



Leadership Styles of Women Entrepreneurs: A Study of Northern India

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Abstract

This paper examines the gendered differences in management style and questioned whether the entrepreneurial style was gender neutral or if there was a particularly “feminine”, management style preferred by women entrepreneurs. The study found that the Women entrepreneurs under study perceived and solved problems in different ways depending upon the nature of the problem and given situation. They took each and every problem as a challenge and provided innovative solutions. They dealt with the problem by taking it to experts or knowledgeable persons. Besides, they also depended on their intuition for solving the problems. Women entrepreneurs encouraged their people to introspect within themselves to analyses and rectify their mistakes.

Key words: *management style, entrepreneurs, gender differences, women entrepreneurs, feminine*

INTRODUCTION

Gender differences do exist in entrepreneurial strategies. Research in the field of human resource management (HRM) has demonstrated that the shaping of management style depends upon factors, such as the sector in which activities are undertaken (Mowday, 1998; Ram, 1999; Curran et al., 1993), business strategy (Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 1988; Youndt et al, 1996) and firm size (De-Kok and Lihlaner, 2001; Ram,1999)3.

Also, the gender of the entrepreneur may play a role in the structuring of management practices (Verheul et al., 2002). Most of the earlier studies have indicated that most entrepreneurs, whether male or female, need a set of skills so that their businesses can survive and prosper. This paper explores the role of gender in entrepreneurship

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contextual Background

Some research conducted before 1980 suggested that gender differences exist in entrepreneurial strategic behaviour (Powell and Ansic,1997). However, more recent studies provide mixed conclusions but tend to support gender similarity more than differences (Chaganti and Parasuaman, 1996). It is suggested that males and females are equally successful in strategic management under conditions of risk (Hudgens and Fatkin, 1985:4 Johnson and Powell, 1994) and are equally capable of processing and reacting to information (Stinerock, Stern and Solomon, 1991:6 Hyde, 1990). In terms of strategic objectives, Hisrich and Brush, (1987) and Kaplan (1988) found that women place greater emphasis on non-financial and personal goals while (Fischer, Reuber and Byke, 1993) rejected this finding. Several studies provide evidence that women tend to place more emphasis on relationships. Carlson- 1971, Ericson-1968, Howksion-1987, Kanter-1977, Miller- 1976, Kenner- (1982) argue that biological differences cause man to be more aggressive and that this aggressiveness is further hardened and reinforced socially. On the other hand, women tend to evolve behaviour pattern that emphasizes sensitivity and communication skills. Pannier, (1985) says that the basic quality of efficient management is a futuristic outlook with a capacity to nurture and plan for the future. This comes naturally to women as they can combine their feminist attributes of nurturing and future planning with male aggressiveness. Generally, the inherent management talents of women remain unrecognized and unaccounted for lest they prove it by being successful in their entrepreneurial pursuits. The management literature generally provides inconclusive evidence regarding the question of whether women and men are different leaders. In

the scientific management literature (Gilligan, 1982; Ely, 1994; Grant, 1988) as well as in the popular management literature (Helgesen, 1990; Roscner, 1990, 1995; Loden, 1985), it is argued that women and men adopt different management styles. Others claim that, when controlling for the context within which women and men run their business, how they behave are fairly similar (Dobbins and Platz, 1986). Most research investigating the influence of gender on management styles focuses on large businesses. In this study, two types of management styles are considered—commitment-oriented and control-oriented.

The distinction between commitment and control can be traced back to McGregor's (1960) theories X and Y, as well as to the distinction between autocratic versus democratic decision-making (Lewin and Lippitt, 1938) task oriented versus interpersonal-oriented styles (Bales, 1950; Blake and Mouton, 1964), transactional versus transformational leadership (Bass et al., 1996), direct control system versus responsible autonomy (Friedman, 1977), Tannenbaum and Smith's (1958), continuum (tell-sell-consult-join) and the employer control categories (fraternalism-paternalism-benevolent autocracy--sweet shop) of Goss (1991). These management modes either emphasize maintenance of tasks through direct forms of control or nurturing of interpersonal relationships through indirect or self-control of employees (VanEngen, 2001). Walton (1985) explicitly proposes the distinction between commitment and control strategies and this distinction is further elaborated in the context of HRM by other authors (Guest, 1987; Arthur, 1992, 1994; Legge, 1995; Goddard, 1998). Commitment and control are two distinct ways in which employee behaviours and attitudes can be influenced (Arthur, 1994).

