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# **A Discourse on issues of Women's Autonomy in Chinese Literature**

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## **Abstract**

In his discussion on the allegorical aspect of language, Paul de Man (1919-1983) suggested that “[t]he subjectivity of experience is preserved when it is translated into language” (“The Rhetoric of Temporality”). While literature is a reflection of real experience, how much could literary works tell us regarding the progress of women's rights at different historical periods? Being inspired by de Man's stance, my paper explores the social status of Chinese women in relation to their degree of autonomy as shown from the selected Chinese literary texts. To reflect the allegorical characteristic of literature, the corresponding socio-cultural backgrounds will be analyzed in understanding how Chinese women from Imperial China till contemporary times responded differently in the persistent battle against patriarchal constraint. While female characters from Imperial China are restricted by a nativized system that governs their conducts and behaviors, those from Early Republican China and Communist China are affected by modern ideologies brought by feminist movements across the globe. It is hoped that this paper could provide new insights on how combats for women's autonomy in the fictional world are shaped by real social settings.

*This research paper is supported by the University Grants Committee of Hong Kong (IDS project UGC/IDS16/16).*

# **ANG TANGING INA: STUDY ON THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF SELECTED WORKING SINGLE MOTHERS IN THE COASTAL COMMUNITY OF LA HUERTA, PARAÑAQUE**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores how the work-life balance of selected working single mothers situated in a coastal community are affecting their well-being. Working single mothers carry the responsibility of earning for their family while simultaneously exercising their motherhood. This study utilized a purposeful qualitative research through semi-structured face-to-face interviews among ten working single mothers living in the coastal community of La Huerta, Parañaque in order to identify the following: a.) experiences of the working single mothers, b.) problems usually encountered, and c.) how these problems are affecting their well-being. Dorothy Smith's Feminist Standpoint Theory is used as a theoretical lens in order to explain their work-life balance. Results have shown that despite their dual roles as the main income earners and heads of the households, they are not neglecting caring for their well-being. They consider getting sufficient rest, eating well, and going to church as forms of caring for their well-being. Other factors that affect their work-life balance include: living arrangements, work hours, type of work, and income.

## **Keywords:**

*Working single mother, women, coastal community, work-life balance, well-being*

## **Introduction**

Work-life balance is a fulfillment of needs in both work and non-works aspects of an individual. It is needed in order for a person to have a greater focus on separate tasks and efficiency. It is also a key issue in all types of employments as dual-career families have become common and high work demands have become the norm (Delina, 2013). Work-life imbalance causes high levels of stress, which reduces quality of life and the efficiency of individual at work (Delina, 2013; Kofodimos, 1993).

In Brgy. La Huerta, 11% of the households have solo parents. While it is for different reasons, it is important to highlight that households headed by single mothers have lived experiences from other households that cause them to neglect caring for their well-being. Reasons being: prioritizing the needs of their children and/or other family members they may live with over their own, earning extra income, and deeming well-being as unimportant to their work-life balance.

Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003) suggests that equal investment of time and involvement in work and family reduces conflict in work and family and stress, which enhances the quality of life of an individual, in this case, working single mothers. Moreover, having a stable work-life balance means reduced risks in health. It is possible that setting aside care for well-being may endanger both work and family life.

This study discusses the problems in the work-life balance of working single mothers situated in a coastal community and how it affects their well-being. Many working single mothers still experience significant conflict in terms of work-life balance. This paper argues that the problems brought upon in the work-life balance of working single mothers in a coastal community area are associated to how they look after their well-being. Furthermore, this study aims to answer the following questions: a.) the experiences of being a single mother in the coastal community of La Huerta, Parañaque; b.) the problems that these selected working single mothers deal with; and c.) and how these problems affect their well-being.

## **Main Argument**

This paper argues that the problems brought upon in the work-life balance of working single mothers in a coastal community area are associated to how they look after their well-being.

## **Statement of the Problem and Research Questions**

What are the problems in the work-life balance that working single mothers situated in a coastal community deal with and how are these associated to their well-being?

- 1.) *What are the experiences of working single mothers in a coastal community?*
- 2.) *What are the problems that working single mothers in a coastal community deal with?*
- 3.) *How are these problems affecting their well-being?*

## **Significance of the Study**

This study aims to be a significant endeavor in recognizing the problems usually encountered by the participating working single mothers that may cause them to

neglect their well-being. The results of this study can be used as a baseline data for policy formulation and improvement concerning working single mothers

### **Scope and Delimitation**

This study is descriptive and focuses on the well-being and work-life balance of working single mothers. Furthermore, it aims to identify how the experiences and problems encountered of the selected working single mothers are associated to their well-being.

The results of this study are limited to the relation of work-life balance to the well-being of the selected working single mothers interviewed in La Huerta. This study does not cover the life histories of the interviewed informants before they became single mothers. Moreover, the findings analyzed for this study came from the limited interviews from a small sample.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review covers a range of theories and articles regarding single mothers and their experiences, work-life balance, and well-being. This literature review is divided into three themes: a.) Work-life Balance of Working Single Mothers; b.) Challenges of Work and c.) Well-being of Working Single Mothers. This study focuses on the association of work-life balance of working single mothers to their well-being.

### **Work-life Balance of Working Single Mothers**

The conflict between work and life balance initiates with the multiple roles that women have to play in order to provide and attain the needs of their families (Adame, Capliure, & Miquel, 2015). Work-life balance is defined as: the flexible working arrangements that allow both parents and non-parents to arrange a balance between work and personal responsibilities (Redmond, Valiulis, & Drew, 2006). The origins of researches on work-life balance could be traced back to the studies of women having multiple roles (Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011). Work-life balance arises because of infinite and high demands of work and in family. Forcing single mothers to lay aside their personal needs, like the care of their well-being.

Work-life balance (WLB), together with its other related terms such as work-family conflict, work-family balance, is a feeling fulfilled and having a person's needs met in both work and non-work facets of their life (Rife & Hall, 2015). However, it seems to be focused on only women with families (Shankar & Bhatnagar, 2010). Women traditionally have more conflicts because of the number of roles they perform, making family commitments a big obstacle for their career development (Adame, Capliure, & Miquel, 2015). This is because motherhood is a physically and emotionally demanding job, and that having children or a family is a constraint in being able to be productive at work. Single mothers in an urban poor area aims to fulfill these needs.

Single mothers deal with it intensely due to the fact that not a lot of women are unable to maintain steady employment. As stated by Elizabeth Mulroy (1995): "*families headed by mothers alone have become a unit of concern not only because they represent changing family form, but also because their current economic marginality threatens a downward spiral toward the instability of urban poverty.*" Working women were often criticized for neglecting their domestic responsibilities (Edgell, 2006; Roberts, 1995). These



challenges and even being blamed for juggling domestic responsibilities are a hindrance to a woman's retention and career success (Martin & Barnard, 2013).

In addition, since they have to live lives with the constant concern of prioritizing earning money and providing quality care for their children and or families, they lack the time and energy to take care of themselves and to satisfy their own needs and indulge in their own interests.

### **Challenges of Work**

A research by Buvinić and Gupta (1997; Constable, 2014) points out that there are three factors as to why there is association between female-headed households and poverty. First, the household reflects a disruption of traditional systems of family governance; second, the main earners (mothers), have lower average earnings than men; and third, the combination of household and gender-related differences in economic opportunities. Employment and poverty may differ according to race with minority women more likely to be working below-poverty wages (Damaske, Bratter, & Frech, 2016). Single mothers are proven to be vulnerable to poverty, and with this, they have to earn their income through survival activities (Tannerfeldt & Ljung, 2012).

Single mothers live with the competing priorities of earning money and providing services for their children (Bronniman, 2008; Craig, 2006). That is why many women are wearing multiple hats in their attempts to balance their responsibilities in career and at home (Delina, G; Raya, Prahakara R, 2013). Women have been traditionally the family caretakers and working women continue to bear much of the burden care for children and elderly parents (Wallace, 2002). Accompanied with these priorities are complications such as: lower earning jobs for women, little to none public assistance and less healthy lives for both the mother and the family. Mothers are rated as less hireable and suitable for promotion and management training because they are believed to be less competent and less committed to paid work (Correll, Bernard, & Paik, 2007). Never really taking the sense off motherhood at work; this results to women and mothers often have limited job search areas because of their domestic and child-care responsibilities - which can be much limited for single mothers (Duncan & Edwards, 2013).

Since gender plays a key role in the informal economy, most women are occupying low-paying and vulnerable jobs (UP Solair, et al., 2010). This is evident especially in poor urban areas, which due to poverty and lack of educational attainment, many single mothers work in the informal sector. The difference between men's and women's work have discernible economic implications and as for women's jobs, it usually yearns lower wage and wields less power (Handelman, 2013). Single mothers differ markedly from married mothers in patterns and types of employment (Williams, 2014). Although, women still retain a disproportionate responsibility for work and child care even if both partners are working.

### **Well-being of Single Mothers**

As much as these single mothers perceive their well-being as non-priority, having an imbalanced well-being provokes stress, thus, harming further their quality of life and effectiveness at work (Kofodimos, 1993; Delina, G; Raya, Prahakara R, 2013). Work stress could be understood as a hazard that threatens health and lowers their

productivity (Väänänen, Anttila, Turtiainen, & Pekka, 2012). When individuals, in this case, single mothers, have satisfactory relationships at work, they experience less conflict at work and be more productive with their job(s) (Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013).

Work-life balance has yet to become a genuine priority (Rife & Hall, 2015). Working single mothers would still need a strong support system in both the workplace and household and possibly (financial) support from the local government as a form of social assistance and security. In a study by Nicole Constable (2014), she stated that: “the single mothers in the Philippines seem to receive less institutional support.” By giving assistance to these single mothers, they could begin to focus on taking care of their well-being from time to time. Balanced living will then occur when activities and aspirations in one domain do not conflict or give negative effects on activities in the other (Levy, 2012).

In order to understand the realities of their circumstances (Schein, 1995), people should learn to listen and address the needs of single mothers. Empowerment of women in the economic sector constitutes one of the fundamental objectives of the development efforts of a country (Bilkis, Habib, & Sharmin, 2010).

### **Literature Gap**

The literature reviews present an outline of the different themes that the study would discuss and expound. While several studies have addressed work-life balance of single mothers in an urban context, this study focuses on the working single mothers in the Philippine context, studies in the work-life balance of women in informal labor, and studies of work-life balance in an urban poor context.

### **Theoretical Lens**

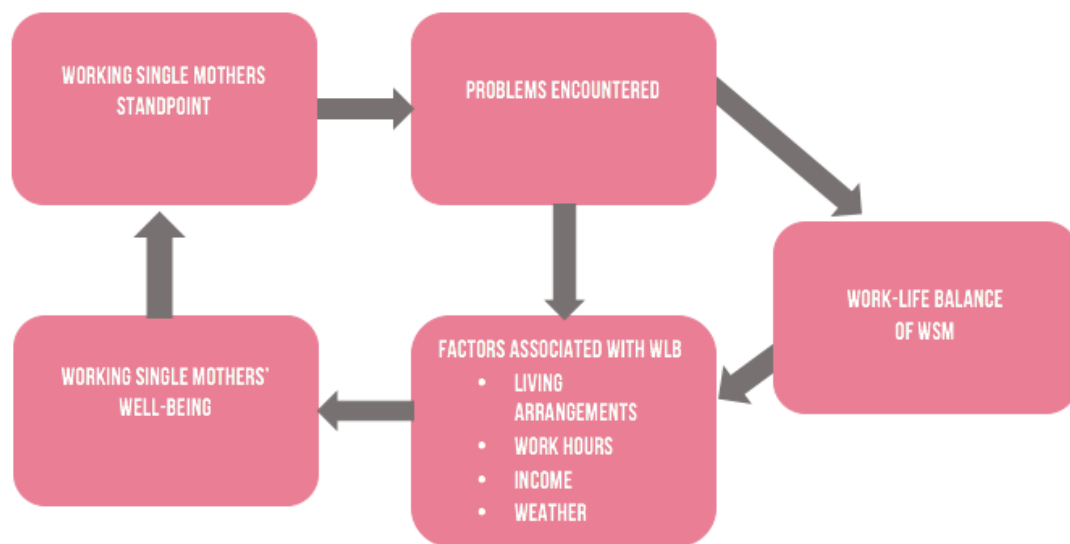
The theoretical lens used to explain the work-life balance would be of feminist standpoint theory. In this paper, the narratives of the selected single mothers were used to explain how they are able to fulfill their work-life balance. Furthermore, work and family goals are shaped by stereotypical gender roles (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). Famous feminist theorists such as Nancy Hartsock and Dorothy Smith assume that women’s daily lives make up an absolute truth that provides a necessary grounding for feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 2004).

However, women’s daily lives do not constitute a given reality that will provide a required grounding for a theory. Using this theory proves that the narratives told from different standpoint is important in pointing out the differences of how the working single mothers manage their work-life balance and how it affects their well-being.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework below shows the relation of work-life balance to the well-being of working single mothers within the coastal community of La Huerta, Parañaque, which can be explained with feminist standpoint theory.

The framework explains that the working single mothers interviewed for this study have shared the problems they usually encounter which affects their work-life balance. From the narratives, the common factors that affect their work-life balance, negatively and positively were the following: a.) living arrangements, b.) work hours, c.) income, and d.) weather. These factors also affect how the working single mothers define and care for their well-being.



**FIGURE 1. Relation of Work-Life Balance to the Well-being of Working Single Mothers based on their narratives**

## Methods

### Study setting

This study was conducted in the urban poor and coastal community of Barangay La Huerta, Parañaque City near Bulungan Market. According to the community profile prepared by the University of Santo Tomas Sociological Society: Barangay La Huerta is a fishing community in Paranaque City, situated at the Las Pinas Paranaque Critical Habitat Ecotourism Area (LPPCHEA). The fishing sector of Brgy La Huerta has a total of 62 households. The primary source of livelihood in this area is fishing. The average daily income for the majority of the households in this community ranges from PHP 1000 – PHP 1500.

### Informants

The researcher initially proposed to interview 5-8 informants working single mothers in Barangay, La Huerta, Parañaque City. Nonetheless, there were a total sample of 10 working single mothers, ages 26 to 60 years old, with different types of occupation (shellfish cleaner, cashier, masseuse, sari-sari store owner, etc.) individually were interviewed for the study. Purposive sampling was used as a sampling technique to

gather informants. The researcher considered only those working single mothers fit in the proposed criteria (ages 25 and above, living in Brgy. La Huerta) who allowed to be interviewed.

**Data gathering procedure**

Purposive sampling was used as a data gathering technique in obtaining the informants for this study. In order to create an exploratory research design as proposed, the data were collected through a qualitative semi-structured interview questionnaire. It was made up of five questions a few sub-questions that reflected the perception of the work-life balance of a working single mother. The first field visit was conducted on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, 2017. The data gathering process ended on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, 2017. Some issues encountered by the researcher include: limited informants due to the fact that some single mothers fit within the conditions refused to be interviewed, the difficulty of the commute to the locale, and conducting the interview and rapport building in a short amount of time.

Before every interview, the researcher introduced herself and an agreement was made between the participant and the researcher about keeping all the information obtained confidential. The interviews were conducted in Filipino and interviews were done in their homes in the coastal community of La Huerta, Parañaque adjacent to Bulungan Market. Field notes were likewise used as a mean to annotate observations. After the interview, the ten informants were again asked to sign a letter of ethical consent. The data gathered were transcribed using ExpressScribe. The transcribed interviews were then coded using the qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti.

**Ethical considerations**

The researcher also asked for permission before taking a voice recording of the interview. Before the interview, the researcher asked for permission if the interview could be recorded; all of the informants agreed to. The researcher also reassured that all of the data obtained in the interview will be strictly confidential. After the interview, the informants were asked to sign a letter of ethical consent. Informing them that the interview will not be used for anything other than research. For anonymity purposes, only the first name and age of the informants were included in this study and research appendices.

**Results**

This section presents the answers of the informants of the study taken for this interview.

The results state that the work-life balance experiences of the selected working single mother vary by work-related factors, living arrangements, family participation and size. Some informants are not able to work if the weather is inclement, some are also able to work because they have their mothers and other family members that will look after their child. Also, according to the barangay community profile prepared by the UST Sociological Society, child labor in the said community is seen in a positive context.

**Table 1**

**Experiences of working single mothers in a coastal community**

Code	Reference Count	Quote
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<p>Work-related</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work hours</li> <li>- Type of work</li> <li>- Number of work</li> </ul>	14	<p><i>“Nahihirapan ka rin minsan matumal, parang ganon. Pero sa pagtitinda talaga okay lang naman yun, minsan matumal nga, pero hindi naman lagi.” –Nanay Enarcissa, 56</i></p> <p><i>“Uh, ano na, ‘pag ganitong wala na, mga alas-dose, mga alas-sais na kami, alas-sais na kami natatapos kasi nililinis ang tahong tapos sa Palawan alas-diyes ang ano... dating ng Palawan, tapos alas-dose kami tapos.” – Nanay Theresa, 44</i></p> <p><i>“Kasi ako, minsan, pag may nagpalaba, o nagpa-plantsa, hindi ako nagtitinda, ‘pag wala, nagtitinda ako.” – Nanay Luzviminda, 49</i></p>
<p>Living arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>WSM</b> who live with their immediate family members find it easier to manage their WLB</li> </ul>	5	<p><i>“Nagpro-provide para sa anak, mga aasikaso para makakain siya...asikaso saka magbihis, kasi ang ano naman namin dito, pag naglalaba, kasi palibasa may kasama kami sa bahay.” –Nanay Maricris, 40</i></p> <p><i>“Kasi merong rin akong nanay na...minsan tumutulong sa amin, Tumutulong siya sa amin, kaya lagi ang pinaka-ano namin, nagbibigayan, ganon.” – Nanay Enarcissa, 52</i></p> <p><i>“Ang madalas kong ano (problem) financially, pero...wala namang other problems kasi kasama ko naman si mama sa pag gabay sa baby ko.” – Nanay Rinalyn, 26</i></p>
<p>Working with their children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WSM also have their children as their <i>“katuwang”</i> in earning money and helping in household duties</li> </ul>	3	<p><i>“Yung mga anak ko, naglilinis sila ng tahong, ‘yun yung trabaho nila, kasi pagdating ng...ano, kinabukasan, pasok nila, may baon sila.” – Nanay Theresa, 44</i></p> <p><i>“yun ang pinaka-bunso ko, katulong ko siya...yun, tumutulong nga sila sa akin kasi alam nila yung hirap ng buhay simula nung maliit sila eh.” – Nanay Luzviminda, 49</i></p>

In the second table, the results show that: financial related problems such as paying for house bills, sending their children to school, and providing basic needs are the most encountered problem among eight out of the ten informants. Because of this, some informants have to have more than one job. Having to raise their children alone is also a problem, especially for informants with younger children and who do not have an immediate family member to assist.

