the development of their strong emotional commitment and a vision and a set of shared values.¹¹ The charismatic leaders are often described as self-confident, with strong convictions, high energy, enthusiasm that they communicate to others, and an ability to manipulate symbols of power and success to create an emotional attraction for followers.

In this type of leadership obedience is based on the follows belief that a person has some special power or appeal i.e. charisma which is form of interpersonal attraction that inspires support and acceptance from others. Charismatic leaders are more successful in influencing others than those who do not have charisma. A highly charismatic leader is more successful or will get his work done more easily and effectively as compared to another who does not have such extraordinary quality.¹²

So, according to this theory, some people have some special qualities. On the basis of these qualities, they influence other people.

6. Attribution Theory of Leadership:

This theory assumed that leadership is merely an attribution that people make about other individuals. The people characterize leaders as having such traits as intelligence, outgoing personality, strong verbal skill, aggressiveness, understanding and industriousness.¹³ The leader is essentially an information processor. He or she searches for informational cues as to ‘Why’ something is happening and then attempts to construct

casual explanations that guide her leadership behaviour.¹⁴

One of the key theme in the attribution theory of leadership is the perception that effective leaders are generally considered consistent or unwavering in their decision.¹⁵

7. System Theory:

This theory advocates that leadership is governed by a person's act rather than by his traits which influences the followers most. It follows that leadership is a sole behaviour which co-ordinates the efforts of the people and stimulates them towards the achievement of their goal in a particular situation. This approach considers all the variables present at the same time i.e. leader, followers, situation, goals, leadership traits, environments and groups nature, characteristics and needs, role, behaviour of the leader and his coordinating efforts. This theory is recognized as the modern theory of leadership.¹⁶

8. Path- Goal Theory:

Path-Goal theory emphasizes the relationship between the leader's style and the characteristics of the subordinates and the work setting. This theory explain how leaders can help subordinates along the path to their goals by selecting specific behaviours that best suited to subordinates, needs to the situation in which subordinates are working. By choosing appropriate style, leaders increase subordinates expectations for success and satisfaction.¹⁷

In this theory leaders help their subordinates to find the best path for achieving their goals and remove obstacles.

9. Acceptance Theory:

This theory explains that followers are important in deciding whether a person is a leader or not. If followers accept a person their leader, he is leader irrespective of his traits. According to this theory, followers must form groups. It cannot be applied without group of followers. It is based on the assumption that groups have certain basic needs which they want to be fulfilled through their leaders. A person, who is successful in satisfying their basic needs, is assumed to be their leader on the contrary, if he does not succeed in getting their needs satisfied he can neither be said to be a good leader nor he will be allowed to function as such. It is the follower's theory that's how playing a significant role in managing the people today.¹⁸

10. Transactional Vs. Transformational Leadership Theory:

Transactional leaders are those who guide or motivate their followers in the direction of established goals by classifying role and task requirements. But there is another class of leaders who inspire followers to transcend their own self-interest for the good of the organization, and extraordinary effect on the followers. These are called

transformational leaders.¹⁹

Need of Women Leadership in Decision Making

Leadership is quite necessary to influence people to cooperate towards a common goal and create situation for collective response. Political leadership is the process by which government try to exercise control over public policy decisionns. In democratic system, political leadership is very essential for growth and development of the society. The integration of women in the political process at all levels of political life is essential for democratization of politics.

Women leadership has also great importance because the most of the Constitution of world has provided to all women the fundamental right to equality and political participation. Though it recognises the political rights of women without any discrimination yet women are still marginally represented in the political arena. The fact that women are grossly under-represented at the political level in Central and State governments, is a testimony to lack of political power in the hands of women.

The maintenance of democratic temper and institution in a country depends greatly on the performance of legislators in the legislative Assembly. Legislative bodies have provided the right platform for the leadership to guide the nation on the path of peace and prosperity. Legislators assume a substantial role as they are the privileged few who can beget political and social change. While there has been progress in many countries in increasing the numbers of women in elected posts, both at local and national level, women are less likely to occupy executive branch posts or key cabinet positions. Similarly, while women occupy leadership roles in but they mostly remain under-represented in organizations that do not focus on women and gender issues.

A political environment at least minimally receptive to change, or in which the politics of inclusion features in the political settlement, makes a difference to the prospects for women's access to decision-making roles. The political environment includes features of formal institutions (such as quotas, to make up for entrenched gender bias, or a party leadership committed to gender equality) and features in informal institutions and social norms. Women party members are politically ambitious but few are involved in politics solely for the purpose of promoting gender equality. Indian women MPs describe themselves as 'party women first' and, in spite of meeting together across parties to discuss some gender-related issues, they are restricted in the action they can take on these issues by party requirements. Rather, as party women with political ambitions, women MPs in India react to the institutional incentives that are put to them. This means that in political systems where parties form the central organising component of mainstream politics (all established democracies) it is not possible to separate women's efficacy as agents of pro-equality change from their party affiliations.

But, Women have made dramatic gains in world politics in recent years. Although women still do not occupy half of all positions of executive and legislative leadership, a survey of global trends is encouraging: women appear to have shattered the political "glass ceiling" in countries with a diverse array of social, economic, cultural, and

political characteristics. Further, these developments appear to have spilled over into other realms of political leadership.

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