According to Walton (1985), Arthur (1994) and Boselie (2002) these two work systems labeled as control and commitment HRM systems, respectively, focus on cost reduction, or improvement of efficiency, whereas commitment management systems emphasize employee development and trust. The systems are bundles of coherent management practices, characterizing the strategic management approach because management practices usually do not add up to a coherent system (Duberley and Walley, 1995; Legge, 1995; De Kok et al., 2002).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The present study is descriptive and analytical.

Area of the Study: The present study has been conducted in the northern region of India covering Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Chandigarh.

Sampling Design: The Women entrepreneurs from manufacturing, trading and servicing units with 50 or more employees having a business turnover of Rs. 10 Crore and above have been selected.

The women entrepreneurs are in the age group less than 35 to more than 45 years. The sample has been selected from the data extracted from sources like State Financial Corporation, DIC, NSIC (Ludhiana and Delhi), Technical Constituency Organization, Indian Council of Women Entrepreneurs, National Institute of Entrepreneurs and Small Industry Service Institutes (Ludhiana and Karnal). For analytical purposes, only those companies have been selected which are operating for the last five years. The sample companies have been classified as 1. Manufacturing companies, 2. Service sector Companies 3. Trading companies.

Data Collection: The data has been collected by using the primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary data has been collected by taking face-to-face interviews. The questions were asked based on the Statements consisting of information about the socio-economic profile, and personal characteristics of the selected women entrepreneurs. Secondary data has been taken from National Small Industries Corporation Delhi, Indian Council of Women Entrepreneurs, Women Development Corporations and Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) etc.

The study has made use of tabular analysis. Descriptive statistical techniques are used.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

MANAGEMENT STYLES

Studies of gendered differences in management style questioned whether the entrepreneurial style was gender-neutral or if there was a particularly “feminine”, management style preferred by women entrepreneurs (Chaganti, 1986). One study quotes that women-owned businesses were more likely to be informally structured (Neider, 1987) and reliance on an immediate network or channel for information was more important to women business owners (Chan & Foster, 2001) characteristically; women attach greater importance to having a good relationship with their employees. They do not exercise their authority as leaders by claiming formal power. The study explores in depth the managerial styles of the 30 most successful women entrepreneurs and their areas of concern and other interpersonal traits.

Main Concern in the Organisation

Every entrepreneur has some of the other important area of concern in their enterprise. The respondents were asked to assign ranks to their main concern in the organisation. These have been analyzed in table 1.

Table 1 Main Concerns in the Organisation

Preferences → Factors ↓		Number of Respondents Assigning Ranks						Weighted Average Score*	Ranks
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI		
a.	To achieve goals or targets	25	2	1	2	0	0	8.09	I
b.	To ensure that laid down rules and regulations are properly followed	4	20	3	2	1	0	6.85	II
c.	To develop competence and expertise amongst the people working with the entrepreneur	2	4	18	2	1	3	5.47	III
d.	To encourage employees to help others develop greater skills, so that they can advance in the organisation	3	5	2	16	1	3	4.95	IV
e.	To maintain a good and friendly climate amongst the people working with the entrepreneur	7	2	1	3	14	3	4.57	V
	To control staff and maintain good discipline								
f.		5	3	2	4	4	12	4.04	VI

* Weights equal to 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 have been assigned to Ranks I, II, III, IV, V and VI respectively