**Table 2**  
**Problems encountered by working single mothers**

Code	Reference Count	Quote
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Financial-related problems - Paying for school tuition - Paying for house utilities - Providing food for children	11	<p><i>"Ah yung mga pangunahing pangangailangan, tubig, kuryente... tulad ng kakainin namin, papakain mo sa mga anak mo... 'di mo alam kung saan mo makukuha." - Nanay Arlena, 60</i></p> <p><i>"Siyempre, pera. Pampaaral sa mga anak..." - Nanay Malou, 49</i></p> <p><i>"Pag wala kasi akong kinita minsan iisipin mo 'yung pambaon...sa eskwelahan, saka sa pamasaha..." - Nanay Mary Jane, 34</i></p> <p><i>"Nagpro-provide para sa anak, mga aasikaso para makakain siya...asikaso saka magbihis..." - Nanay Maricris, 40</i></p>
Taking care of children alone	4	<p><i>"Tulong-tulong kami mag-ina hanggang sa lumaki na sila. Pero mas hirap ako nung maliit sila, ako lang talaga eh!" - Nanay Luzviminda, 52</i></p> <p><i>"Oo...ang hirap talaga nung ganyan, ako lahat ng taga-, ako lahat nung ano sa mga anak ko, parang pag-asa ko." - Nanay Theresa, 44</i></p>

In the third table, the results show how the work-life balance of the informants is related to how they look after their well-being. While some do not feel like that they are not neglecting their own well-being at all, they stated that taking care of their children is what should be their priority. Working single mothers interviewed also have different ways to spend their free time when they are not working, like going to church and taking siestas.

**Table 3**  
**Relation of Work-Life Balance to Well-Being**

Code	Reference Count	Quote
Daily care for well-being - How WSM care for their well-being despite dual roles	8	<p><i>"Pag natapos na, pahinga lang, ganon lang." - Nanay Arlena, 60</i></p> <p><i>"Makaligo lang, makakain lang, okay na yan; sapat na 'yan. Basta makatulog ng maayos, at saka makakain ng maayos." - Nanay Maricris, 40</i></p> <p><i>"Pahinga na ano...halimbawa na wala ako client, saka ako mag-ayos sa sarili ko." - Nanay Joan, 31</i></p>
Prioritizing children's needs over their own	11	<p><i>"Napapabayaang ko na rin...gawa rin nung sa mga ano rin...mga hanapbuhay. Kakaintindi sa mga bata..." - Nanay Mary Jane, 36</i></p> <p><i>"Hindi. Kasi, iniisip ko talaga na may makain kami, sa araw-araw...'yun talaga iniisip ko. Naisip ko 'yung may makain lang kami at</i></p>

		<p><i>huwag magkakasakit. Yun lang iniisip ko.</i>  <i>" – Nanay Luzviminda 49</i></p> <p><i>"Hindi ko naman nakakalimutan (alagaan) sarili ko, kahit papano naman eh, naaalagaan ko naman yung sarili ko...kasi kung may sakit ka, alam mo na may sakit ka, eh, 'di... bigyan mo ng lunas! Para hindi...maging mapagbigay problema ating karamdaman."</i> – Nanay Enarcissa, 52</p>
Time for self	7	<p><i>"Hindi...nagkakaroon naman ako ng time sa sarili kasi...tulad niyan, ganto, wala akong pasok. Mamaya pa ako papasok...eh, 'di maghapon akong nakahiga mamaya paghatid ko sa kanya (child)." – Nanay Malou, 49</i></p> <p><i>"Pag...ano (rest day) naman din, 'pag Linggo naman inaaya ko rin naman na pumunta ng simbahan yung mga bata."</i> – Nanay Mary Jane, 34</p> <p><i>"Parang 'yun yung time ko sa sarili ko, 'pag napapasyal ko yung baby ko...kasama ko pa rin siya! Di puwede yung ako lang kasi...di na katulad nung dati na puwede gumala-gala mag-isa."</i> – Nanay Rinalyn, 26</p>
- How WSM spend their time when they are not working		

Using the feminist standpoint theory, the results of this study would be further explained in order to explain the work-life balance of the selected informants.

## Discussion

### *Experiences of working single mothers in a coastal community*

Experiences of working single mothers in a coastal community vary on different factors. First, the size of the family is one contributing factor to how these selected single mothers maintain their work-life balance. It is easier for single mothers who live with bigger number of family members because of financial contributions; they are able to receive assistance.

As mentioned earlier, living arrangements are a huge influence into how these working single mothers manage their well-being. Informants who live with their mothers and/or siblings are more at ease when working because they have someone in the household looking over their children. It proves that societal factors, in this case, family assistance, do have an impact on the work-life balance (Poulose & Sudarsan, n.d.) of these selected informants. Varying living arrangements of working single mothers is needed in order to understand and interpret differences in mothers' time allocations to caring for their children/family accurately. (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008).

Informants with younger children find it difficult to balance work and motherhood since younger children need more attention. On the other hand, those single mothers who live

with their older children and mothers/siblings find it easier to look after themselves while earning for their families; since their children are older, they do not need to watch them closely all the time; they also serve as their *katuwang* in earning money.

#### *Problems encountered by the working single mothers in the coastal community*

All single mothers interviewed for this study have stated that the problems they usually encounter are financial-related problems. Single mothers live with the competing priorities of earning money and providing services for their children (Bronniman, 2008; Craig, 2006) There problems are particularly with sending their children to school, paying for house utilities, and being able to feed their children. Their income is, at times, not enough to cover all their needs therefore, for some informants, they are being assisted by their mothers or children. Others also have to work two jobs in order to support their family.

Another difficulty faced by working single mothers is having to raise their child alone. While some informants have stated that they are able to get assistance from living with their immediate family members, some do not share the same benefit; especially for single mothers with more than one child.

When asked on how they are able to suitably manage their work-life balance, they all answered with “proper time management”. They are able to allot time for working during different times of the day while taking care of their children. Since most of the informants work in informal setting, their work timetable also varies, and it is a factor into how they are able to care for their family.

Moreover, an interesting note taken during interviews: some single mothers are not able to work and earn money whenever the weather is inclement. This means that the weather is also be a contributing factor on work-life balance as some single mothers are not able to work since they are situated in a coastal community, their workplace may be unsafe. Hence, in order to earn money, they have to find other sources of income.

#### *Working single mothers and well-being*

The concept of well-being in this paper is defined as the lack of work-stress which can harm their quality of life (Kofodimos, 1993; Delina, G; Raya, Prahakara R, 2013). The informants interviewed defines “well-being” as the way they are able to take care of themselves. When asked on how they are able to look after their well-being, they all answered with:” *basta maka-pahinga*”. Furthermore, they have also defined their well-being as: looking physically healthy and pleasant.

Some informants do not think that they are neglecting their well-being since for them, they do not feel sick often and they feel healthy. For them, being able to eat and rest during and after work are forms of self-care. They are also able to rest after taking their children to school. Although, they forget to care for their well-being, this is due to the fact that they have to keep their children and keeping the household in order their priority.

One important factor in order to maintain the ability to cope with high pressure is to take sufficient periods of respite, or a short period of rest (Robertson & Cooper, 2011).



Small rest breaks in between work allows working single mothers to prevent work strains. Strains imposed on single parents, shift in work, irregular working routines have all been associated with damage to well-being (Robertson & Cooper, 2011).

Feminist standpoint theory was useful in explaining the differences the work-life balance of working single mothers because it proved that the importance of own accounts of lived experiences are useful in being able to identify how their well-being is associated with their work-life balance. While the answer of the informants had similar ideas in some questions, their experiences in their work-life balance were totally different from one another because of the varying factors mentioned. The changing standpoint of working single mothers interviewed for this study proves that their inputs are vital in producing new knowledge and that their lived experiences “encompasses diversity among women and their lives and activities” (Hekman, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Overall, this study reaffirms that the problems encountered in the work-life balance of the working single mothers interviewed are associated to how they look after their well-being. The work-life balance experiences of the participating working single mothers differ from each other based on the following factors: living arrangements, different work hours, type and number of work, age, and age of their children. They are all able to fulfill their roles as mothers and income-earners through proper time management. The problems they encounter are mostly financial in nature (tuition and school fees, food sources, paying for utilities). However, with these problems, at least for informants with social support such by way of mothers, siblings, and/or older children, do not feel that they are entirely neglecting caring for their well-being. They have defined well-being as feeling and looking physically healthy.

On the other hand, informants without social support tend to forget to care for their well-being since they do not have anyone that will aid them.

### **Recommendations**

This study has shown that the informants consider financial related problems as the biggest problems they encounter as a working single mother. Working hard to support their respective families, they think that their own well-being should not be their priority. As mentioned earlier, the results of this study can be used as a baseline data for more policy formulation and improvement concerning working single mothers. Additionally, the results of this study could be used as support information for the future improvement of R.A. 8972 or the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000 in order for working single mothers, or any working single parent for that matter, to get appropriate financial assistance from the government. The researcher recommends more research into the work-life balance of single mothers in informal labor and in the Philippine context, for further improvement of this study as well.

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# **Cultural and spiritual care – An overlooked aspect of Aboriginal Aged Care in South Australia**

**Authors: Dr Nina Sivertsen and Associate Professor Ann Harrington**

Aged care for Aboriginal people needs to be understood within the social and historical context of colonisation, dispossession of land and culture, and economic exclusion. Health conditions associated with ageing often affect Aboriginal people earlier than other Australians (DTA 2017; AIHW 2011). This outcome is reflected in the Australian Government policy to provide Aboriginal people access to culturally appropriate aged care services from 50 years old, in comparison to 65 years for the broader population (Australian Aged Care Quality Agency 2014).

Despite this policy initiative, those who work with older Aboriginal people remain sceptical of whether aged care services provided are optimal. Fundamental issues such as lack of Aboriginal care workers and lack of access to technology presents a barrier - notably the reliance on the internet and the 1800 phone number. Hermant (2016) points out that many Indigenous people do not have landlines and use mobile phones sparingly to conserve credit.

The Federal Government National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Flexible Aged Care Program report found that although aged care services are largely delivered effectively to Aboriginal people, the ageing of Australia's population and growing diversity among older people, are placing pressures on the depth and agility of Australia's aged care system. This pressure brings about challenges in ensuring Aboriginal peoples' access to culturally appropriate care (Australian National Audit Office 2017; DTA 2017). Culture and spirituality are important determinants of Aboriginal health (Dudgeon, Milroy & Walker 2014), and nurses and carers can play a pivotal role in integrating cultural and spiritual care into the general care for Aboriginal people (Sivertsen & Harrington 2016).

Similar to Australia, other nations with Indigenous populations struggle to achieve positive health outcomes for their older generations. In New Zealand, many Māori experience a compromised quality of life and reduced lifespan relative to non-Māori, and there is much scope to enhance positive ageing strategies that includes Whanau (family) so that they can support older Māori people to achieve their own self-defined aspirations (Edwards 2010). In Norway health professionals often have limited Sámi language skills and knowledge of Indigenous Sámi culture (Sivertsen 2010), which limit their ability to anticipate, assess, and communicate about the possible needs, particularly of the older Sámi patients (Blix, Hamran & Normann 2013). In Canada First Nations elderly on-reserve do not receive the home care and ongoing support that they need to stay in their communities (Health Council of Canada 2013). Overall, consideration of the issues of self-aspiration, cultural competency of carers, and domestic support are important to provide high-quality, sustainable, culturally appropriate, and accessible aged care

and disability services, in remote centres as well as cities and large regional centres, where more than half of Aboriginal people in Australia live. This care includes close involvement with local Aboriginal community-controlled health services.

A research project to discover how culture and spirituality can be integrated into residential aged care is being conducted through Flinders University. This study is currently in its final stages and has captured the voices of Aboriginal residents and care workers, findings to be reported at its conclusion.

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# **Empowering Muslim Women through Sports:**

## **A Case Study of Dhofar University's Female Hostel Residents**

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### Abstract

When discussing or reading about women in the Arabian Gulf, many readers might think of the conservative aspects of the region and wonder about the title of this research study. At Dhofar University's female dormitory [hostel], the participants in the study have a story to tell about their empowerment through sports.

This case study uses qualitative methods to examine the female students' usage of the hostel gym and their subsequent reactions. Observation and student feedback are the primary research tools, and faculty observations of student academic behavior are also included in the gathering of data. All students are living in on-campus housing as no other students are allowed to use the gym facilities. The research commences with the opening of the gym facilities in September 2017 and the subsequent initial training of student 'gym coordinators', then follows student journeys through the first semester of academic year 2017-2018.

The research concludes that students who use the gym facilities feel better about their bodies and have improved their eating habits. In other words, they became more conscious of keeping healthy not only through sports but also through consuming healthier food. The same group of students also have improved study habits which allow them to complete their homework assignments and to get to bed at a reasonable hour; in other words, they feel that they are more time efficient. Faculty members also observed that these students have less class absences, complete their assignments on time, and show attitude improvement towards their learning.

**Empowerment**  
**Finding the Inner Power**  
Dr. Lutricia Roberts

## Empowerment - Finding the Inner Power

What is empowerment? The etymology.

Prefix-em meaning to cause to be in a certain condition; within.<sup>1</sup> Power meaning a person or thing that possess or exercises authority or influence, strength and force<sup>2</sup>...

Empowerment then is the ability to release from confinement the internal authority and strength to influence yourself and others.

In the beginning, no matter your spiritual beliefs, God, however, you define Him, created man. Man in his purest form embodies all of the necessary elements that he will need to succeed. Throughout time and the demoralization of humanity, it would appear that only the strong survive. And it is upon this precipice which many have found themselves standing in want and not attaining to what should be and has been granted. It is in this dark, deep, unrelenting well we find the seeds of Power. Seeds lost in the proverbial humdrum of society that cannot fully grow.

Who am I, and where, if anywhere do I fit in? This question has plagued man since the dawning of time, for some, its thorny pricks of the flesh remain an unhealed scar. Still, it never ceases to amaze that most people have not tapped into their true self. Not knowing who you are will certainly choke the very life out of your seeds. Your identity is not merely your ancestry and DNA but it is what makes you uniquely you. Your life will not be judged or excused based on your parent's accomplishments or lack thereof, but rather your actions. Realizing and accepting the truth of your Identity is half the battle. Let's take a look at ourselves from the inside out. Why? Because the outside tells us what you want us to see but the inside reveals a different story, the real you.

What is Identity and why is it of such importance. Identity is defined as: *the condition of being oneself or itself, and not another: the state of having unique identifying characteristics held by no other person or thing*<sup>3</sup>. Stop, will the real you please come forth. If you do not understand who you are, the true power you possess will lay dormant and forever untapped. You can't tap into your true power if you are camouflaged as someone else. It's time for the real you to come out of hiding and free yourself from the place of confinement. By now, I'm sure you are contemplating why this is important. Until you fully understand "you", your power remains hidden. If you look at man (human beings) we are tri-partite meaning 3 parts, body, soul and spirit. Each part playing a distinctive role. The Body (Soma) or Physiological structure includes: the 5 Senses. The Soul (Physche) or Psychological Structure includes: the Emotions, Will and Mind. The Spirit (Pneuma) or Spiritual Structure includes the Conscience and Belief system. Each structure or part of man has a level of power within it but the most potent level is within the Spirit.

Housed inside all 3 parts of you are the weaknesses, strengths, and passions which in turns motivate you. On every level the seeds of your power must be released, cultivated and

nurtured, so they may come forth. It may seem or sound to be a daunting or difficult process but it is attainable. The release begins when you realize who you are. How? It opens the gates of potentiality and opportunity. It sends a message of approval to all 3 parts of you relinquishing the confinement of yourself to finally live and fulfill your purpose. Again this is only half the battle because the power seeds must be in the proper surroundings for germination to begin. This process breaks through the insurmountable obstacles that hindered you from being the best you.

So now that we know who we are, in short was the planting of our seeds, let's contend with the surroundings. Just like with any pregnancy, the surroundings must be conducive for proper growth. It is necessary that we cultivate a nurturing environment. The incubation happens deep in the recesses of your mind. American author, Earl Nightingale stated, "Whatever we plant in our subconscious mind and nourish with repetition and emotion will one day become a reality."<sup>4</sup> The soil of the mind must be plowed and rid of all debris and noxious, python-like thoughts (weeds) that can choke the life out of the seeds of power that has been planted. In a much simpler term, we must guard and protect the seeds with a better way of thinking. Is it not an old proverb that states, For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.<sup>5</sup> Due to life circumstances and disappointments some have fostered and incorporated a more negative mindset and way of thinking which has depleted the soil of its vital growth nutrients. Soil void of the proper nourishment causes growth deficiencies and abnormalities.

The vast majority of people around this world live in a broken place. What do I mean broken place? These are different areas of your life that have become fragmented due to hurt, pain, and disappointments. Broken promises, dreams and hopes lead to despair and ultimately broken lives. This will explain why some have not tapped into the power already hidden on the inside. The lack of power or the feeling thereof did not come from an external source, rather it is a byproduct of the enslavement and deceit of our own minds. External stimuli can only present the chain of events, it is up to us to make a conscience decision. A choice that in hindsight could change how we think not only about the situation but about our own selves. How can we change the way we think, is it possible? All things are possible if you believe. So then change is possible, yes it is! The question now presents itself, is how intent are you on following it through. Because it's going to take deliberate steps to arrive at your desired goal. It seems like a lot of work but we are not merely talking about finding the Inner Power in a temporal fashion but a process that can be added to every aspect of your life. A power that cannot be halted, instead that can transform the very essence of your being.

The change in our thought process (psyche) will alter not only our present but our future. Maya Angelo is quoted as saying "I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better."<sup>6</sup> The revolution has begun! There is a gentle air of change blowing, can you feel it? Give yourself permission to experience the change. Often when things come to that challenge the norm no matter how flawed the norm is, we fight against it internally. Even if that means fighting our own-selves. Raise your sword in vengeance against every negative thought cutting it with the sharpness of a conscience interrupt. A conscience interrupt immediately stops, quarantines the negative thought and replaces it before it attaches to the wall of your emotions. Simply put it is a refusal in allowing yourself to think negatively.

Literally stopping your own thought and not dwelling on it. Because if it reaches the emotions it will be stored in your memory. Our focus is to abort any behavior or obstacle that tries to derail you from truly finding the inner power.

True power more often, is not lost, rather buried under several layers of external circumstances that we have internalized. Which ushers me into the next layer, fear. Why would fear be a layer?

Fear within itself can have a positive or negative response but in order to understand it, let us look at the definition. Fear is defined as, to be afraid, anxiety, a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc., whether the threat is real or imagined.<sup>7</sup> People, in general, respond to fear differently. We understand being afraid but what about when it's imagined. In their psyche, it is as real as the words on this paper but in actuality, it is not. At one point or another, we have all been afraid of something, the dark, a movie or even a person. But this fear I am referring to captures its victims, crippling their ability to move forward or even fight back, stripping them of any signs of hope or power. Before you paint a picture of a person in dire straits, it's not, these are everyday people who have lost their ability to fight back or draw from the eternal well of power. Negative physical or verbal mistreatment outwardly or from oneself is usually their modus operandi. Fear constantly beats on the membranes of the psyche, steadily reminding its victim of its presence and never letting them go beyond the bounds of confinement to seek freedom. There is no escape from its power numbing shrills. This lack of liberty is evidence of the loss of freedom. Liberty fertilizes the soil of power seeds supplying the minerals of strength and hope. Paralysis, guilt, and shame are the offsprings of fear, consuming the power seeds of the soul. How then doth we free ourselves from the clutches of this tormenting demon?

What must we do to regain power? Disarming the debilitating cancers mentioned in this paper and those not mentioned is by digging deep. Sounds vague, it's really not. Situated within the subcutaneous tissue of the soul lies your passion and determination. Although housed in the soul with your emotions, its intensity is greater. Determination is one thing that cannot be taught. It's innately in you. Your creator hardcoded it in your DNA, it's just a matter of being able to ignite it when needed. Permit me to make this blanket statement that determination dwarfs external motivation. External motivation, although good and has its place, is not enduring. Remember earlier I mentioned that man was tripartite (body, soul & spirit) and within the soul reside your emotions. Let me shed more light on this illustration. Imagine if you will a waffle cone, at the top layer, is the emotions, love, hurt, pain, happiness ect...they take up most of the cone and are all constantly moving and fluctuating. On the next, substantially smaller layer is determination and passion. Lastly hidden beyond that is power. Take note that passion & determination are smaller. Not because of potency but rather importance. People have a tendency to focus mostly on the physical and emotional man, never planting or maintaining the seeds of power. Power seeds left un-nurtured eventually stop growing and remain in an embryonic state. Power left unfocused can be dangerous. Now that we know true inner power resides on the inside of us and it is part of our genetic makeup. We can now dig deep into the core of our existence and find a power that can never be destroyed. Understanding that ultimately the source of the inner power that resides in us came

from the creator. We can stand against any external situation and exude unprecedented force that can overcome any opposing foe. We are no longer victims subject to the wiles of our adversary. Liberated from the torment and abandonment by our own minds. We have released our Power seeds to grow, and we are Victorious.

From the heart

We have allowed people and situations to destroy the very fabric of our being, lacking the ability to fight back. We have been raped of our identity only remaining a shell of our former selves. We have sought approval from those who mistreated us further destroying our self-worth and value. It is in these situations where you must remember who you are and the power you already possess. It's beyond the emotions and tears, driving deep into the soul of who you are that you find the power to stand. I understand the hurt we have felt, shame and guilt but what's in me is greater than what is outside of me. It demands you to get up and keep it moving.

## Source Page

- 1- <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/en->
- 2- <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/power?s=t>
- 3- <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/identity?s=t>
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- 7- <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/fear?s=t>



# **FACILITATING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG RURAL WOMEN THROUGH MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS**

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Women represent half of the population in the world; therefore their strong participation in economic activities is essential to enhance the economic growth and nation building. However, participation of rural women in economic sector is limited as compared to urban dwelling women. Factors such as environmental conditions and limited facilities prevent rural women from participating in economy. Thus, there is a need to empowering rural women economically in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nation, in particular no poverty and gender equality. This study argues that empowering rural women by promoting entrepreneurship can encourage rural women to involve in income-generating activities, hence improving the standard of their living. Due to the above facts, many researchers argue that microfinance programs are powerful tools to lift up economic status as well as social status of women. The main idea of microfinance is that, by providing small loans women are able to initiate income-generating activities, earn income, thereby improving their standard of living. In the case of Malaysia, Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) is an active microfinance institution that solely focuses on women as borrowers. By providing women with access to financial service, AIM becomes a platform to produce entrepreneur among women in Malaysia. Previous studies show that AIM has changed the socio-economic of the borrowers by empowering their entrepreneur skills, transformational thinking and a desire to get out from poverty programs. These programs have benefited the well being of the families, community and the nation. The purpose of this study is therefore to explore the role of Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) in facilitating entrepreneurship among rural women in Malaysia. This research is timely and relevant as far as SDGs and the role of rural women as an important agent of the change in development of Malaysia are concerned.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, Rural Women, Microfinance, Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia

## Introduction

At least 211.1 million total borrowers served by microfinance institutions worldwide as of December 2013 (Microcredit Summit Campaign Report, 2015). The total number of women clients increased from 150.9 million in 2012 to 157.7 million in 2013. The upward trends show that microfinance institutions are effective tools that can encourage women to participate in economy as well as to improve their standard of living.

Microfinance can be defined as a small-scale financial services—primarily credit and savings—provided to people who farm or fish or herd; who operate small enterprises or microenterprises where goods are produced, recycled, repaired, or sold; who provide services; who work for wages or commissions; who gain income from renting out small amounts of land, vehicles, draft animals, or machinery and tools; and to other individuals and groups at the local levels of developing countries, both rural and urban (Robinson, 2001) .

In Malaysia, the role of women has undergone great changes since Malaysia gained independence in 1957. With increased access to education, employment opportunities and also changes in the socio-cultural environment, Malaysian women have progressed and participated effectively in all aspects of the development of the country. Women constitute 15.6 million of the total Malaysian population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). Therefore, their strong participation in economic activities is absolutely essential for economic growth of Malaysia. UNDP calculates that the increasing number of women participation in economic activities by 70% leads to the increase in Malaysia GDP by 2.9% (UNDP, 2010).

As Malaysia evolves from a subsistence agricultural economy to manufacturing and service sector, the participation of women in economic become more intense. Statistics show that female labour participation rate increase from 4.8% in 1990 to 54.8% in 2017 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). Since that, there has been a rapid increase in women participation in almost all sectors of the economy including agricultural, service and manufacturing, education and many others.

However, despite the positive progress have been shown by women, the participation of rural women in the economy is limited as compared to urban dwelling women (Manjunathan, 2013). Factors such as environmental conditions and limited facilities prevent rural women from participating in the economy. For example, in India and Bangladesh, a strong patriarchal society limits the women to involve in economy. In order for them to survive, many of them are involved in small-scale economic activities that offer them low and irregular incomes.

Thus, it is important to empower rural women economically in order to sustain a better livelihood for themselves and their family as well as to the community. Basically, women play the main role as the key provider to their family especially in the rural area where hunger and poverty are considered to affect women more than they affect the men. Studies show that women invest more of their incomes for their family's well being including child health, education and nutrition as compared to men (Duflo, 2012; Maertens & Verhofstadt, 2013).

One way to encourage rural women participation in economy is by promoting entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship can be sources of income for rural women that can help to improve their standard of living. The involvement of women in entrepreneurship will definitely benefit their families, community and also for the nation economic development.

However, lack of access to financial, lower level sources of human capital and social capital prevent women to involve in business (Afza et al., 2010; Palaniappan et al., 2011).

In order to give opportunities for rural women to effectively involve in economy, effective programs must be formulated and also the strong institutional support must be given on provision of credit access and training in basic skills to rural women. Microfinance programs are the powerful tools to help to lift up the economic and social status of women (Garikipati, 2008; Al-Shami et al., 2017.). The main idea of microfinance is that by providing small loans women are able to initiate income-generating activities, earn income, thereby improving their standard of living.

Muhammad Yunus (2003) mention that women are the world's greatest entrepreneurs. Every day, they must innovate in order to survive. They remain poor because they do not have the opportunities to turn their creativity into sustainable income. Muhammad Yunus observed that when women received the loan, they did not spend their money on luxury items as men did. Instead, they used their loan to buy some chickens, a cow or even some seeds. They use the money received to buy nutritious food for their children, providing to their children and also sending them to school.

Thus, this study focuses on Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) as it said that AIM is one of the most successful microfinance programs that working on the low-income household development especially women (Al-Mamun et al., 2012). This study will investigate the role play by AIM in facilitating entrepreneurship to rural women in order to help them actively participate in economy so that they can increase their standard of living.

## **Literature Review**

Many studies have been provide convincing evidence that microfinance program has become an important model in creating business and also a tool to help develop the entrepreneurial skills among the borrowers across the world (Lahimer et al., 2013; Nag & Das, 2015). Besides, microfinance programs also use as the main mechanism by many government agencies in order to solve the social problem for example poverty, health and empowerment in many countries around the globe (Young & Grinsfelder, 2011).

Research on the impact of microfinance loans on women borrowers has been conducted in many countries with the various dimension of empowerment. Early work by Hashemi et al., (1996) studies the effects of rural microcredit program on women's empowerment in Bangladesh. The study is based on the two-microcredit programs in Bangladesh, which are Grameen Bank and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). The study finds that both microcredit programs had significantly positive effects on women empowerment in Bangladesh but in difference dimensions. The Grameen bank significantly effects on women economic empowerment: economic security, purchases small and large assets, contribution to family income meanwhile BRAC significantly effects on women's mobility, participation in political campaigns and protests.

Bernasek (2003) argues that women participation in Grameen microcredit program improved their socio-economic condition, empowering them and lifting their families out of poverty. Bernasek (2003) states participation in Grameen microcredit has increased women's income and their contribution to overall family income. It is presumed that women's contribution to family income increases their involvement in family decision-making.

Kato & Kratzer (2013) conducts a study by using both quantitative and qualitative data on women in three different regions in Tanzania. They examine how participation in three microfinance programs (PRIDE TZ, SEDA and SIDO) affected women empowerment in three regions of Arusha, Manyara and Morogo. This study use comparison between women members of MFIs with non-members of MFIs. The result indicates that women members of MFIs have more control over savings and income generated from business, a greater role in decision making, increased in ownership of assets, greater self-esteem and self-efficiency and freedom of mobility.

A similar study conducted by Kabeer & Noponen (2005) examine the economic and social impact of microfinance enacted by a self-help group (SHG) organized by Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADHAN) in one of the poorest states in India which is Jharkhand. The study also uses a comparison between women members of PRADHAN SHG with non-members. Their study uses both quantitative and qualitative method. The results indicate that the bank linkage model of PRADHAN SHG improved the participant's livelihood bases, savings and their debt positions and increases their standard of living and also increase their consumption standards.

Aruna and Jyothirmayi (2011) conduct a study to test the hypothesis about the relationship between SHG (Self Help Group) bank linkage and women empowerment in Hyderabad, India. Data were collected from 300 female respondents from two groups; 1) SHG members who receive the loan and 2) SHG members who did not subscribe loans. The result shows microfinance had the significant influence on socio-economic of borrowers (such as economic status, increasing in decision making, increasing in knowledge and also self-worthiness).

### **An Overview of Microfinance Sector in Malaysia**

The Malaysian government has made great efforts for socio-economic development and to eradicate the poverty in the country. The government introduced the National Development Policy (NDP) and New Economic Policy (NEP) in order to achieve goals of economic development, poverty alleviation and gender equality. The government also introduced The National Policy on Women to ensure that the resources and development opportunities are equally distributed between men and women and also to integrate women into all sectors of development according to their capabilities and needs.

Before the emerging of Microfinance institutions in Malaysia, poor people especially women face the difficulty to get the access from the commercial bank due to the lack of collateral. So, the informal credit institutions are the main source of credit and other financial services. Commonly, poor people borrow money from their family, relatives and friends. This is an easy alternative as the borrowers have a personal connection with the lenders, besides there is no interest will be charged (Armendáriz & Morduch, 2010). When borrowing from family and friends is not possible, poor people turn to moneylenders and pawnbrokers. These alternatives, however, have their disadvantages; moneylenders charge high-interest rates and pawnbrokers require physical collateral in exchange for loans.

Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) was the first microfinance institution introduced in Malaysia followed by Yayasan Usaha Maju (YUM) and The Fund for National Entrepreneurs Group (TEKUN). AIM and YUM are poverty-oriented institutions that only give loans to poor people at the grass-root level. TEKUN provides loans to both poor and below average income people. AIM and TEKUN provide microfinance services throughout Malaysia (Peninsular,

Sabah and Sarawak). Meanwhile, Yayasan Usaha Maju (YUM) focus on providing microfinance loans to the poor people of Sabah. Each of these microfinance institutions has its own lending systems and has been subsidized by the government since their existence.

Government acknowledged that development of the microfinance industry is important in promoting greater financial inclusion since almost 80 percent of the SMEs in Malaysia are micro enterprises (BNM, 2006). Thus, in 2007, Bank Negara Malaysia (The Central Bank) proposed a comprehensive microfinance institutional framework comprising banking institutions and Development Financial Institutions (DFIs). The main objective is to promote the development of a sustainable microfinance industry in Malaysia and to provide micro enterprises an important avenue to obtain financing from the formal financial systems. This microfinance institutional framework will act as a complement for the existing government-sponsored microfinance programmes (UNDP, 2008)

Following this initiative, ten local banks are now offering microfinance products in Malaysia. These include Bank Simpanan Nasional (BSN), Bank Rakyat, AgroBank, Alliance Bank, AMBANK, CIMB Bank, EONCAP Bank, Maybank, Public Bank and United Overseas Berhad (BNM, 2010). The development financial institution such as BSN was mandated to provide microfinance, while Bank Rakyat provides microcredit to cooperatives member and AgroBank would continue to provide microfinance in agriculture sectors. With this development, the opportunity for microfinance borrowers in the country to access a credit facility has widened.

### **Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM)**

AIM was established in 1987. It is the first microfinance institution in Malaysia that replicate Grameen Bank model in Bangladesh, where it is a poverty-oriented microfinance institution that provides loans only to the very poor, poor and low-income households to help the group to stand on their own capability. The difference between the AIM and the Grameen Bank is AIM is given out without interest. However, borrowers required paying a management fee of 10% where the fees used for fund crises, operational risks and for borrower training. Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) is an active microfinance institution that solely focuses on women as borrowers. By providing women with access to financial service, AIM becomes a platform to produce entrepreneur among women in Malaysia. By joining the program, rural women have the opportunities to involve in economic activities and definitely can improve their standard of living. However, majority of AIM borrowers have no prior business experience and little formal education so AIM also offers entrepreneurial development programmes including various business training and skills and knowledge development to their borrowers. Training provides by AIM such as:

- Developing entrepreneur character
- Basic of Entrepreneurship
- Basic skills
- Technical skills
- Business enhancement skills (Misnan & Manaf, 2015)

AIM is a group lending based where typical group consisted of 5 borrowers. Since the feature of the program is the joint liability, each member of the group will take the responsibility to pay the debt of any single group member in case of default. It is because if any group member defaulting, no group member is allowed to borrow again. Other than that, borrowers are also compulsory attend for the weekly meeting and contribute to the group saving. AIM

offered three categories of loan scheme, which are the loan for economic purpose, non-economic purpose and recovery loan.

Table 1: AIM's Product and Services

Services	Products	Description	Purpose
Microfinance	Economic Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial financing amount is up to RM3000; with a maximum of RM20, 000</li> <li>Subsequent financing is based on existing repayment records</li> </ul>	To finance income-generating activities
	Educational Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For members and their family (including children)</li> </ul>	To develop skills and fund educational needs
	Multipurpose Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>House renovations/ repairs, investments (fixed/liquid assets), household consumption</li> </ul>	To increase the well-being of the <i>Sahabats</i>
Savings	Compulsory savings/group funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From RM1 to RM15 weekly</li> </ul>	To include good savings habit and generate group funds. The savings are made into shares in KOOPSAHABAT (AIM) which belongs to the <i>Sahabats</i>
Security	Welfare and well-being funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RM2 monthly</li> <li>1% contribution deducted from economic financing</li> </ul>	To compensate for unfortunate events including natural disasters, fire, hospitalization charges, chronic illness and death
Economic Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entrepreneurship training</li> <li>Business development programmes</li> </ul>	To develop 90% of active members into entrepreneurs.

Source: AIM as cited in Mason et al., (2015)

Many studies on the impact of AIM loans show significant impact on women livelihood. A study conducted by Chan & Ghani (2011) on how the impact of AIM microloans in vulnerable remote areas in Malaysia. The study was conducted in Bruit, Sarawak. It is an underdeveloped rural region with low population density and remoteness. The study use comparison before and after joining the AIM program to seek the changes in borrower's household income, ownership of assets and changes in quality of life. This study indicates that majority of borrowers are better off in terms of income, increased assets ownership, improved living conditions and a better quality of life.

Zaini et al., (2012) conduct a research to examine the economic performance of AIM microcredit program. A case study was conducted in Kedah, Malaysia. The effectiveness of AIM was measured by looking at the changes in borrower's income before and after joining AIM program. The result shows that there are significant positive changes in the borrower's income after joining AIM program. The findings from this study are in consonance with the study conducted by Saad & Duasa (2011) who noted that there is a significant change in the borrower's per capita income after joining AIM and they are more active and have the ability to make decision to household expenditure and have more control over the household income (Manum et al., 2014)

Al-Shami et al., (2016) conducts research on the effect of Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) loans on women empowerment in the urban area in Malaysia. The study was conducted in Shah Alam, Selayang, Masjid Alzem and Melaka. The study compared current clients of AIM with new clients on five dimensions of empowerment (mobility, decision making on household daily expenditure, major purchases, family planning and decision making regarding health insurance). He finds that current clients were more likely to have a greater mobility that leads to increases in their self-esteem and involve highly in household decision making as compared to new clients.

In addition, an impact study done in 2005 (AIM, 2008 as cited in Hassan et al., 2012) reported that after receiving loans for four times, 90% of the participants have successfully got out of poverty and 74.9% of them have improved their house condition with modern facilities and there is also an increase in assets owned with a 3.5 times increase compared to the situation before joining AIM.

After 20 years since its implementation, AIM has served thousands of poor people in Malaysia and made their life better. The success of AIM can be seen from the increasing number of clients and amount of total loan disbursement over the years (Omar et al., 2012). Until June 2017, the number of women served by AIM is 342,887 across 136 branches with the total loan's disbursement is approximately RM 18.2 billion (Table 2), a far increase from RM 891, 488 in 1990 (Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia, 2017), making it the largest microfinance institution in Malaysia.