** Weighted average scores have been arranged in the descending order

These management modes either emphasize maintenance of tasks through direct forms of control or nurturing of interpersonal relationships through indirect or self-control of employees (VanEngen, 2001). An interpersonally oriented leadership style includes behaviour such as supporting employees, being available, explaining procedures and looking out for their

welfare, whereas a task-oriented leadership style consists of behaviour such as having employees follow rules and procedures, maintaining high-performance standards, and explicitly formulating work roles and tasks (Bales,1950; Blake and Mouton, 1964, Rosener,1990)

Table 1 exhibits the ranks arranged by the respondents to different areas of concern. After analyzing the table, it is found that achieving goals and targets is the highest priority area of concern among the women entrepreneurs in their enterprise as it possesses the highest weighted average score of 8.9. Women entrepreneurs maintain that their unparalleled growth and success were only because of their quality planning and the ability to achieve targets and goals fixed by them. With goals, they had a definite direction to achieve an aim and could do so with time. High-growth women entrepreneurs provided more organizational structure, planned earlier for growth, used the team-based approach to the business, and were concerned about reputation and quality (Gundry & Welsch, 2001).

To ensure that laid down rules and regulations are properly followed scored a weighted average score of 6.85. To develop competence and expertise amongst the people working with the respondent achieved a 5.47 weighted average score. To encourage employees to help others develop greater skills so that they can advance in the organisation got 4.95 weighted average scores. To maintain a good and friendly climate amongst the people working with the respondents had a 4.57 weighted average score. While to control staff and maintain good discipline gets a weighted average score of 4.04 as far as the main concern in the organization is concerned. This also clearly shows that female entrepreneurs control their employees and can maintain discipline using interpersonal skills. Thus, the main area of concern is to achieve goals and targets in the enterprise. The results share the same ground with the observation made by (Bales, 1950; Blake & Mouton, 1964) that a task-oriented leadership style consists of behaviour such as employees following rules and regulations maintaining high-performance standards and explicitly formulating work roles and tasks.

Way of Working with People

The way of working of the leader with people had a strong bearing on the performance of the enterprise. Table 8.2 highlights the preferences of the respondents regarding their way of working with people.

Table 2 Way of Working with the People

	Preferences → ↓ Factors	Number of Respondents Assigning Ranks						Weighted Average Score*	Ranks**
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI		
a.	Interaction with others mainly in relation to achievement of targets and goals Interaction mostly with people on the basis of their expertise	22	2	4	1	1	0	7.76	I
b.	Interaction with few trusted and competent people Meet people to help them develop and advance in the organisation	4	17	3	1	3	2	6.28	II
c.	Keep informal social interaction with most of the people	3	1	15	4	2	5	5.14	III
d.	Interact with my people to help them grow in the field	3	1	2	14	6	4	4.23	IV

e.	2	4	5	3	4	12	3.85	V
f.	4	2	1	3	13	7	3.80	VI

*Weights equal to 6, 5, 4,3,2,1 have been assigned to Ranks I, II, III, IV, V and VI respectively

** Weighted average scores have been arranged in the descending-order

On analyzing table 2, it becomes quite obvious that interaction with other people mainly about the achievement of targets and goals occupies the first place in the order of preference with a weighted average score of 7.76. The reason seems quite clear that it is the achievement of targets and goals which ultimately matters in the success of the enterprise. The interaction with people based on their expertise achieved a weighted average score of 6.28. Entrepreneurs interacted mostly with people found capable based on their expertise. This trait was identified mostly among entrepreneurs with jobs involving a high level of expertise and skillsets. 5.14 weighted average score was taken by interaction with a few trusted and competent people