Table 2: AIM's Membership and Total Loan Disbursement

Years	Number of Borrowers	Total Loan Disbursement (USD)
1990	3220	228,917
1995	39,401	8,914,713
2000	66, 683	27,540,183
2005	15, 4614	78,204,205
2017	342, 887	4,699,035,192

Sources: Omar et al., (2012) and AIM's Website 2017

## Conclusion

The role of Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) in empowering women economically was well documented in the literature. This paper explained the role of Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) in facilitating entrepreneurship among rural women in Malaysia by looking at the services that provided by AIM to women. This study also finds that AIM loans have the positive impact on women economically and socially. It was found that AIM gives opportunities for women to start-up their own business so that they can receive regular

income from their business. Besides that, women participation in economy also benefits their own families where they can invest in their children education and health and also to the community as they can provide job opportunities for other women. This study argues that AIM microcredit program still relevance and will continue to play its role as one of the approaches to empower women both in rural and urban Malaysia. This conceptual paper was in the first phase in investigating the role of AIM in rural women entrepreneur development and this research is timely and relevant as far as SDGs and the role of rural women as an important agent of the change in the development of Malaysia are concerned.



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## **From Anxious to Empowered: How the Messenger of Anxiety Can Drive Us Toward Healing and Purpose**

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The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 264 million people worldwide meet criteria for an anxiety disorder, with nearly twice as many women afflicted than men. While a great deal of anxiety treatment focusses on symptom management and reduction, there's one particular piece to the problem of anxiety that is often misunderstood and overlooked. For some, underlying a great deal of anxiety issues is an unrecognized and unresolved experience of trauma somewhere in the sufferer's history. Unresolved trauma is a problem that can impact the sufferers emotional, relational, and occupational functioning. Anxiety is a messenger that tries to point the sufferer to the deeper issue that needs to be addressed. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR) is one highly effective therapy for helping people to heal from paralyzing anxiety and trauma issues. However, many barriers keep people from obtaining treatment, including fear, stigma and access to services. There is much work to be done in terms of providing education regarding anxiety, trauma, and treatment as well as encouragement and empowerment for those who are suffering from these issues.

**“Leadership by women in the field of politics,  
a study in the context of Gujarat, India”**

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**KEY WORDS** - Gender, Political Empowerment, Governance, Panchayati Raj (Governance at the local level), Sarpanch (Head of a Village), Talati (Village Secretary), Gram Sabha (a Meeting by the villagers)

**ABBREVIATION** – MGNREGS – Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, IAY – Indira Awas Yojana, ICDS – Integrated Child Development Scheme

**ABSTRACT-** The Presenter has attempted in this paper to provide a glimpse of women leadership in the field of politics in Gujarat-India. The constitutional provisions, international treaties, historical/social background from the gender lenses, in the context of India with focus on Gujarat- one of the 29 states of India have been included in the present paper so as to enable one to get a glimpse of gender scenario in India.

A small but meaningful research on the relevant theme, conducted by the team headed by the presenter in the year 2013 in Bardoli block of Surat district of Gujarat state, India has also been part of the present paper. “Panchayati Raj” is a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of administration. It has 3 levels: Gram (village, though it may comprise of more than one village), Taluka (block) and Zilla (district). The term "panchayat raj" is relatively new, having originated during the British administration whereby *Raj* means "governance or government". The prime responsibilities of the Panchayat is to contribute significantly to village, taluka and district development activities and implementation of various schemes for social and economic development and collect appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees. In short it is Government at Gram, Tehsil and Dist level with constitutionally guaranteed powers.

The Indian women have begun to contribute in all the fields including decision making –politics from village level to National level. Reservation policy for women is a key factor contributing in political empowerment of women, as especially in the rural areas.

However; much more is desired to be done to achieve the goal of gender just society.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Women in Ancient Age**

India, the second highest populous country of the world, comprises women as almost half of its total population. Women of ancient India, especially during the Vedic and Indus civilizations, received a great divine honor and were worshipped as Goddesses.

As a part of the society, a Woman used to perform her independent role, as she was given more prominence in decision making in the social institutions.

The genesis of “Gender Equity” can be traced to the Vedic literature of the ancient India; contrary to a popular belief that it is conceptualization of the Western Sociologists and “Women Empowerment” gained ground only after deliberations on this issue, in various international forums at the fag-end of the twentieth century. For example, Ubhaya Bharti the wife of a well-known ritualistic, Mandan Mishra possessed extra ordinary argumentative skills and it was she who challenged Adi Shankaracharya (a great religious saint) for another round of debate, after the latter outsmarted her (Ubhaya Bharti) husband in a debate on the issue, “whether or not, the life of a house holder was superior to that of a monk.” The debate between an empowered woman, Ubhaya Bharti and scholarly saint Adi Shankaracharya is indeed a testimony to freedom of expression enjoyed by women in ancient India. The other prominent scholarly women during the Vedic period were Lopamudra, Maitreyi and Gargi. Misogyny was alien to our social milieu and cultural ethos.

### **Medieval India**

However, with the passage of time many social evils including gender discrimination permeated in our social milieu so much so that the status of a woman was reduced to that of a subservient wife supposed to perform domestic chores like kidding urchins, cooking, cleansing utensils, and washing clothes etc. from dawn to dusk.

Later on, gradually her position slipped into the abyssal depths that deprived her of independence; social, economic and political rights and thereby, made her dependent on the male members of her family. All the decisions for her were taken by men only. Since ages she has been deprived of an opportunity to be an independent entity and made to suffer inequalities. She was made to live as a mere chattel and placed at the receiving end, at the mercy of the male chauvinistic society.

A widow had to commit “sati” mandatorily on the pyre of her deceased husband and glorification of this inhuman practice became prevalent in some communities.

A female child became an unwelcome guest in the family and in some communities an unwanted female child used to be drowned in a cauldron of boiling milk. (“Doodhpiti”)

Birth of a male child used to be celebrated with great fun fare whereas; arrival of a female child was treated with dismay and disdain.

The widely accepted practice of child marriage deprived a young girl of even primary education.

In a patriarchal society a woman had to be at mercy of her husband and in laws and she had no other option but to lead a life of misery, deprivation and all forms of discriminations.

Many a young newly married young women had to lose their lives at the hands of avaricious and greedy in-laws who brazenly raised a demand for “Kariavar” (Dowry) both in cash and kind from the parents of a bride.

### **Women and freedom struggle**

During freedom struggle of India a sizeable number of women actively participated in agitational programmes launched by Mahatma Gandhi and also revolutionist activities undertaken by well known freedom fighters like; Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Raj Guru and Ramprasad Bismil etc. some women freedom fighters suffered, struggled and sacrificed their precocious lives to free India from the clutches of the Britishers.

Netaji Subhaschandra Bose had created a special women brigade headed by the late captain Dr. Laxmi Sehgal in his Indian National Army (INA).

With the advent of independence some prominent women like Sarojini Naidu, Smt. Suchitra kiplani ,Vijaya Laxmi Pandit and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur etc enjoyed the position of power.

### **Women and the Constitution of India**

The Indian constitution which came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 provides the framework for the good governance of the country and it is considered to be a comprehensive document containing the principles of “Justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.”



Keeping in view, the different forms of discrimination against women since the time immemorial, the framers of the Indian constitution were conscious enough to incorporate some general and specific provisions for upliftment of status of women and also to set in motion the legal process to bring gender equity in all the spheres.

The scheme and scope of the Constitutional Provisions relating to women could broadly be classified in three chapters.

- 1) The preamble of the constitution
- 2) The Fundamental Rights – part III and
- 3) The Directive Principles of the State Policy – part IV

### **The Preamble**

The preamble is the “soul” of the Indian constitution and it unambiguously declares the common objective and purpose for which several provisions have been incorporated therein. A careful perusal of the preamble in its letter and spirit would convince one that “we the people of India” is a broad and meaningful assertion aimed at establishing superiority of the people irrespective of caste, creed, religion and sex. It also expresses general wishes of the people to render “Equality of status and of opportunity” to every man and woman. The preamble assures “dignity of Individuals” which beyond all questions includes the dignity of women.

In pursuance of spirit of the preamble several important enactments have been brought into operation pertaining to gender equity in every walk of life – family, succession, guardianship, employment and economic and political empowerment of women.

### **The Fundamental Rights**

Part III of the Constitution recognizes and confers Fundamental Rights to citizen, applicable in equal measures to men and women and they can be invoked by women for the assertion of their rights. The first of these rights ‘the equality before law’ is based upon the principle of Natural Justice. Article 14<sup>th</sup> of the Constitution deals with equality before law and provides that “The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.”

Article 15(2) prohibits the general public and any citizen from discriminating on the grounds of religion, race, caste, **sex**, and place of birth or any of them. Thus by incorporating Articles 14 and 15 the status of women has been uplifted and a new life of equal rights at par with men has been accorded. These articles do not direct and support any particular or matriarchal institutions, but simply say that women should be given equal rights with their male counterparts. However, the provisions of non discrimination on this account do not prevent the State, to make any special provisions for women & children. The same has been laid down under Article 15(3), which empowers the State to make special provisions for them. By incorporating Article 15(3), the framers of the constitution favored women because they have been neglected from centuries and this Article imposes a duty on the State to give special attention by making special statues for the welfare and upliftment of women.

### **The Directive Principles of the State Policy**

The directive principles are incorporated in part IV of the Constitution from Articles 36 to 51A. They are aimed at serving social and economic freedoms by appropriate State action. Their ideals are based on the concept of 'Welfare State' and fix certain goals; social and economic; for immediate attainment by the Union and the State Governments while formulating a policy or enacting a law. The directive principles are non-judicial and only prescribe various goals which could be achieved through the means of Fundamental Rights. Certain specific provisions in part IV deals with the directions to the State to improve welfare and protection of women.

According to Article 39(a) the State shall direct its policy towards securing that the citizens, men and women equally, have right to an adequate means of livelihood. Under Article 39(d) – the State shall direct its policy towards securing equal pay for the equal work for both men and women. To give effect to this Article the State has enacted the equal Remuneration Act, 1976. Article 39 (e) is aimed at protecting the health and strength of workers, both men and women.

Keeping in view the constitutional spirit; a myriad of laws have been enacted to protect interests and rights of women apart from relevant Sections of Indian penal code and Criminal procedure code:

A Special mention is needed about the existing provisions for reservation of women in the local self-Governments. Article 243(T) (3) specifies that one third of the seats be reserved for women candidates belonging to scheduled caste and schedule tribes.

Gujarat state has made provision for 50% reservation for women in the local self-government.

### **International treaties**

The convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted on 18 December 1979 by the UN General Assembly. CEDAW is rightly and justifiably often described as an international bill of rights for women. CEDAW consist of a preamble and 30 articles. The convention defines DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN as “...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”. It came into force as an international treaty on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1981. More than hundred nations have agreed to be bound by its provisions.

Similarly; the fourth world conference on women at Beijing in China in September 1995 “declared” commitment of the participant Government s of various nations to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity.

Popularly, known as “The Beijing declaration” was Indeed an epoch making event in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

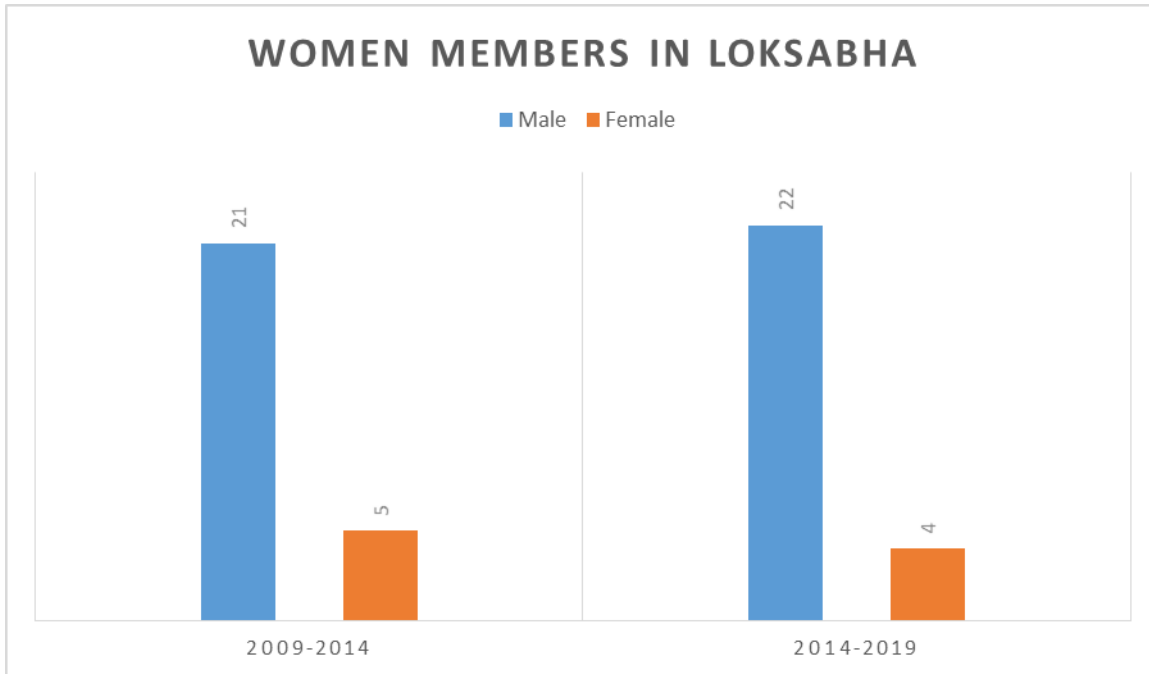
However, one has to concede a harsh reality that the overall scenario on Gender equity and Gender equality is far from satisfactory.

The child sex ratio has plummeted to 914:1000 as per the 2011 census report. The incidents of domestic violence and rape at public and private place have increased. Both the central and the

state Governments have therefore, taken Gender issues seriously. The National policy for Gender equity has been announced by the Government of India in the beginning of the 21 st century and National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) has been launched in the year 2010.

**The following set of key sectors are part of gender equity concept:**

- i. Economic Environment*
- ii. Governance and Decision Making ( Political empowerment)*
- iii. Health & Quality of Life including proper Sanitation.*
- iv. Protection from Violence*
- v. Natural Resource Management*
- vi. Education*
- vii. Legal Environment*
- viii. Advocacy and Capacity Building.*

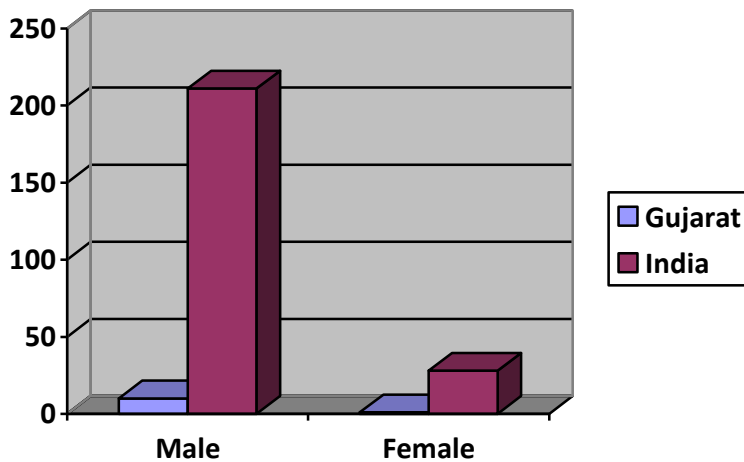


**Gujarat in 15<sup>th</sup> Loksabha (Lower House) 2009-2014 ( Women Members )**

Total 26      Male 21      Female 5

**Gujarat in 16<sup>th</sup> Loksabha (Lower House) 2014-2019 ( Women Members )**

Total 26      Male 22      Female 4

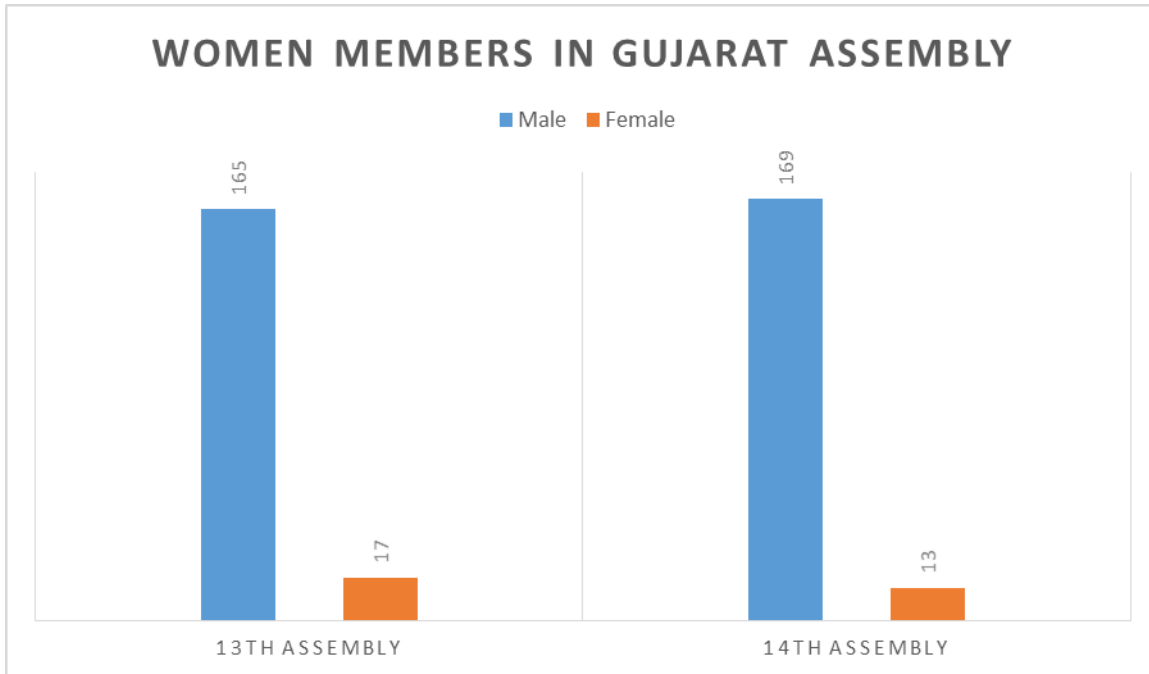


**Gujarat - RajyaSabha (Upper House) at present ( Women Members )**

Total 11      Male 10      Female 1

**India - RajyaSabha (Upper House) at present ( Women Members )**

Total 239      Male 211      Female 28

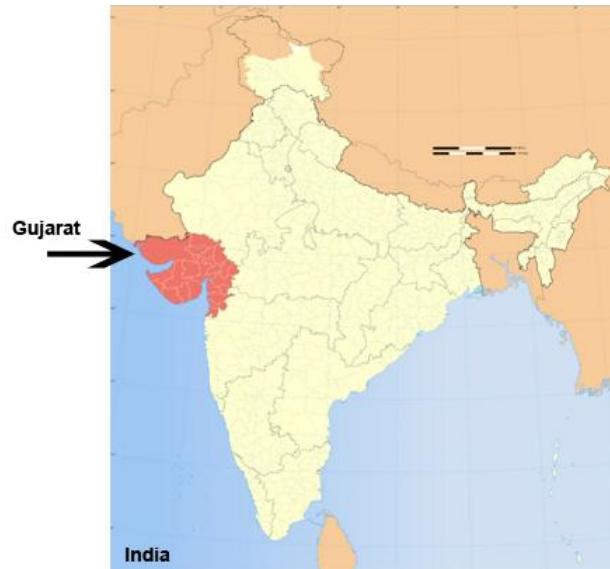


**Gujarat in 13th Vidhansabha (State Legislative Assembly)**

Total 182    Male 165    Female 17

**Gujarat in 14th Vidhansabha (State Legislative Assembly)**

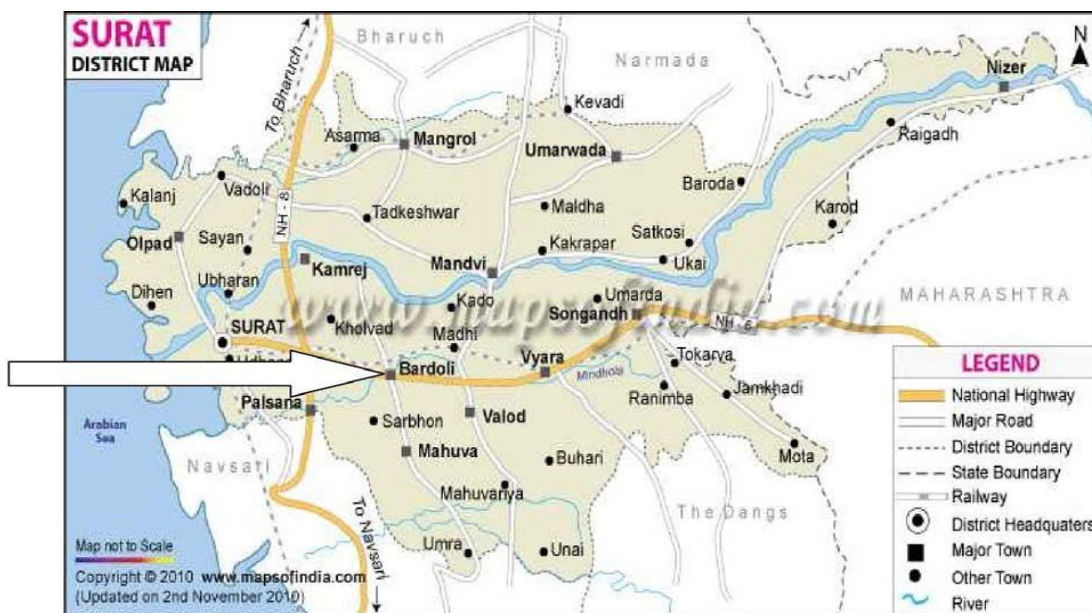
Total 182    Male 169    Female 13



Source : <https://upload.wikimedia.org>

In the context of Gujarat state; a field study had been conducted by the presenter's team in Bardoli Block of Surat district Though this study's university is relatively small; it provides a real picture at the grassroots on political empowerment of women.

**Map of Surat - dist ( TehsilBardoli) Geographical location of universe of the study**



**Bardoli Tehsil – Surat District - Gujarat**

Bardoli is renowned as ‘Karm Bhoomi’ of Sardar Patel- The first Dy. Prime Minister of India and it is divided in 2 circles namely, Bardoli circle and Kadod Circle.

Bardoli Circle encompasses of 43 villages ranging from headquarters south, east and west, out of which 2 villages namely Sarethi and Tajpor khurd are extremely backward villages with no population. In this area there are 27 faliyas and on eastern part lies Tapi River and it passes another taluka of Surat called Mandvi and to the south of Bardoli lies the river of Meedhola.

Bardoli taluka comprises of 86 villages wherein which 3 villages are completely fallow villages and according to Census 2001 the population of the taluka is 210798 and total area is 9,36,96711 and population of Nagar Palika is 510963. Main agricultural crop of Bardoli is sugar cane and paddy, and has 2 sugar factories located in Baben and Madhi.

The taluka is blessed with good water accessibility and facilities and most of the area is covered under irrigation. There are 63 shops of Public Distribution System (PDS) and new 11 shops have been sanctioned, and these shops distribute kerosene and gas to the public.

### **Bardoli Block Profile Census 2001**

<b>Gram Panchayat</b>	76
<b>Villages</b>	86
<b>Population</b>	210789
<b>Male</b>	107227
<b>Female</b>	103562
<b>Rural Population</b>	
<b>Male</b>	80633
<b>Female</b>	78210
<b>Urban Population</b>	
<b>Male</b>	26594
<b>Female</b>	25352
Schedule Caste	92,055
Schedule Tribe	8,215
Other	58,573
B.P.L - 0 to 16	7985
17 to 20	8492
<b>Literacy Rate</b>	66.28
<b>Male</b>	72.04
<b>Female</b>	60.37
<b>ICDS Center</b>	216
<b>Primer School</b>	109
<b>(2008 HDR)</b>	



**Second and Higher 29 secondary school (2008 HDR)**  
**Colleges 8**  
**Dropout Rate (2006-7 5.7 HDR)**  
**Sex Ratio 966**  
**PHC ( 2009 HDR) 7**  
**CHC ( 2009 HDR ) 54**  
**Private Hospital 4**

### Size of the Survey

The survey was conducted in Bardoli taluka which has 76 gram panchayats. Out of this 40 sarpanches have been included in the survey which is approx. 53 percent of the total G.P.s of the block. Amongst this 57.5 percent are male and 42.5 percent are women.

**Table: 1 Gender wise Sample**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	23	57.5
Female	17	42.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

## Findings -

**Table :2 Age (General)**

Age-group General	Frequency	Percentage
25 to 30	9	22.5
31 to 35	9	22.5
36 to 40	7	17.5
41 to 45	5	12.5
46 to 50	3	7.5
51 to 55	2	5
56 to 60	2	5
More then 60	3	7.5
Total	40	100

**Table: 3 Gender wise comparison**

Age-group	Female	Male
25 to 30	5	4
31 to 35	7	2
36 to 40	3	4
41 to 45	1	4
46 to 50	1	2
51 to 55	0	2
56 to 60	0	2
More then 60	0	3
Total	17	23

**This clearly indicates that the number of young women making a foray in to P.R.I s is higher than their male counterparts.**

One of the prominent observations is that approx 45 percent of the sarpanches were in the age group of 25-35 years and hence it can be said that the administration of panchayats are in hands of the youth which is indeed a welcome and healthy sign.

**Table: 4 Caste wise comparison**

Caste	Frequency	Percentage
Schedule Tribe (S T)	37	92.5
Schedule Caste(SC)	3	7.5
Other Backward Castes (OBC)	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Bardoli is Tribal area

**Table :5 Gender wise comparison**

<b>Caste</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Schedule Tribe (S T)	15	22
Schedule Caste(SC)	2	1
Other Backward Castes(OBC)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>

Though the population of SC, ST and OBC is 24.6 percent of the total population, it is noteworthy to that all 100 percent, covered in the survey belonged to the reserved category.

This highlights the State's efforts to mainstream the hitherto neglected people into decision making process and to ensure equity and equality.

**Education:**

One of the stumbling blocks is that, merely 5 percent of these elected representative had higher education. This is a hurdle as it reflects upon lesser managerial and administrative skills. It also indicates that for such positions training and skill building is necessary.

However , sex segregated education data, indicates , that the 5 percent women are is educated beyond higher secondary (out of 17 Mahila Sarpanches 1 has reached up to graduation while one Mahila Sarpanch has studied up to Post Graduation.) Compared to that no Male Sarpache has studied beyond Higher Secondary Education). When this is put under the gender lens this paints a good picture, yet it remains to be ascertained if these resulted in better decision making capacities. It also needs to be linked to their administrative and managerial capabilities.

One of the crucial aspects reflected is the survey in that approx 73 percent of sarpanches served only for a period between one and two years reflecting that these posts were not sustainable. One of the noteworthy points is that not a single woman was able to remain sarpanch for more than two years. This clearly indicates that no concrete decision for all round development of a village could be taken in the absence of completion of a full term.

**Table : 6 Number of terms, elected as a Sarpanch (General)**

<b>No. of terms t</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Once	31	77.5
Twice	7	17.5
Thrice	1	2.5
Four times		
Five times		
More than five times	1	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table : 7 Gender wise comparison**

<b>No. of terms</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Once	17	14
Twice		7
Thrice		1
Four times		
Five times		
More than times five		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>

This indicates that women sarpanches find it difficult either to get re-elected or they do not intend to get re-elected after expiry of their first term. The constitutional provision is the main reason for 1/3 female members in local self government.

## Case Study- 1



### **Dakshaben Dineshbhai Rathod**

Age - 38, a XII drop out, is the Sarpanch of Kanthali village for almost a year and she runs a small kiosk selling provisional items to earn her livelihood. Her husband is a farm labour and incidentally he is the Vice Sarpanch of the Village.

According to her response to a query she regularly attends gram sabhas and actively participates therein, however she feels that Talati (Patwari-)/ secretary of G.P is not cooperative to her.

During interactions, She was found to be quite enthusiast as a Sarpanch and she makes it a point to pay a regular visit to the Aanganwadi in her village. She lamented that her village is devoid of adequate sanitary facilities and despite all possible efforts by her the situation has not improved.

She expects the Government to sanction a modicum of monthly emolument and some allowances to Sarpanches so as to enable them to discharge their duties in a better way.

## Case Study- II



### **Madhuben Dilipbhai Halpati,**

Age : About 46 years Sarpanch of Bamni Village

She is class VI dropout claims to have been elected by the villagers on their own, virtually without a contest, despite her poor educational background.

She regularly attends gram sabhas and receives cooperation from other members of the Gram Panchayat.

She is happy that her efforts to provide potable water through hand pumps to the villagers have been successful.

Her village does not suffer from erratic electricity supply and the anganwadi functions regularly.

However it is noteworthy that her husband had been Sarpanch of the village previously and Madhuben got elected on a reserved seat for woman.

Thus it can be reasonably inferred that women are elected to the post of a Sarpanch because of a reservation clause and under normal Circumstances: the patriarchal society would not allow women to make a foray into electoral politics of local self-governments

## PHOTO GALLERY –

The researchers with the elected representatives and Government Officials of Bardoli Block – Dist. Surat on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013.as part of the present study



**Venue:- Panchayat training centre, Bardoli . Surat Gujarat - India**

## **Observations**

It is also observed that though the elected sarpanches are young, they are unable to survive a full term of five years in the administration of villages.

It transpires from an input by the respondents that they attend gramsabhas (village meetings) regularly. However, it is found during interaction with women sarpanches that despite their physical presence in Gram Sabhas they are lacking in confidence and are not assertive in any decision making processes.

It is found during interaction with the respondents that the women sarpanches possess rudimentary knowledge of Flagship schemes like MGNRGS, IAY and ICDS and they are neither interested nor actively involved in implementation of these schemes in their villages. There is a modicum of status elevation for female sarpanches in their families. However; their male counterparts are found to be more advantageous on this count in the sense that they get more social status after being elected to the post of a sarpanch. 17 percent of the women sarpanches who responded to the researcher's query in this regard, feel that their status has somewhat increased; while 23 percent of the male sarpanch respondents have the feeling of elevation.

It is observed that the number of women sarpanches comprise one third of the total sarpanches, as stipulated in the law, however, when the same is considered on the yardsticks of decision making capacity, the ground level reality is that these women sarpanches are not empowered enough for the same. This could be attributable to lack of confidence to come out of the existing male dominant set up.

## **Recommendations**

This calls for training and capacity building of elected women representatives so as to enable them to be conversant with welfare schemes and nitty gritty of the administration of Panchayati raj and Gender sensitization of male sarpanches and Government officers at the district, Block and gram(village) levels.

Education and economic empowerment of women are necessary to boost up their confidence to contribute in the fields other than routine domestic chores.

## **Limitation of the Study**

The universe is small because of the time constraint The study was conducted approximately 5 years ago and therefore, the statistical data is not updated.

Nevertheless, this small study will enable one to get a peep into "leadership by women" in the local self-government.

The study may also be useful for prompt the academicians, sociologists and feminists to carry out further research studies on the same theme.



## **Acknowledgment-**

The following team members helped the researcher prepare this study and he ought to express gratitude to them for their valuable and timely support.

- Mr. Kalpesh Mistry. (An employee of the district level)
- Ms. Bijal Bangdiwala.(A member of GRC Team/Research officer)
- Ms. Nandini Arora. (Ex member of GRC Team)

**Practices and challenges in managing curriculum implementation by female  
school heads in South Africa and Zimbabwe**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study is part of a broader project that investigated curriculum management and implementation practices and the challenges being faced by some female primary school heads in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The study attempted to establish the extent to which subordinate teachers and the female heads themselves perceived issues and challenges in managing curriculum implementation in school heads' quest to improve learning. The research adopted a mixed research design, where descriptive survey was employed. A randomly selected sample of ten female school heads and forty teachers from both countries was used. Two self-constructed questionnaires were used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The research results showed that, though female primary school heads (as a unitary group) perceive themselves as effective and confident in managing curriculum implementation, teachers perceive them as weak in managing curriculum implementation. Good management practices were as perceived as impacting positively on learning. The major challenges women school leaders face are cross-national and emanate from lack of resources, cooperation, support from teachers and the community. Despite these challenges, female leaders were found to be resourceful in improving learning and their schools. Very few workshops and in-service programmes to enrich female heads have not been initiated in the areas they are perceived to be weak, especially curriculum evaluation. The paper calls for more interactive meetings between and among teachers, the department of education and female school leaders to improve decision-making and curriculum management and implementation in respective schools.

**Key words:** Female school heads; curriculum; challenges; management; South Africa, Zimbabwe;

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Research shows that women are fundamentally disadvantaged in the social, economic and political spheres locally and globally (Bharath, Narayanan and Seyhun 2009; Coleman and Cater 2006; Hogan and Perrucci, 2007; Hunt, 2016; Johnson 2017; Khapoya 2015; Kumra. and Vinnicombe, 2008; Mandell and Johnson, 2016). In the area of educational management, for instance, the number of women remains quite low (Coleman 2012; Grogan and Shakeshaft 2010; Makura, 2011; Morley, 2013; Wrushen and Sherman, 2008). Several factors contributed to this seemingly unending trend. Societal culture and negative attitudes towards women (Dorsey, 1989; Eagly and Mladinic, 1989; Esmail, Darry, Walter and Knupp, 2010; Fernández, 2010; Mostafa, 2005, 2003) are commonly cited. Eagly (2007), Moore, Griffiths and Payne (1987) opine that the reason for this situation lies in the social and attitudinal factors.

### **Gender and educational management**

Men have always been associated with school management while women are associated with classroom teaching (Dorsey, 1989; Skelton, 2002; Strober and Tyack, 1980). Women desire to enter and operate in educational management, which, traditionally, is viewed as exclusively for men. Such desire is often viewed with suspicion by some societies. Such notions stem from perceptions that still view women's roles as mothers, wives and care givers in the family. When women venture into this 'masculine terrain', they risk being accused of being labeled poor managers, and even earn euphemistic tags such as "male daughters and female husbands" (Amadiume, 2015) "lost leaders" or "absent talent" (Morley, 2013). No wonder that, before Zimbabwe's political independence, there were no women educational leaders in the Masvingo education district. A study by Oplatka (2006) revealed that in developing countries, women have been traditionally assumed to be domestic and household managers and thus divorced from organisational decision-making positions or managerial work. Women thus represent a very small percentage of school management personnel even though the overall state of the teaching service is balanced slightly in favour of women (Chabaya and Gudhlanga, 2013; Kochan, Spencer and Mathews, 2014; Marshall, 1985). Therefore, to break into school leadership and management, women thus meet stiff resistance unleashed by a patriarchal society.

Brunner (2001) argued that the fewer number of women who have made it to leadership positions as school heads have sometimes resigned and have taken lower positions because of lack of support from the community and other stakeholders. This is in addition to school-based ICT related challenges resulting from no or limited access to ICT and a rigid structural educational system (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012). Although some research results reveal that female school heads continue to be underutilised by societies who do not want to recognise the talents of aspiring female school heads (Morley, 2013) as they can make a real difference in the quality of schooling in respective nations. Brunner (2001) reveals that research studies that focus on women in school management are conducted mainly by women (see Shakeshaft 2010). This perhaps, is indicative of a literature that does not highlight female leadership as an important field of study in education.

At independence in 1980, the Zimbabwe government saw it necessary to bring about educational and professional equity in Zimbabwe. The same can also be said of South Africa. By promulgating policies meant to improve the welfare of women through the affirmative action policy (Chabaya and Gudhlanga, 2013). The policy recognises the role of women and has provisions that guarantee protection of women from any form of discrimination from entering especially school management. The effort by the government of Zimbabwe, for instance, to advance women to decision making positions, or school management positions through the affirmative action policy are reflected in several circulars such as No. 11 of 1991. It reads in part: "---- Heads of schools should identify women who could be promoted to school head position without reference to seniority, women to be given first preference to men". Subsequent circulars, notably, number 22 of 1996 and number 1 of 1997 prompted women to apply for school management posts. Consequently, many female teachers responded positively and joined the field

of school management. Despite these promotions, female school heads experience endemic challenges. Some communities do not readily support female school heads (Eagly, 2007; Mostafa, 2005 and Optalka, 2006). These challenges may impact negatively on female heads' achievements of curriculum goals especially in the digital era.

Studies by Lumby, Azaola, De Wet, Skervin and Williamson (2010) and Makura (2012) reveal that women themselves harbour low self-esteem because they have been appointed to traditionally male roles. Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango (2009) share similar views arguing that women themselves lack self-confidence to handle school management issues. This view presupposes that women are unable to handle responsibilities. Doresh (2001) stresses that women who aspire to be school heads must identify gender specific factors that impede their professional growth and effectiveness, and must develop skills to surmount all the challenges. Women thus face plethora challenges in entering school leadership and managing school curricula. The preceding account and available literature point to a dearth in comparative literature on female school leadership in the Africa subregion.

### **The curriculum concept**

A curriculum as applied to schools transcends the confines of the school by considering the values, traditions and beliefs of the whole culture of society (Fernández, 2010; Makura and Makura, 2012;). The word also evokes a variety of meanings to different people (Posner, 1995). In this paper, we look at curriculum as an "... instrument through which complex societies transmit and maintain cherished bodies of knowledge values and skills" (Gatawa (1990:16). Such knowledge could be sociological, philosophical, political and economic. These aspects reflect and reinforce the social realities in the wider society (Makura and Makura, 2012). Female leadership is a reality that society is slowly grappling to accept. Given the patriarchal nature of the African society, female leadership is accepted with a pinch of salt. Society is slowly being socialised into accepting women (and leadership) as part a social group (Cockburn, 1991) but not as unique individuals. Thus, women need to internalise certain values, customs and skills that characterise schools and society. Moreover, women need to be aware of the school characteristics and the values they espouse and identify with these. Posner (1995) opined that any curriculum developed by society is not value neutral. Hence society expects female leadership to manage a school curriculum without bringing in deviant patterns of leader behaviour. It is in this vein that curriculum implementation should be viewed as a conduit for the development and reflection of respective communities' 'grassroot' values (Chikoko, 2008).