.These women felt that dealing with class and not with mass is the key to their outstanding success. While meeting the people to help them develop and advance in the organisation had a score of 4.23. Informal social interaction with most of the people got a weighted average score of 3.85, whereas interaction with people to help them grow in the organisation got only 3.80 weighted average score. Thus, the main priority of the respondents regarding their way of working with the people has been the achievement of targets and goals maintaining the relational strategy. Women use relational strategy while working with employees and clients focusing on the creation and development of teams, mutual empowering, achievement and perseverance. Relational theory evidenced potential as a framework for identifying and explicating women entrepreneurs' interactive style in their own businesses. Buttner, (2001). Brush (1992) describe the role of women as coordinating the relationship rather than ordering people around. Women leaders tend to focus on relationships instead of hierarchy (Buttner, 2001; Brush, 1992; Belenky et al., 1986; Fischer and Gleijn, 1992; Stanford et al., 1995)

Supervisory Style of Women Entrepreneurs

The supervisory style of the entrepreneurs can motivate or de-motivate the employees working under them. It can affect the overall environment of the enterprise. Table 3 throws light on the supervisory style of the respondent women entrepreneurs.

Table 3 Supervisory Style of Women Entrepreneurs

Preferences → ↓ Factors	Number of Respondents Assigning Ranks						Weighted Average Score*	Ranks**
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI		
a. Ensure the development of good, friendly relations and of team spirit.	22	4	3	1	0	0	7.95	I
b. Give them instructions and suggestions	3	21	2	4	0	0	6.80	II
c. Improve their personal skills and chances of advancement	5	2	17	2	3	1	5.76	III
d. Reward (and/or appreciate) outstanding performance.	6	2	0	15	4	3	5.04	IV
e. Check people so that they do not make mistakes	4	3	6	2	13	2	4.61	V
f. Show my own expertise to make an impact on my people	2	5	3	4	4	12	3.85	VI

* Weights equal to 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 have been assigned to Ranks I, II, III, IV, V and VI respectively **Weighted average scores have been arranged in the descending order.

Table 3 brings to light that the first and foremost style of the women entrepreneurs has been the creation of congenial and friendly relations and the team spirit in the enterprise with a

weighted averagescore of 7.95. Women entrepreneurs believe strongly that working on interpersonal relationships has always paid them rich dividends. For the outstanding growth of the organization, a high level of team spirit is a must. This is possible only when employees have a high level of positive attitude coupled with greatpeer understanding. The respondents registered their second priority as giving instructions and suggestions to the workforce with a weighted average score of 6.80, whereas the weighted average score was given to theimprovement in the personal skills of the subordinates and improving their chances of advancement in the organization was 5.76.

Though appreciating and rewarding the performance seems quite important, it has got the fourth priority in the minds of the respondents with a weighted average score of 5.04. To check people sothat they do not commit mistakes had a weighted average score of 4.61 whereas a weighted average scoreof 3.85 was allotted to follow personal expertise to make an impact on the people in the organization. The observation made by women entrepreneurs is that while maintaining friendly relations and team spirit, they have also to give instructions and have a check on people. They are using commitment and control management practices. In a control system, they divide work into small, fixed jobs for which individuals can be accountable and direct control is with them, supervising rather than facilitating employees (Walton, 1985)⁴³. This reduces direct labour cost and improves efficiency by employee compliance with specified rules and procedures (Elsewhere D.T, 1985)⁴⁴

Commitment managerial practices are characterized by leaders facilitating rather than supervising and there is indirect control. This establishes psychological links between organization and personal goals.

Dealing with a Problem in the Organisation

Table 4 highlights the respondents' styles of dealing with the problems in their organizations.

Table 4 Dealing with a Problem in the Organisation

	Preferences → ↓ Factors	Number of Respondents Assigning Ranks						Weighted Average Score*	Ranks**
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI		
a.	Pose it as a challenge to my people to find an innovative solution.	24	2	1	3	0	0	7.95	I
b.	Discuss it with someone in the organisation who is an expert or is knowledgeable	3	22	2	1	2	0	6.80	II
c.	Discuss it with those who are close to me Work out a solution which will benefit my people or organization	1	3	18	3	2	3	5.19	III
d.	Discuss it with a senior person or refer it to him for solution	4	2	3	15	2	4	4.71	IV
e.	Solve it on my own	7	3	1	2	14	3	4.66	V
f.		2	4	3	6	3	12	3.80	VI

* Weights equal to 6,5,4,3,2,1 have been assigned to Ranks I, II, III, IV, V and VI respectively.