### **Management of curriculum implementation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

School management activities encompass management of curriculum implementation by putting human, material resources and tasks towards the achievement of curriculum goals (Coleman, 2012; Lee and Dimmock, 1999; Lumby *et al*, 2010; Nkomo, 1995). At school level, effective level of management of curriculum implementation involves effective planning (Nkomo, 1995). It is through this process of planning that the school heads set the pace and time of various school activities, setting goals and devising and means of achieving them. The effectiveness of school leadership in the management of curriculum implementation lies in the head's ability to establish a course of action for self and others to accomplish specific goals. Research shows that that schools run by female heads are better than those run by males in most respects (Brunner, 2001; Lumby *et al*, 2010; Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2010; Makura, 2011). Female headed schools reportedly produce outstanding examination results suggesting that female heads are effective on planning school activities and programmes. Hoy and Miskel (1995) stress that planning has greater effect on organisational effectiveness.

Management of curriculum implementation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century also involves effective organisation of staff and resources. Haskin (1995) reveals that female heads are perceived as collaborative in nature and thus create people-oriented decisions that utilise staff and resources effectively. This

implies that female heads are being perceived as effective in managing school curriculum implementation. Managing curriculum implementation also involves directing. It is through this process that the school head moves teachers in the direction that facilitates the achievement of curriculum goals. Directing also involves includes climate building, delegation of duties of teachers. Effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation also lies in the heads ability to handle these tasks. A study by Rimmer and Davies (1985) reveals that female are relation-oriented leaders such that they can create a conducive school climate which enhances effective accomplishment of curriculum goals. Therefore, if female heads are perceived to be effective in this task they are likely to be effective in managing curriculum implementation also involves supervising.

A study by Glass (2000) reveals that female heads use collaborative approach and people-oriented styles which makes them effective in managing school activities, the study also reveals that with this approach, female heads promote effective teaching because the use of effective management styles that forms the foundation of effective collaborative curriculum implementation. Literature shows that women who choose school headship as a career tend to introduce deviant pattern of behavior in such a role (Shakeshaft, 2010). It is such a notion that is rejected by post-colonial liberal feminists.

### **Theoretical framework**

This work is guided by the Post-colonial feminist theory as articulated by Mestry and Schmidt (2012). Post-colonial theory is fundamentally an offshoot of, and reaction to western liberal feminism. Mestry and Schmidt (2012) posit that the skewed nature of gender demographics in school leadership positions is not a matter of equity but a historical, cultural, political and social imperative. Though the authors use South Africa as a case in point, it is our contention that the theory buys currency in our endeavour to articulate the Zimbabwean school leadership scenario as both countries have contrasting histories. Post-colonial feminists, according to Mestry and Schmidt (2012), argue that gender and patriarchy oppression have marginalised most women in post-colonial states of which Zimbabwe is one such. While the race card is not profound in the Zimbabwean case (due to the very insignificant numbers of whites, coloured and Indians in the country), it is traditional culture (Fernandez, 2010) that appears to have entrenched itself to the detriment of women advancement. Hence, post-colonial feminists challenge oppression in its many forms. They, as liberal feminists, are critical of past and current social relations, arguing that women are independent, non-submissive hence autonomous (Makura, 2011). Post colonial theory thus advocates the emancipation of women without “glorifying pre-colonial culture” (Mestry and Schmidt, 2012). Regrettably, recent studies (Skelton, 2012:77-78) view the large numbers of women in primary school teaching as ‘feminisation of primary schooling [that is] detrimental to the education of boys’. It is such notions that are rejected by post-colonial feminists particularly black feminists who are at variance with western notions of emancipation and instead propose the addressing power imbalances in society. The mission of Post-colonial feminists is to alter, by challenging aspects in society that seem to curtail women advancement especially perceptions which view women as docile victims of patriarchy. Instead, women in school leadership should be viewed as diverse, independent and unique experiences that should be tapped through listening to their own voices. This paper, thus attempts to report on women’s perceptions and that of their subordinates.

### **The purpose of the study**

The study intended to establish the extent to which female primary school heads perceived themselves (alongside their subordinate teachers) as effective and confident in managing curriculum implementation in the digital era. Since educational management is traditionally viewed as exclusively for men, the study attempted to establish whether women educational leaders also faced challenges in managing curriculum implementation.

### **Statement of the problem**

The comparative effectiveness of female primary school heads in managing curriculum implementation in an African context is an under-researched area. On the other hand, there is a substantial body of knowledge that catalogues challenges faced by women school heads, but these studies rarely refer to disadvantaged contexts. It is for these considerations that this study was conceptualised.

### **Research questions**

The following questions constituted the research problem investigated.

- (a) To what extent do female primary school heads in South Africa and Zimbabwe perceive themselves as effective and confident in managing curriculum implementation?
- (b) To what extent do teachers perceive female primary school heads as effective and confident in managing curriculum implementation?
- (c) What challenges do female primary school heads face in managing curriculum implementation?

### **The significance of the study**

It was the researchers' hope that this research was going to benefit the following people and institutions. To:

- (a) help policy makers to formulate policies that might improve the efficiency and welfare of women in school management especially utilising ICTs.
- (b) encourage curriculum planners to plan for effective workshops on curriculum implementation and to involve women in school management in curriculum planning issues.
- (c) suggest to the Department/Ministry of Education the need to plan for workshops or in-service programmes that enrich school leadership particularly through utilising technology.
- (d) prompt the female primary school heads to identify and conceptualise the challenges they faced and to make informed decisions in educational management.
- (e) to sensitise teachers on the challenges facing female heads in the hope that they realign their attitude towards female heads for the better.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The researcher employed the mixed methodology research design. This design emphasizes qualitative and quantitative of phenomena. Mixed methods enable the researcher to describe trends, attitudes and opinions on the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Partially, the design maximizes objectivity by using numbers and statistics (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). Creswell (2014) that through statistical explanations and analysis used in quantitative design, results produced are more accurate and representative. The qualitative component focuses on phenomenon in their natural settings and without due regard to mathematical constructs. The researcher resultantly benefits from the experiences or narratives of phenomenon. Best and Kahn (1993) point out that qualitative designs are non-experimental, the data consist of words rather than numbers and there is in depth verbal description of the phenomena. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) also stresses that the major goal of qualitative designs is to capture the richness and completing of behaviors from the participants. Consequently, the researcher found this design very suitable for this study.

### **Population, Sample and Sampling Procedures**

#### **The population**

The population of the study was all female primary school heads and their subordinate qualified teachers in Masvingo and Motheo districts of Zimbabwe and South Africa respectively. Their exact number could not be readily established from the district education offices.

### **The sample**

A sample of ten (10) female primary school heads was selected from primary schools that are headed by females in the said districts. Forty (40) qualified teachers from the ten (10) selected schools constituted part of the sample.

### **The sampling procedure**

The researcher initially used multistage sampling. Female headed schools in the education districts were identified and ten were conveniently selected to participate in the study. The respective female school heads automatically constituted the heads' sample. I then randomly selected four teachers from each school with the assistance of the respective school heads. We requested for both male and female teacher participants before coming up with the final sample of the teachers per school. Using this strategy, the required number was attained.

### **Research Instruments.**

#### **The questionnaire**

The researcher used two self-constructed questionnaires to elicit information from both female primary school heads and their subordinate teachers. The selected female primary school heads completed a questionnaire with four sections. Section A solicited biodata, section B and C required respondents to show by ticking their perception of their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation on at thirteen leadership and management dimensions. Section D required respondents to respond to structured or free response questions that also sought to establish the perception of their effectiveness as well challenges they face in managing curriculum implementation at their respective schools. The teachers' questionnaire was also divided into four sections. Section A also collected biodata. Section B to C collected to data on teachers' perception of female heads' effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation on eleven leadership dimensions.

#### **Validation**

The level of validity and reliability of the questionnaires were determined before the questionnaires were administered in the field through a pilot study. In this case, questionnaires were administered to three (3) female Zimbabwean primary school heads and ten qualified teachers under female heads who were not included in the final sample. Statistical tests, comments and suggestions from the pilot study enable the researcher to come up with valid and reliable questionnaires before these were administered in the field.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Permission to collect data from respective school was sought from the respective Regional Education offices prior to the administration of the research instruments. Thereafter, the researcher personally administered the questionnaire to selected teachers and selected female primary school heads. Two schools were visited each other day during working hours. The researcher, after getting further permission from the school administration, personally administered the questionnaires to teachers in their classroom and collected all questionnaires after completion. The researcher also administered questionnaires to female primary school heads in their offices and collected all questionnaires after completion.

### **Data analysis procedures**

The researcher used descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean, percentages, etc) to analyse data from Sections B and C of the two questionnaires. Where the respondents indicated very effective (V.E) and or effective (E) these were taken to mean effective (E). Where the respondents indicated strongly agree (SA) or Agree (A) these were taken to mean Agree (A). The responses were summarised and expressed as percentages. The data were presented in tables. Data from the free response questions of the questionnaires were studied and scrutinized for their content and meaning. Data were categorised to discern themes which are presented in tabular form.



## Ethical considerations

In keeping with ethics, the names of the schools, their [school] heads and teachers shall remain eternally anonymous. Prior to collecting data, the participants were assured of confidentiality.

## RESULTS

This section presents results of the study on perceived effectiveness of female primary school heads in managing curriculum implementation and the challenges they face in managing curriculum implementation. The first part presents the female heads' perceptions of their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation. The data are presented in tabular form, followed by a detailed interpretation and discussion.

### Female heads' perception of their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation

Tables 1 presents the data collected from the school heads' questionnaire regarding their effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation.

Table 1: Female primary school heads' ratings on their effectiveness

#### Key

N	=	Total frequency
VE	=	Very effective
E	=	Effective
W	=	Weak
INE	=	Ineffective

No	Task performed	N	VE	E	% E	W	INE	%
1	Planning	10	5	5	100	0	0	0
2	Delegating	10	1	7	90	1	0	10
3	Organizing staff and resources	10	7	3	100	0	0	0
4	Communicating	10	6	2	80	2	0	20
5	Provision of resources	10	2	3	50	4	1	50
6	Supervision of lessons	10	8	2	100	0	0	0
7	Checking records	10	5	4	90	1	0	0
8	Demonstration lesson	10	1	2	30	6	1	70
9	Motivation of staff pupils	10	7	3	100	0	0	0
10	Staff development	10	1	3	40	5	1	60
11	Producing good results	10	5	3	80	2	0	20
12	Climate building	10	7	3	100	0	0	0
13	Evaluation	10	1	3	40	6	0	60

From the data displayed in table 1, the results of the study seem to suggest that female primary school heads perceive themselves as very effective in planning, organisation of staff and resources, communication, supervision of lessons, motivation of staff and pupils, checking records as well as creating a conducive school climate, on the other hand they perceive themselves as weak in evaluation and presentation of demonstration lessons. The results further indicate that female primary school heads rated themselves highly on planning, supervision and climate building (100%). The Table shows that 100% of female heads rated themselves as very effective planners. This means that the female heads feel that they can effectively establish a course of action for self and teachers to accomplish specific curriculum goals. It also means that the female heads feel that they can effectively establish procedures for monitoring and regulating, processes, tasks and activities for teachers and pupils as well as monitoring delegated assignments. In the same vein 90% of female primary school heads rated themselves highly in delegating of duties to teachers irrespective of gender. The research data indicates that female primary school heads rated themselves highly in communication. Table 1, shows that 80% of female primary school heads feel that they are good communicators. In other words, the female primary school heads feel that they are confident in expressing themselves or presenting

curriculum ideas, tasks clearly verbally or written. Table 1 reveals that 70% of the female school heads felt that they are weak in managing demonstration lessons. The results also showed that 60% of the female primary school heads rated themselves low on managing staff development and evaluations (60%). On provision of resources, half (50%) of the school heads neither felt confident nor weak.

**Table 2: Teachers' ratings on their perception of female primary school heads' effectiveness**

**Key**

- N = Total Frequency
- VE = Very effective
- E = Effective
- W = Weak
- INE = Ineffective

No	Task performed	Male teachers						Female teachers							
		N	VE	E	%	W	INE	%	N	VE	E	%	W	INE	%
1	Planning	20	2	3	<b>25</b>	10	5	<b>75</b>	20	1	5	<b>30</b>	12	2	<b>70</b>
2	Delegating	20	3	4	<b>35</b>	10	3	<b>65</b>	20	1	4	<b>25</b>	13	2	<b>75</b>
3	Organising staff and resources.	20	1	5	<b>30</b>	12	2	<b>70</b>	20	3	4	<b>35</b>	10	3	<b>65</b>
4	Communication	20	12	2	<b>70</b>	1	5	<b>30</b>	20	10	3	<b>65</b>	5	2	<b>35</b>
5	Provision of resources	20	1	4	<b>25</b>	10	5	<b>75</b>	20	1	3	<b>20</b>	13	3	<b>80</b>
6	Lesson supervision	20	1	6	<b>35</b>	7	6	<b>65</b>	20	2	5	<b>35</b>	8	5	<b>65</b>
7	Demonstration lessons	20	0	2	<b>10</b>	13	5	<b>90</b>	20	0	3	<b>15</b>	14	3	<b>85</b>
8	Motivating staff and pupils	20	8	5	<b>65</b>	2	5	<b>35</b>	20	9	4	<b>65</b>	3	4	<b>35</b>
9	Producing good results	20	2	4	<b>30</b>	10	4	<b>70</b>	20	0	7	<b>35</b>	10	3	<b>65</b>
10	Evaluation	20	0	6	<b>30</b>	7	7	<b>70</b>	20	0	6	<b>30</b>	8	6	<b>70</b>
11	Climate	20	2	5	<b>35</b>	10	3	<b>65</b>	20	2	5	<b>35</b>	10	3	<b>65</b>

From the data displayed in Table 2 above, between 65 and 70% of the male and female staff members perceived the female heads as effective in two curriculum areas only. These were: communication (75% and 65% males and females respectively) and motivating staff and pupils (both 65%). Surprisingly, the female school heads were perceived as weak in all the remaining areas. These are: presentation of demonstration lessons (90% and 85% males and females respectively), planning (75% and 70% males and females respectively), delegating of duties (65% and 75%), organising of staff and resources and producing good results (70% and 65%), evaluation (70% in both cases) and supervision of lessons and developing the school climate (65% both cases). Thus, both male and female teachers, feel that the female primary school heads are weak in establishing a course of action for self and teachers to accomplish specific curriculum goals.

**Table 3: Summary of the problems faced by female heads as perceived by themselves**

**Key**

- N = Total frequency
- F = Frequency
- % = Percentage

No.	Nature of the problem (Theme)	N	F	%
1	Lack of trust from community	10	9	90
2	Lack of resources	10	9	90
3	Negative attitude of teachers	10	8	80
4	Lack of community support	10	7	70
5	Male teachers not accepting criticisms	10	6	60

From the data displayed on Table 3 above, the results of the study seem to indicate that the major challenges being faced by female head in managing curriculum implementation included: lack of trust from the community (90%), lack of resources (90%) teachers' negative attitudes (80%) and male teachers not supporting them (60%). Data from some of the narratives showed that parents did not respond to their call for a meeting. Most felt that parents did not support curriculum innovations especially the School Development Committee/Association (S.D.S/A) do not really accept heads decisions on financial issues. Data from the teachers (below) also pointed to a lack of community support as one of the challenges facing female primary school heads. The lack of resources especially for instructional purposes featured prominently. Observation by one of the researchers revealed that ICT resources were not available at all the schools visited. The female primary school heads (80%) feel that teachers' negative attitude towards female heads is also one of the major challenge they are facing. Most female heads (70%) felt that teachers do not accept female heads' criticisms after lesson supervision (data not revealed here) while some teachers were reportedly not performing duties delegated to them promptly. Male teachers, particularly were not very cooperative as compared to female teachers according to the female school heads. Some school heads opined that both male and female teachers preferred male primary school heads to female ones. Consequently, teachers who held such beliefs failed to cooperate with the female school heads. Our study also attempted to establish teachers' perceptions of the challenges facing their respective female school heads. Table 4 summarises the data.

Table 4: **Summary of problems faced by female primary school heads as perceived by teachers**

**Key**

- N = Total frequency
- F = Frequency
- % = Percentage

No.	Nature of the problem	N	F	%
4.3.2	Acting on rumours	40	34	85
4.3.3	Lack of resources	40	34	85
4.3.1	Lack of confidence in decision making	40	28	70
4.3.4	Lack of community support	40	28	70

Data in Table 4 reveals that teachers (85%) felt that female school heads sometimes base their decisions on rumours as a result teachers fail to accept some of their decisions. An equal number (70%) of the teachers, cited lack of material resources as an issue the female school heads grappled with. Such resources include ICT related ones as it was evident that the visited schools did not have these. Seventy percent of the teachers opined that female school heads lacked assertive confidence in making decisions. An equal number also confirmed that the community was not supportive of the school heads.

**DISCUSSION**

From table 1, the results suggest that female primary school heads perceive themselves as very effective in planning, organisation of staff and resources, communication, supervision of lessons, motivation of staff and pupils, checking records as well as creating a conducive school climate, on the other hand they perceive themselves as weak in evaluation and presentation of

demonstration lessons. The finding that female heads are effective in planning agrees with Makura (2011) who reported that schools run by female heads produce good academic results because female heads are effective in planning. Effective planning leads to effective management of curriculum implementation (Makura & Makura, 2012). To this effect, Elms (2002) study confirms that female heads are people oriented leaders, hence can cultivate favourable school climate that can enhance effective curriculum implementation. It is easier to manage well planned curriculum activities. On this premise, if female primary school heads perceived themselves as good in planning they are likely to be effective in managing curriculum implementation.

A compelling finding was that female heads perceived themselves as good in communication. This concurs with Funk (2004) who reported that females tended to describe themselves as effective communicators and team builders, a point that corroborates Nkomo's (1995) observation. The fact that the female heads perceive themselves as good communicators and that they also cited communication as their major strength, implies that female heads perceive themselves as confident and effective in managing curriculum implementation. This finding also agrees with Hoy and Miskel (1991), Skelton, 2012 and Strober and Tyack (1980) who revealed that female heads perceive themselves as effective instructional leaders. Glass (2000) reveals that, because women are collaborative in nature, female school heads can effectively communicate with all stakeholders and produce meaningful and lasting curriculum changes. Surprisingly, the female school heads were perceived as weak in eight of the ten curriculum areas. Seventy percent (70%) of both male and female teachers feel that female primary school heads are weak in carrying out evaluations. This finding is at variance with some researches that report female heads as good instructional leaders (Funk, 2004; Lee and Dimmock 1999; Makura, 2011; Skelton, 2002) than as poor evaluators and poor decision makers. This implies that teachers perceive female heads as ineffective in managing curriculum implementation. The heads' effectiveness in managing curriculum implementation is also determined by his/her ability to organise staff, resources, workplaces and time to a large extent.