** Weighted average scores have been arranged in the descending order

Women Entrepreneurs perceive and solve problems in different ways depending on their preferred problem-solving style (Kilmann and Herden, 1976). The above table reflects that the weighted average score of 7.95 dealing with a problem goes to the notion that the respondent poses it as a challenge to her people to find an innovative solution. Entrepreneurs have used this technique from time to time and said that it

worked beautifully. Women Entrepreneurs were of the view that there are two types of people: adopters and innovators. An adopter is a person who prefers to do things better and an innovator is he who prefers to do things differently (Tailor, 1989.297). The second choice of dealing with a problem is to take it to experts or knowledgeable persons with a weighted average score of 6.80. Discussing the problem with a person close to the respondent gets a weighted average response of 5.19. This is contrary to the prevalent notion that in times of crisis, women take the problems to people with whom they are emotionally close. Working out a solution that is beneficial to the people or the organisation secured a weighted average score of 4.71 whereas discussing the problem with a senior person gets a weighted average score of 4.66. The last priority for the solution to a problem comes out to be solving the problem of her own with a weighted average score of 3.80. Women entrepreneurs were of the view that in addition to the above-mentioned techniques, they acquired a set of intuitive, problem-solving styles which is one of the key components of effective managerial behaviors(Simon,1987). This agrees with studies by (Agor,1986; Watson,1992;) in which they observe that they often arrive at a solution intuitively without being able to report how they attained the result, Bowers,Regehr,Balthazard & Parker,(1990) proposed that intuitions are like hunches that may or may not lead to correct insights or solutions.

Dealing with Mistakes

The behaviors of the leader in dealing with mistakes has an important impact on the working of the organisation. Table .5 analyses the way of the respondent women entrepreneurs in dealing with mistakes.

Table 5 Dealing with Mistakes

Preferences →	Number of Respondents Assigning Ranks						Weighted Average Score*	Ranks*
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI		

	Factors ↓								
a.	Encourage people to own up and analyze their mistakes and receive help and support from others.	21	3	2	3	1	0	7.61	I
b.	Treat the mistakes of my people as an experience from which they can learn to prevent failures and improve performance in future.	2	17	4	3	0	4	6.00	II
c.	I encourage people to seek the help of experts or knowledgeable persons in understanding the mistake and preventing it from occurring in the future.	6	2	15	2	3	2	5.71	III
d.	Correct the mistakes and guide my subordinates to prevent them in future. Follow the philosophy that the supervisor can commit no mistake and the subordinates dare not commit one.	4	5	2	14	3	2	5.09	IV
e.	Do not reject the person making the mistake, I show him warmth	7	2	1	6	4	10	4.38	V
f.		3	2	4	5	12	5	4.14	VI

* Weights equal to 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 have been assigned to Ranks I, II, III, IV, V, and VI respectively

** Weighted average score has been arranged in the descending order

A glance at the above table shows that the first preference has been given to encourage the people to own up and analyze their mistakes and receive help and support from others with weighted average score of 7.61. Women entrepreneurs are motherly in nature and share that one of the key reasons of their growth was never getting overcritical about mistakes, rather with loving care and guidance helping employees minimize the mistakes and supporting them for improved error-free functioning. Weighted average score of 6.00 was received by the notion that making mistakes is a part of learning experience which helps improve future performance and prevents failures. Verheul,(2002) suggests that female entrepreneurs are more likely to oblige their personnel to engage in training and development than male entrepreneurs. Another study says that female entrepreneurs are more likely to pay attention to management training as the bulk of women in management positions do not have the advantage of experience in management and they tend to rely more on their employees (Cromie and Birley,1991) or they may be expected to pay more attention to social development of employees as they are thought to value collective action (Jago and Vroom,1982;Gibson,1995) for which social skills are important. Since these trainings are more of general character, it may be that women focus more on general training. The third important style which comes into light in dealing with mistakes is to encourage people to seek the help of experts or knowledgeable persons in understanding the mistake and preventing it from occurring in future, with weighted average score of 5.71. The notion that correction and guidance are important as most of the time it is difficult for people to analyze their mistakes themselves got weighted average score of 5.09. This thought perhaps stems from the nurturing behaviour of some women entrepreneurs who strongly felt that correction and guidance is absolutely necessary for better functioning. The philosophy that the supervisor can commit no mistake and the subordinates dare not commit one got weighted average score of 4.38, whereas it is not rejecting the person making the mistake but showing him warmth secured the sixth place with the weighted average score of 4.14.

Dealing with Conflicts

The conflicts are considered a strong detriment to the efficient functioning of the enterprise. Table 6 deals with the views expressed by the respondents regarding conflict resolution. Stanford et al.(1995) view women entrepreneurs as more open to criticism and accessible to employees. They foster relationships with employees based on mutual trust and respect.

Table 6 Dealing with Conflicts

Preferences → Factors ↓		Number of Respondents Assigning Ranks						Weighted Average Score*	Ranks**
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI		
a.	Analyse the causes and resolve the conflict with an overriding consideration for productivity.	18	4	6	2	0	0	7.52	I
b.	Appeal to people to keep the ideas and larger good of the organisation in mind.	4	18	2	3	1	2	6.42	II
c.	Take decision myself and tell people what to do or not to do. Accept the experts' opinions	3	4	17	3	2	1	5.80	III
d.	Tend to avoid or smooth over conflicts to retain cordial atmosphere	7	2	1	15	3	2	5.19	IV
e.	Seek the arbitration of senior persons.	6	3	5	4	1	11	4.57	V
f.		5	3	1	6	13	2	4.52	VI

* Weights equal to 6, 5, 4,3,2,1 have been assigned to Ranks I, II, III, IV, V and VI respectively

** Weighted average scores have been arranged in the descending order

Almost every entrepreneur's focus was higher productivity and faster results. It is a fact of common knowledge that wherever there are people, there will be conflicts too. After the analysis of the table, it is found that the entrepreneurs in study think that conflicts should be resolved after a careful analysis wherein the focus should always be productivity and quality. In service firm, the relationship between employer and employees is to the production process (Heskett et al., 1997; Mowday, 1998; Ram, 1999). The factor that conflict

should not allow the organizational productivity to fall below certain accepted levels was placed at the first rank with a weighted average score of 7.52. Appeal to people to keep the ideals and larger good of the organization in mind comes at 6.42 on the weighted average score. They believe in the philosophy of organization above self. Deciding byoneself and telling people what to do or not to do achieved weighted average score of 5.80.

To take conflicts to experts and accept and respect their opinion got a score of 5.19, while to retain the cordial atmosphere by avoiding the conflict scored 4.57. The arbitration of senior people in disposing of problems of conflict among employees at various levels got weighted average score of 4.52.

Communication Styles

Communication is the sharing of ideas. It is the mechanism through which human relations are developed and organized activity is unified. It is as necessary to an organization as bloodstream to a person. Table 7 analyses the communication styles of respondent entrepreneurs.

Table 7 Communication Styles

Preferences → Factors ↓	Number of Respondents Assigning Ranks						Weighted Average Score*	Ranks
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI		

a.	Have concern for my people and communicate with them out of such concern.	19	2	4	1	3	1	7.14	I
b.	Have informal and open communication with my people	4	17	2	4	2	1	6.38	II
c.	Give instructions considering all aspects and expect that these are carried out. Encourage people to directly seek information from knowledgeable colleagues in and outside the department.	6	3	15	3	1	2	5.90	III
d.	Make available relevant information to all who need and use it for achieving high performance	3	4	1	14	5	3	4.61	IV
e.	Give information only to deserving people	5	3	4	1	12	5	4.42	VI
f.		7	1	4	6	2	10	4.52	V