The study seem to suggest that the major challenges being faced by female primary school heads in their quest to manage curriculum implementation effectively ranges from, lack of support from the community (Lumby *et al*, 2010; Mostafa, 2005, 2003; Oplatka, 2006), lack of cooperation and support from teachers due to negative attitudes and finally lack of resources. The finding that parents do not give full support to female heads endorses Chabaya and Gudhlanga, (2013), Grogan, and Shakeshaft (2010) and Makura (2011) observation that some communities are at variance with female heads due to cultural myths and beliefs, as a result parents may fail to cooperate fully with female heads. Community support is very crucial to effective management of curriculum implementation. Nkomo (1995) opined that parents can hinder the effective implementation of curriculum innovations if they display negative attitudes. Therefore, without community support, female school heads might not manage curriculum implementation effectively. Teachers are also key implementers of the curriculum, so their cooperation with the school head determines the heads' effectiveness to a large extent. Therefore, lack of cooperation and support from community and teachers due to their negative attitudes (Chabaya *et al*, 2009; Kochan *et al* 2014) is also one of the major challenges facing female heads in managing curriculum implementation.

This study also indicated that lack of resources is also a major challenge facing female heads in South Africa and Zimbabwe in managing curriculum implementation. The study inferred that the absence of ICT resources (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012) could be part of the resources referred to by the school heads and their subordinate teachers. Moreover, resources like textbooks, syllabi and other resource materials are crucial to effective curriculum implementation (Nkomo, 1995). Some school heads argued that parents compounded the problem of resources by failing to pay school fees on time. Consequently, the female school heads struggled to provide adequate resources.

All these challenges can affect female primary school heads negatively in managing curriculum implementation.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the study seem to suggest that female heads (as a unitary entity) perceive themselves as effective in planning, supervision of lessons, communication, motivation of staff and pupils, organisation of staff and resources as well as creating a good school climate. On the other hand, female primary school heads feel that they are weak in evaluation and presentation of demonstration lessons. The challenges are common in the studied countries. The research findings suggested that, both male and female teachers, irrespective of country under study, consider female heads as poor in eight leadership and managerial functions particularly, poor in presentation of demonstration lessons, planning, delegating, organising staff and resources and in general, as evaluators. Further results indicated that teachers, rated female heads as poor decisions makers arguing indecision was characteristic. But the teachers viewed them good at motivating staff and pupils towards the achievement of curriculum goals. Regarding challenges, the study revealed that the school heads faced several challenges notably lack of trust and support from the community, lack of resources teachers' negative attitudes particularly male teachers not supporting them. These are crossing cutting challenges.

To mitigate some of the identified challenges, the paper implores governments and schools to invest in ICT for learning, teaching and administration. My observations noted the lack of ICT in most of the schools visited. School heads and teachers alike never referred to ICT either as a challenge or as an asset that was instrumental in school administration and management. And yet technology for learning and teaching is the bye-word in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. School heads should call for more interactive meetings with teachers and communities while involving them in decision making in the hope that they may view the female school heads in good light. Above all, more females should be appointed into school leadership positions especially in the primary school sector where they have empirically excelled as leaders while constituting the greatest portion of the teaching fraternity.

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Striving for Equality: Social Standing of Newcomer Chinese Female  
Immigrants in Contemporary Japan

Jie ZHANG

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**Abstract:**

This study explores the quests of immigrant women in transnational social spaces. Reflecting on immigrant women from China, it explains their engagement in uprooting and redefining their selfhood, cultures and responsibilities as they are resettling as migrants in contemporary Japanese society. As a significant immigrant group in Japan, Chinese women becoming the important members of labor force, their adaptation and social standing may affect their migration process and willingness to stay in Japan, hence influence the Japanese labor market. Therefore, this study aims to discuss how newcomer Chinese women striving the equality in contemporary Japanese society from the economic, social and cultural aspects.

Focusing on the interrelation between gender, migration and equality, this study further reflects the similarities in their circumstances highlighting the growing salience of women in the different sectors their ‘new’ social space. Whereas their experiences denote their vulnerabilities attributed to conditions of social distance as well as migrancy, this study underscore the active agency of women as a gendered subject – whether in the strive of equality, or in the performance of their social roles as consumer, family and community member, or worker.

By draws on life stories, interviews and mixed methods, this study reaffirms the significance of gender. Often intersecting with class/status, ethnicity and generation, gender is an enabling tool for comprehending women’s changing social, economic, political and cultural roles in modern Japanese society. Either as the “other” or the “otherer”, women in Japan represents the continuing struggle of women in Asia and elsewhere for equality.

**Keywords:** Gender, equality, migrant, Chinese

The Power of Positive Thinking  
Born in Thailand, Citizen of The United States of America  
Marian Sweezer-Chief Executive Officer-Think Marian



Think Marian

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Positive Life Experiences

As a military baby, it did not take me long to realize what life was. I was born in Rayong, Thailand and journeyed to the United States as a baby with my father and mother once they were married. My father was a United States Air Force member and my mother from Thailand. It was through my mother's life and my eyes that I saw life in a different aspect. No matter the paper, people view you for who they think they see. Through my mother, I know my father viewed well and then good was born. I was born, to help my mother to survive this thing called life. She was viewed as an Asian and nothing more. As my mother and I began our journey, she realized early that life in the United States as two Asian females, a mother and her daughter, wouldn't be easy to adapt at first. That was my thinking, but my mother's thinking was do good and it will lead to good results. She could not speak English, which is the language of the American people, but she listened each and every day very carefully. She was always aware of her surroundings and kept up with what was going on around her. She had several stumbling blocks and even some let downs, but she still had her will power to keep moving forward. I would only continue to think, where is the will power coming from that makes my mother keep going as a woman of another country to adapt to some who could be so rude to individuals no matter where they were from. This is where I learned that this was a part of life all over the world. My thought is the human mind thinks and reacts according to their situations, circumstances, surroundings and feelings at the moment. Some have situations of sadness, while others have circumstances of happiness. Then you have those who choose to impress others in order to see happy, but not actually accomplish it for themselves. As I thought our situation was bad, I realized someone else's situation was worst. I had to start thinking positive. It wasn't all about being born abroad, but knowing how to think in a different environment, around different people who were still as human as all others. My mother began to learn the American way of doing things but needed my help. I learned English and spoke and was taught the American language in order to be educated their and to mainly help my mother and family to survive and accomplish needs and goals throughout our life. I knew in my heart very naturally and I always blamed this on my Asian side the smart and right way to think. Treat others the way you would like to be treated is the American way, but not the American way alone. This is a positive way of thinking we should all have. In the beginning, I would see my mother cry and she would be sad. To all the women, my mother who is still surviving a happy life where all loves and knows her as their friend, they say she makes them laugh and smile. As time went on, I stopped to think, even as of this day and I realize through my thinking that I was my mother's hope, her will power and her voice as I stand here today. She knew she could not fail from the time she left here to pursue something different, better at the time and positive in life being in a country for which she did not know, but she knew she had me. She raised me to assist her in order to succeed in life. I was her goal and accomplishment and now she is also mine and my inspiration. So ladies and gentlemen know what the real prize is when playing in the game of life.

The Power of Positive Thinking  
Born in Thailand, Citizen of The United States of America  
Marian Sweezer-Chief Executive Officer-Think Marian



Decide To Develop a Positive Attitude Toward What Is To Come, Good or Bad

We must tell ourselves that we can handle more than we think we can. Always have something to be happy about. Turn negative thoughts into positive thoughts. Believe in you.

For some this doesn't just happen, but must be developed positively. Once we develop the skills and this way of thinking, we can move forward. We can't be ashamed of how someone else see's us, we must be proud of who we are. I once read a quote from Cool n Smart:

“Positive thoughts enrich the power of the mind, provide a deep sense of reasoning, rationality and optimism, and contribute to a meaningful, happy life.” It is our attitudes that will make or break the confident level of others and ourselves to want to move forward toward a positive future. My version of James Allen's statement: “As a man or woman thinketh in his or her heart, so is he or she,” not only embraces the whole of a man or woman's being, but is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of his or her life. A man or a woman's character is the complete sum of all of his or her thoughts. Once we make the decision to have a positive attitude, we have also decided to become a positive thinker who feels the intangible, sees the invisible, and achieves the impossible. Words of Mahatma Gandhi: “Keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive because your words become your behavior. Keep your behavior positive because your behavior becomes your habits. Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny.”

#### Conclusion

My life experience has turned me into an optimist. I tend to be hopeful and am confident about the future and the success of others. I believe that this world is the best of all possible worlds and that good must ultimately prevail over evil. A bad attitude is like a flat tire, if we don't change it, we will not go anywhere. I became who I am and began thinking the way I do because of all the things and people life has put in my path. It is my lessons learned from the negative experiences that have motivated me the most. It gave me a reason to not be on that level or be put in those situations or have to face those circumstances often. But through them we must grow. Women of this 2018, 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Empowerment Conference know that we must continue to grow and plant seeds of great wisdom and powerful positive knowledge to help others. As we do so to help others we will humbly be inspired to do great things in this movement of molding a better world of women, men, children, and families everywhere. For everywhere there are rules and everywhere else somewhere else there are privileges that we should be thankful for. I am Marian Sweezer, the CEO of Think Marian. I wear a lot of career hats with experience. I have a college degree in Business Administration, Accounting, and Early Childhood Development Technology. I hold several certifications. I am a certified tax preparer, business owner of Marian's Tax & Financial Services, a Credit restoration specialist, private real estate investor, business consultant, and a financial advisor. I am also a motivational speaker and trainer and a professional truck driver. Anything is possible.

# **Women and Leadership: Approaches to Close the Gender Gap and Increasing Women in Leadership**

Mahshid Damadam

## **Abstract:**

Although the number of educated women at workplaces has grown over the past few decades, the proportion of women leaders shows that women are still underrepresented in leadership positions. Accordingly, this paper aims to explain the importance of women's presence in elite position of power. Besides, this research reviews metaphors pointing the challenges women have encountered on the way to leadership and decision-making roles during the last decades. Moreover, this study classifies barriers women nowadays experience to achieve leadership levels. Finally, the current study focuses on providing potential and strategic approaches to decrease gender stereotypes and close the gender gap in leadership in order to fulfill the fifth goal of the United Nations sustainable development agenda and increase the number of women in leadership.

**Keywords:** Women, Leadership, Barriers, Gender Stereotypes, Sustainable Development

## Introduction

Post-feminism rejects altogether the notion of gender-inequalities (Soklaridis & Lopez, 2014) and women in industrialized societies want the same opportunities given to men to attain any position, including leadership roles (Garsia Retamero & Lopez- Zafra, 2006). Despite women's impressive gains in education and the workplace over the past 50 years, men greatly outnumber women in leadership, especially in top positions (AAUW, 2016). The capacity of this massive force has not been fully used based on their capabilities in the workplace and in leadership areas (Shojaee, President's Advisor, 2002 ). Women are half of the world's population and societies' human capitals (Mahabad, 2002) that their underrepresentation in leadership positions results in the waste of talents. In 2014, fewer than 4 percent of CEOs heading the world's 500 leading corporations (United Nations Statistics Division from Fortune, 2014), six percent of top managers and 15 percent of board managers were women (Stevens, 2010). The number of female heads of state or government reached 19 (The world's women Trends and Statistics, 2015) and women's representation among cabinet ministers is about 18 percent (The world's women Trends and Statistics, 2015). Based on a research done by Catalyst, among 43 countries, Norway has the highest proportion of seats held by women on executives boards and the shares of women on corporate boards is 7 out of 15 countries in Asia, mainly Western Asia, are lowest (below 2 percent) (The world's women Trends and Statistics, 2015). These statistics show the underrepresentation of women in decision-making and positions of power. In addition, numerous studies have been conducted on obstacles and barriers that women leaders challenging through leadership positions. A research shows that how different factors contribute to the gender gap in leadership. It explains that performance feedback can be a power retention mechanism that puts women at a relative disadvantage and contributes to lack of women in leadership positions (Bear; Cushenbery; London & Sherman, 2017). Male-centric leadership models and norms have served to limit women's aspirations regarding leadership, as well as their access to leadership roles (Dunn, Gerlach & Hyle, 2014). Society's attitude toward appropriate male and female roles is another obstacle that women in leadership confront (Grove & Montgomery, ). A combination of economic forces, cultural and social norms, discrimination, and unequal legal rights appear to be contributing to gender inequality (Macis, 2017) Prejudice and discrimination directed against women as leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Both domestic responsibilities and contemporary workplace cultures differentially impact women and men in the domain of leadership (Hoyt, 2010). Overall, although there are many barriers for women on the way to achieve leadership

positions; yet their presence in decision-making and leadership levels is important and essential for the world's peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

### **Importance of women's presence in leadership positions**

There are many reasons why participation of women in leadership roles in public and private sectors is more than beneficial. Competency at leadership levels is one of the most prominent reasons for the participation of women in leadership positions. Women's participation in leadership roles provides a better choice based on merit at leadership levels. Competency causes the entire community uses all its scientific and human potential for growth and development (Zahedi, 2009). As women have different views and abilities from men, organizations need different people of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and leadership models to work more effectively in organizations and environments. Women's presence in leadership positions causes gender diversity which brings intellectual diversity and diversity of ideas in organizations. Having a culture of diversity creates a culture of dissent as diverse board members provide diverse perspectives and improve critical thinking (Board diversity in Singapore). Furthermore, gender diversity in organizations can enhance the quality of a board's decision-making and monitoring functions (Rhode, 2017). Differences and variations in knowledge and experience of individuals will lead to different interpretations and perceptions of different subjects which lead to creativity and innovation. Moreover, gender diversity in organizations creates a space for competition among male and female members in searching new information that increases the speed of organizations overall growth. In this case, different studies show the benefits of gender diversities in business of organizations. For instance, a study of fortune 500 corporations concluded that gender diversity contributes positively to financial performance (Nancy M Carter). Moreover, a research on a private firm found that managerial gender diversity is related to positive performance outcomes (Menguce & Auh, 2006). Besides that, Women's participation in decision making and leadership positions is a key to sustainable development. Ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (Sustainable Development Agenda, 2030) is at the top of sustainable development agenda across the world. If women were in more productive and decision-making roles, we could be moving faster and more assuredly towards sustainability in the economic, social and environmental sense. Sustainable development is about good

governance, which will be hard to achieve until we get closer to gender parity (Stevens, 2010)

### **Barriers to leadership positions**

Alice Eagly and Linda Carli in their book "Through the labyrinth: the truth about how women become leaders" considered three types of barriers that have obstructed women's advancement during the leadership journey. They used 'The concrete wall', 'the glass ceiling' and 'the labyrinth' as three metaphors to describe the main barriers to promotion of women during the decades. 'the concrete wall' was a metaphor for a division of labor dictating that men should be breadwinners and women should be homemakers. This notion struck most people as a part of natural order (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The glass ceiling came to be known in the 1970s as shifted barriers on the way of women's advancement. From that time onward, women no longer totally excluded from all positions of authority- only those at the higher levels. The glass ceiling implied an absolute barrier- a solid roadblock that prevents access to high-level positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007). By depicting a single, unvarying obstacle, the glass ceiling fails to incorporate the complexity and variety of challenges that women can face in their leadership journeys. A better metaphor for what confronts women in their professional endeavors is 'the labyrinth' which conveys the idea of a complex journey toward a goal worth striving for (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Based on the definition of the labyrinth, there are several barriers and challenges on the way to leadership for women that I divide them into two main categories such as 1) Individual barriers 2) Cultural and social barriers. Individual barriers involve any barriers directly caused by women themselves so that can be also controlled and removed by themselves. Women are reluctant to leadership positions because of an imbalance between their behaviors and leadership roles. A distinction between communal and agentic attributes (Schuh, Bark, Quaquebeke, Hossiep, Frieg, Dick, 2014) causes women to rate themselves as less suitable for the respective leadership position than men as possessing less of the agentic traits typically required for such positions. Another barrier that causes women move away from leadership positions and high-risk careers is family- work conflicts.

In addition to individual barriers, women are exposed to cultural and social barriers, such as gender discrimination, biases, prejudice and people's expectations (Garcia-Retamero & Lopez- Zafra, 2006). As traditional portrayals of leaders are predominantly masculine (Bosak



& Szesny), society has determined that only males make good leaders (Grove, 2000). Expectations about successful leadership behavior are strongly associated with attributes such as competitive, assertive, and decisive (Schuh; Bark; Quaquebeke; Hossiep; Frieg; Dick, 2014) that causes women to judge themselves as less suitable for leadership positions than men (Bosak & Szesny, 2008).

### **Potential and strategic approaches to decrease gender- leadership gap**

There is no magic bullet to solve the leadership gap, but this problem does not require magic (AAUW, 2016). There are strategic steps to take as individuals, in groups and organizations in order to diminish gender- leadership gap and increase the number of women in leadership (Stevens, 2010)

#### **1. Individual Actions**

Women should take personal responsibilities to reach their goals by investing in themselves to create their own personal brands and overcome challenges (Patel & Buiting, 2013). Women leaders must know that the best leaders are the best learners (Rhode, 2017) and lifelong learning is one of the most important steps in achieving and being successful in leadership positions. As management and leadership need to acquire different skills and as long as knowledge and technology are in progress, learning different skills has an incredible impact on women's self-esteem. To be effective leaders, women must improve their interpersonal skills such as Motivation, communication, and team building skills (Khan & Ahmad, 2012). Developing mentoring relationship and building professional contacts (Rhode, 2017) can keep women motivated and updated on the path to elite positions of power. Women leaders have to learn more about time management. They have to learn how to make a distinction between their short terms objectives and long-term goals (Institute of leadership and management, 2007). Time management also is required for women leaders with family commitments (Rhode, 2017). Furthermore, women must learn and practice negotiation skills to ensure that salaries and benefits start fair and stay fair (AAUW, 2016). They have to negotiate for what they need and deserve. (Rhode, 2017)

#### **2. Group Actions**

Women support women. Women who have reached leadership positions need to focus on empowering other women. (Rhode, 2017). Leaders who support others are more successful,

for themselves and for their teams; in terms of advancement and compensation (Catalyst Research) studies show that interactions between female leaders and other women in the firm through various channels, including communication, mentoring and offering role models (Macis, 2017) can be helpful in building networks of support which have a great impact on women leadership efficiency.