* Weights equal to 6,5,4,3,2,1 have been assigned to Ranks I, II, III, IV, V and VI respectively

** Weighted average scores have been arranged in the descending order

It is a matter of common knowledge that everything works where there is a free flow of communication. Women entrepreneurs display this emotion in their leadership style wherein they believe that if you love your employees, tell them; if you do not, again tell them. So having concern for the people and communicating with them out of such concern gets the priority among the respondent entrepreneurs with a weighted average score of 7.14. A weighted average score of 6.38 goes to sharing informal and open communication with the employees. Several studies show (Hornsby and Kuratko, 1990; Deshpande and Golhar, 1994; Marlow and Patton, 1993; Jackson et

al.,1989; Dekok and Uhlaner,2001) *that* this may facilitate delegation and provide greater autonomy to employees in decision making(Ram,1999)⁵⁵. Giving instructions considering all aspects and expecting that these will be carried out gets a weighted average score of 5.90. Encouraging people to directly seek information from knowledgeable colleagues in and outside the department got weighted average score of 4.61.Making available relevant information to all who need and using it for achieving high performance is the last priority in the communication style of the respondents with a weighted average score of 4.42. The notion that information should be shared with people who deserve it, as sharing it with people who do not deserve only creates confusion but is also a great energy sapper, comes with a score of 4.52

Decision Making Style

Decision-making is an integral part of management which influences its every function. Decisions are to be taken to keep the wheel of the enterprise moving in the right direction. The authority and the privilege to make decisions are the prerogatives of the entrepreneurs.

Some researchers conclude that women are more cautious, less confident, less aggressive, easier to persuade, and have inferior leadership and problem-solving abilities when deciding risks to men (Johnson and Powell, 1994). However, more recent research studies provide mixed conclusions and tend more to support gender similarities than differences (Chaganti & Parasuraman, 1996; Powell & Anisc, 1997). Some studies found no significant gender differences in management decision-making styles (Changanti, 1986; Powell, 1990). Other research found that men and women entrepreneurs possess more similarities than differences in decision-related personality traits (Birley,1989; Sexton and Bowman-Upton,1990). Still, other studies conclude that males and females are equally successful in making decisions under conditions of Risk (Hudgen and Fatkin 1985; Johnson and Powell 1994) and are equally effective in roles of leadership (Eagly, Karau, and information (Stinerock. Stern and Solomon 1991: Hyde1990)

	Factors	Number of Respondents Assigning Ranks						Weighted Average Score*	Ranks*
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI		
a.	Encourage experts and high performer to participate in decisions being made	20	3	1	2	3	1	7.23	I
b.	The good of organisation and its people mainly guide me in taking decisions While taking decisions I take special care to maintain cordial relations with all concerned.	3	19	2	4	2	0	6.52	II
c.	Consult specialist and knowledgeable people and give great weight to their opinions.	4	3	17	2	1	3	5.61	III
d.	Do not take decisions, but only communicate the decisions made at higher levels to my people.	4	2	3	15	1	5	4.66	IV
e.	Take decisions myself and inform my people about them.	6	2	1	2	14	5	4.23	V
f.		5	3	1	4	5	12	3.95	VI

* Weights equal to 6, 5, 4,3,2,1 have been assigned to Ranks I, II, III, IV, V and VI respectively

** Weighted average scores have been arranged in the descending order

Table 8 depicts the issues concerned with decision-making by respondent entrepreneurs.

The analysis of the table reveals that the priority with a weighted average score of 7.23 was given to the women entrepreneurs in decision making to display a high level of enterprise by encouraging experts and high performers to participate in decision making. These entrepreneurs firmly encouraged high performers to be involved in the decision-making process. Almost all agreed that decisions made by more practical people far withstood the market pressure and allowed growth at all times. Several studies share the same ground as the present study and find that female entrepreneurs are more likely to let employees participate in decision-making (Cromie and Birley, 1991; Neider, 1987; Stanford et al., 1995; Jago and Vroom, 1982). Verheul et al. (2002) argues that although both men and women let employees participate in decision-making; the degree to which employees can contribute is dependent upon the gender of the entrepreneur. Although male entrepreneurs let employees participate in decision-making, they usually make the final decisions themselves. Female entrepreneurs are assumed to be more likely to involve employees throughout the decision-making process. According to Jago and Vroom (1982) “Women entrepreneurs may be more likely to recognize the need for commitment to decisions by others and this may cause them to take appropriate measures to obtain that commitment in the decision-making process”. The existing literature indicates that employee participation is higher in female-led businesses than in those led by males.

The table reveals that the good of the organisation and its people is being taken care of while taking decisions secured a weighted average score of 6.52. The maintenance of cordial relations registered a weighted average score of 5.61 at the time of decision making by the respondent entrepreneurs. An earlier study by Brush (1992) describes the role of women as coordinating relationships rather than ordering people around. Women leaders tend to focus on relationships instead of hierarchy (Buttner, 2001; Brush, 1992; Belenky et al., 1986; Fischer and Gleijm, 1992; Stanford et al., 1995). Accordingly, Rosener (1990)⁶⁷ assumes a high degree of decentralization and delegation of decision-making power in businesses headed by women. A weighted average score of 4.66 goes to consulting specialists and knowledgeable people and giving great weight to their opinions, and a score of 4.23 is obtained by communicating the decisions taken at the higher levels. The last priority goes to taking the decisions by self and just communicating them for implementation. It is quite an autocratic style where elements of consultation and delegation of decisions are not present, a management style is referred to as autocratic (Lewin and Lippitt, 1938). This decision making has been given the last preference by women entrepreneurs with a weighted average score of 3.95.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Interaction with people working in the enterprise is equally important for the success of an undertaking. They mostly interacted with a few trusted and competent people, through formal as well as informal social interaction. They used the relational strategy with their employees and clients and focused on team spirit, mutual empowerment and perseverance. At the same time, while maintaining friendly relations and team spirit, they had also adopted strategies to check the people, thus making them accountable. Such practices have led to the reduction in labour costs and improved efficiency by employees, compliance with specified rules and procedures.

They behaved with their employees as motherly figures and never became over-critical about their mistakes. It was their loving care and guidance that helped them in minimizing their mistakes and in improving error-free functioning. They believed that making mistakes is a part of the learning experience that helps in improving future performance and prevents failures. In dealing with conflicts, they tried to resolve these after a careful analysis wherein the focus was always on productivity and quality. They believed in the philosophy of organization above self. By and large, they took the decisions themselves and at times sought the help of seniors and experts. In decision making, women entrepreneurs had encouraged experts and high performers to participate in decision-making. usually, the decision were taken at a higher level. Employees at different levels and in different sectors of operation were getting involved in the decision-making process.

To develop human relations and unify the organized activity, free flow of communication had been a priority with the women entrepreneurs. They shared informal and open communication with the employees. They shared information with the deserving people who mattered in the enterprise. This facilitates delegation and a high autonomy for employees in decision-making.

CONCLUSION

From the study, it has been observed that women entrepreneurs' understudy adopted both commitment and control management practices. Their highest priority area of concern was to achieve goals and targets fixed by them. For this purpose, they laid more emphasis on quality, planning, teamwork, and adherence to rules and regulations. They encouraged the employees to develop greater skills and expertise. They provided and tried to maintain a friendly and congenial work environment as far as possible, controlled their employees, and maintained discipline by using interpersonal skills.

In brief, it can be concluded that women entrepreneurs under study were practical people and behaved more or less democratically. Their behaviour and personality traits were instrumental in achieving the goals set for them. Therefore, hypothesis HO5 that women entrepreneurs follow a combination of management styles is proved.

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