### **3. Organizational Actions**

As gender diversity is followed by the diversity of ideas and talents, the essential step for organizations must be recognizing the underrepresentation of women and minorities as a significant problem and holding administrators accountable for addressing it (Rhode, 2017). Organizations can support women's professional developments by creating strategies and providing women different courses in order to strengthen women's abilities and foster their power motivation. Fostering Power motivation among women for leadership positions provide beneficial insights for contributing to an equal proportion of both genders in leadership positions (Schuh; Bark; Quaquebeke; Hossiep; Frieg; Dick, 2014). Another significant solution for organizations to decrease gender inequality, close the gender-gap and increase the number of women in leadership is Gender Quotas. Gender quotas can reverse discrimination in law and practice and to level the playing field for women in politics (The world's women Trends & Statistics, 2015) in order to increasingly improve women's representation in leadership roles.

### **Conclusion**

Women are half of the world's population and representing half of the human resources that ignoring their capabilities will limit the society's development and prosperity. There are many women who would like to further their corporate career but who meet discrimination or barriers in the workplace; there are also some women who actively choose to move away from corporate careers because of conflict-practical or ideological with the culture (Klentner, Clarke & Boersma (2014). Reducing the gender-gap in leadership requires a deep understanding of barriers and challenges that women face during their leadership journey in order to design training and mentoring courses both for improving their professional leadership skills and changing public attitude towards women leaders and leadership.

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## **WOMEN OF INDIA: THE NATION'S GROWTH ENGINE**

**Dr. Sangeeta Patil**

**HEY Foundation**

“Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their value system leads to the development of good family, society and ultimately a good nation.” – Late Dr. A.P.J.Kalam, Former President of India.

Ancient India was a centre of learning and noted women scholars during that time contributed to the advancement of society.

A government of India study shows that more than 40 per cent of rural women directly or indirectly contribute to the uplift of their families and thereby bringing social change.

Now, women such as Ela Bhatt who founded SEWA are empowering women to gain freedom from poverty and unemployment. The industries with the highest percentage of Indian women on boards are technology, media, and telecommunications.

Women play a dual role of Home Makers as well as Professionals & have always proven to make a huge impact in enhancing the productivity of the Indian economy.

### **Challenges:**

It has been known worldwide that women continue to bear the major share of household work and childcare. The only thing that can address this issue is by encouraging workplaces to become more responsive to family needs and to promote sharing of household responsibilities between both genders. Indian women hold only 7.7% of board seats and just 2.7% of board chairs.

If women's participation in economic development is to be enhanced, women must receive the following services: training in income generating activities, easy access to low-interest loans, and family planning services to limit childbearing.

### **Conclusion:**

They can contribute significantly to the growth the development of India in multifaceted ways.

Women in rural India, despite suffering from the problems like health, malnutrition, repeated childbearing, and lack of education, engage themselves in direct and allied agricultural activities, run small shops, sell by-products or handicraft products and thus generate additional income for the family.

In urban India, the lowest strata, women despite the lack of education and facing problems like shelter, have been the catering to social changes and economic development by contributing as a substantial labour force in various industries like construction of residential & commercial buildings, roads, water bodies, engaging in various domestic and community services.

If India can increase women's labour force participation by 10% points (68 million more women) by 2025, Indian women can strengthen their root to become INDIA'S GROWTH ENGINE....

# **Women, Community building and Security in the Information age: an International perspective**

Chander Shekhar Kohli

## **Abstract**

Since the beginning, the subject, or discussion, on women issues have not been given much attention by scholars, theorists and other dominant agencies in the domain of international politics. This might be because of their absence and silent throughout the centuries. Nevertheless, the dynamics and nature have not changed until the advancement of information age- which of course has contributed in the upliftment of women- who for centuries had been kept in the closed box. The information age-as a force- has further facilitated women to engage and interact with outside world. It likewise seeks to develop women community-notably in the organizations and cyber space-that is attempting to establish peace and security in the dominated disciplines. Therefore, the proposed paper strives to examine the shift driven by information age; provides women an opportunity to building their own community; and contributing in security. Moreover, it is also described how the status and role of women is changing in international politics through constructing women community. This study would be more exploratory and qualitative that would show how women are being placed in the research. It is argued in the paper that information age, too, has accelerated the speed of women empowerment; transforming their behavior and presence in international politics; and through building community, it is also contributing in the security affairs as women are and have been security subject. It is eventually concluded by saying that the scope, presence of women and the research on women studies have increased both in security and non-security field, and facilitating on the other hand in building community, with information age, and strengthening security. Finally, the information age has come up with a new kind of women, with building community, playing a key role in security affairs

**Key words: Information age; Women; Community Building; Security**



## **Introduction**

A group of scholars claim “women as subjects of history, politics, and international relations” (Jones 1996:405). International relation is although described as the realm of politics of men, power, hegemony, domination, national interest and so on. Moreover, it is also seen by scholars of international relations as a discipline-which is largely dominated by the mainstream scholarship-that has been controlling by male, the counterpart of women in world politics. Therefore, the scope of international relations is “highly gendered rather than gender neutral...its theories were based on foundational stories by androcentric authors, such as Machiavelli and Hobbes” (Tickner 1999:45). This relationship has been continuing for centuries without any sort of changes. However, it was not until the post-Cold War-notably in the information age, the alternate discipline was developed in response to counter ‘the dominant narrative’ and provided a space for women issues. The absence of women, moreover, could also be seen in other fields-such as economics, management, and so on. This new alternative approach strives to counter “every conventional category of IR theory on a number of levels, contributing to the major theoretical debates in the discipline and raising new areas of analysis” (Narain 2014: 180).

In addition, women’s suppression, isolation and domination since the advancement of discipline, international relations, by men are witnessed the transformation in the twenty first century-especially due to the beginning of information age. The history does not talk much about the role of women. It, nonetheless, only demonstrates the negative picture of women. The recognition of feminism thereby as a framework that expresses its view for the empowerment of women precisely signifies that the status and position, from old to new, would soon get change. According to Emma Watson, “feminism is the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of political, economic and social equality of the sexes” (Watson 2014). The advancement of information age-especially after the end of Cold War in 1990s-is a significant step in this direction, which not merely provides women an opportunity but also gives them as weapon against the patriarchal dominated international system.

This study has been organized into five different sections: the first section presents the picture of women in the area of international politics. It also attempts to provide a counter narrative against the patriarchal dominated international relations; the second section will address the transformation driven by information age as force and its substantive consequences for

women; the third section deals with the relationship among women, community building and security in the information age, which primarily would be dealt from the international relation perspective. This section would see how each of them could work well in order to contribute in women empowerment; the fourth section accords the major benefits of information age for women empowerment; and the fifth section will conclude this study by mentioning that women as a subject of security could only be empowered with the cooperation of men in this surveillance society. It also would end by saying that the cooperation between men and women rather would provide better off to both in order to develop the gender equality in international relations.

### **Women in International relations**

The discipline of international relations, as IR scholars believe, is “dominated by elite, white, male practitioners; is a patriarchal discourse that renders women invisible from the high politics of IR” (Blanchard 2003:1292). Today, the nature of international relations has undergone a transformation from an excluded to the inclusive discipline as it is now being embedded by other actors, such as individuals and so on. Moreover, it is significant to note that “women and gender are both important parts of the daily operation and scholarship of IR, this presence is neither debated nor analyzed by most theorists” (Narain 2014:179). The world is witnessed that for centuries women have not given must attention unlike men. Historically, from the Westphalia period to onwards the domain of international relations has been dominating by men. For Tickner, international relations for many decades have marginalized other subjects and also “there has been little engagement given between feminists and international relations scholars” (Tickner 1999:3). Women although are an important part, which cannot be neglected for long times. The writings on women-particularly their presence-are also absence. This clearly shows they have been kept out of the pictures. This, nevertheless, is because of “the hegemony of taken-for-granted universalized Anglo-American IR theory” (Blanchard & Lin 2016: 48).

The realist scholars claim that the nature of international politics is anarchy-which means there is no single authority above national government-that attempts to stimulate men to maximize hard power. This all might be due to “burgeoning literature on gender in international relations” (Murphy 1996:513), which so far has been written by men. This assumption precisely however demonstrates that men as have been portraying in the realm of

international politics are considered the dominant subject. There are likewise several factors that are responsible for women isolation in international relations, which are as follows:

Maintaining status quo: the field of international relations have largely been controlling by men-who always keep trying to maintain the status quo. They are, nonetheless, not providing a space for women to discuss about their issues. Because, they are “underrepresented in the profession and trail their male colleagues because they see the world differently...because of their minority status” (Maliniak et al 2008:122).

Domination of realism: the history of international relations has showed that realism since the beginning has dominated the entire field of IR for many years. This had left no room for discussion for other scholars who are emerging now due to the domination of mainstream theory. The mainstream theory does not “give voice to non-Western approaches to international politics” (Blanchard & Lin 2016: 48), for instance.

Cold War politics: for a long time, the world has faced the war without direct confrontations. The Cold War is considered another cause which has likewise prevented others discipline from emerging. This period although is featured as hard politics constructed by men. The dominant narrative during this time also, moreover, was substantive which gave rise to feminist discourse. “The transnational women’s movement was actually comprised of a loose and diverse coalition of women’s groups, mainly from the West, who had dominated international political forums and spaces and pursued a western-led agenda” (Steans 2006: 103).

In addition, when we come to the literature of international relations we conclude that the texts were mainly written by men. This is believed that “International relation is a male-dominated and masculinist field” (Hooper 2001:1). The prince, for instance, does not show any sort of women pictures. Machiavelli, the author of this book, has displayed the prince (a man) as the dominate authority in the society, who has all the powers. And, he does whatever he wants to do, irrespective of morality or immoral. He however did not try to discuss in his text about women instead of that he utterly keeps women away from his advice. Therefore, it seeks to raise some critical questions: Did women during those days consider an organic part of society? Why she is absence in texts? These are some questions, which are equally important when we discuss about historically the role of women. Of course, this is quite different from the present times. Because of “lack of female practitioners both in academic

and elite political and economic circles all combine” (Hooper 2001:01), their silence have also stimulated men to narrate more on and about the history without them.

On the other hand, in the state of nature, a place or an island based on fantasy, as Thomas Hobbes, shows that the life and men was selfish and fighting for his survival, not her. This period is characterized as men against men, or war against all. Here, it is substantive to underline the clear picture of women absence from war and texts. Despite of all narrowly dealt assumptions, women empowerment has received attention in international politics

### **Role of Information age**

Information age, or the information and communication technology (ICT), in its various forms have been influencing the life of women, directly and indirectly. This influence these days has gone up when the women are playing proactive role in international politics. Over the couple of decades, the world has undergone some drastic changes in the all the fields. The advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become crucial as we are becoming more interdependent. This dependency, thereby, is witnessed that women are taking part actively in economic, society, politics and management. The ICT endeavors to stimulate women to engage in gender discourse, as a whole, in international politics, which for years has been neglected for some obvious reasons.

The information age has provided women an opportunity to come forward for the leadership and others as they are the only major subjects who could facilitate in building new rooms for women empowerment. The information and technology has become so much important as the world is facing several conflicts to bring women an opportunity for discussing topics concerned to their empowerment.

The information and communication technologies provides women an accommodation-who were ignored for long time-to know about others and participate proactively in all the activities in respect to women issues.

## **Women, Community Building and Security**

According to J Ann Tickner, “all men are innately aggressive...all women are naturally peaceful” (Tickner 1995:49). The term, however, security traditionally has been defined the security of state and its territory. The material forces were predominant during that period. As a result, the security of women had not been given importance. They were also not given opportunity to think about community among women for their own welfare. Moreover, this all major setbacks were brought down by the help of globalization and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The mainstream scholarship of international relations talks about community of states and government. It nevertheless ignores the other areas of concerned-such as women community building and so on. The concept of community in international relations is not a new phenomenon. For building peace, the concept of community has accorded a substantive path to empower women.

The history of community building can be traced back after the World War II, which has come up with the rise of several communities-especially the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) now. This concept could, in addition, likewise be applied to the women studies-particularly their empowerment in IR. This was limited only with the states and the traditional actors. It did not include other sorts of actors-especially transnational community, cyber community and women community.

A community is described as a group of people who share common history, common interest, common culture and common norms. In the case of women, who had been a subject of avoidance and negligence, community building would provide an alternative understanding about women in the age of information and communication technology (ICT). According to Adler and Barnett, there are three features that establish a community (Adler & Barnett 1998:31). First, community members share common identity, understanding and values; second, they have interactive behavior; and finally, through interaction they come up with exchange in the sense of reciprocal, which establishes common interest and concerns

For Tickner, the term security has comprehensive definitions as she puts “new thinking on comprehensive security encourages us to focus our attention on structures and individuals other than state and national security policy makers as potential providers of security” (Tickner 1995:54). In security field, women are doing great jobs, which could be seen from their negotiation skills as successful negotiators in peace building and peace negotiation. “First, women may be different from men in ways that affect their behavior and performance

in a negotiation; for example, consistent with gender stereotypes, women may be more cooperative or altruistic. Second, women and men may be perceived differently based on stereotypes and so may be treated differently, especially in a setting where there are few women” (Eckel et al 2008:430).

The twenty first century would be witnessed that “women are no longer excluded from mainstream security establishments, neither are they entirely distanced from decision-making processes on security matters” (Byron & Thorturn 1998: 216).

### **Women Empowerment and Gender Equality**

In the realm of international relations, the term ‘women empowerment’ was considered, or defined, narrowly described. This, however, “rarely discussed work of women in world politics” (Murphy 1996:515), and displays the true picture of women in international relations literature. It instead would try to highlight that this would have consequences, or process, to empower women in all the respected fields. Women empowerment at the outset has been a subject of discussion and debates. Each country is followed different pattern of women empowerment strategies, which of course is quite different from another. However, technology has opened up the several windows for women empowerment. This could be seen from the 2018 Davos Agenda, *‘Leading Women: Gender on the 2018 Davos Agenda’*, where this time for World Economic Forum the co-chairs were only women. It accords clear evidence that the presence of women in world affairs have increased due to information age. Gender equality in international relations however is “shaped by several factors, such as rules, social norms, social perceptions, territorial claims, and personal and household attributes” (Steffen 2014: 2). This has resulted the rise of women entrepreneurs; business leaders and so on.

The role of gender is changing as women are shifting their position from one to another profession. Earlier, they were only restricted with home, but now they are found at the top level positions, such as the Prime Minister, CEOs of companies. The Prime Minister of Norway, Erna Solberg, for example. It would seem most probably possible when “the dominant literature of international relations scholars would gain if we shifted our gaze from the few to the many who are putatively powerless” (Murphy 1996: 513).

The modern history however has demonstrated how the activities of women are increasing as “women in government, including prominent examples such as Hillary Clinton, Christine Lagarde, Angela Merkel and Michelle Bachelet of China, accelerate the modern women’s movement” (Taussig 2013). According to Caroline Howard, the 2017 Forbes survey on women find 25 most powerful women in the world from different areas, such as politics, economics and so on. Among them, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, got the first position. The other women are Theresa May, the Prime Minister of United Kingdom, and so on.

The term ‘women empowerment’ is comprehensive that comprised of all sections of society- especially women, from bottom to top, irrespective of their colors, religions and so on. For the achievements of women empowerment in international relations, it is stated that “IR as one of the most gender-blind, indeed crudely patriarchal, of all the institutionalized forms of contemporary social and political analysis” (Jones 1996:405).

For a long time, women have been facing several challenges from the mainstream scholarship and also from domestic violence. Therefore, “Women are disproportionately a victim of structural violence and that it is gender inequalities that are often responsibility for women’s particular vulnerability” (Tickner 1995:51). For many scholars, the improvement in the life of women would become a pivotal instrument that would come up with seismic changes in order to improve their conditions.

## **Conclusion**

After detailed discussion on women's portrayal in international relations since its inception, this paper has sought to provide a clear picture about the relationship between women and international relations. This study has presented so far the snapshot images of women status and position in the domain of international politics, which precisely shows their marginalization and non-recognition about their work. This is because for a long time "security discourses are part of the elite world of masculine high politics" (Blanchard 2003:1289). It, moreover, likewise has accorded a significant work that is being done by womanhood. In the information age, an era of self centered and busy life could provide an important platform for women empowerment through community building as women did not get recognition for many centuries despite of many efforts. A community with shared norms, values and culture could only bring this change for women empowerment when they are committed. In addition, in this new world, it would be very easy to spread information quickly without any direct restriction throughout the world in order to aware women, both black and white. In the age of social networking world-such as face-book, twitter, YouTube and so on-the process of empowering women have enhanced, which could only be further increased with the cooperation of men. This 'new women' comprehends the present more than previous and would soon provide a platform to all. Today, the dominate narrative has changed as the numbers of women both in international relations and other fields have facilitated them to come out from their dark place. This rising numbers is also witnessed that women-with the help of the ICT-has boosted the confidence of women in order to find an inclusive, shared and cooperative world, where unlike the past the existence of anyone would not be recognized.



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# **Workspace Better than Family and Public Spaces: Findings from a Rapid Formative Research with Women and Men Workers in Garments Industry in North India?**

Debamitra Bhattacharya Mondal

## **1. Introduction and Objectives**

Participation of women in labour force varies significantly across less developed countries and emerging economies. India is no exception. As per the National Sample Survey (NSS) data for India participation in labour force by urban women aged 25-54 years stagnated at around 26-28% between 1987 to 2011. The same figure for rural India fell from 54% to 44% between 1987 (Klasen, 2017). According to an estimate almost 120 million Indian women which is about 80% of the total female workers are employed in the rural sector (Live Mint, 2017). This is almost 30% of the total workforce in rural areas. Thus, compared to rural women, labour force participation among urban women is much lesser in India. A large proportion of urban women are employed in the textile and apparel industry in India since it is the second largest employer in India employing around 45 million workers of which 60% are women (Sisters for Change, 2016). A large percentage of these workers are migrants. The industry typically employs women from rural poor households with little or no formal education. The women working in apparel industry are those that have been pushed to find jobs to supplement the income at home. All these factors make them more vulnerable to exploitation and labour violations of low wages, insufficient facilities and hostile work environment (Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), 2016).

Several studies have documented the working condition in garment industry in India. The most common violations of labour regulation include low wages that often fall below stipulated minimum wages, long working hours, insufficient overtime payment, abusive behaviour by supervisors including verbal, physical and sexual abuse, absence of social security benefits and an absence of written contracts (Bhattacharjee S, 2016; Lerche, et al., 2017). Women garment workers are employed based on their ability to obey their male superiors. The logic of hiring women workers in factories seem to thus follow the patriarchal logic of dominance and subjugation, subjecting women to unequal power relations at the workplace thus making them more vulnerable to abuse (Bhattacharjee S, 2016). A number of studies on the garment industry have concluded that women garment workers regularly face sexual harassment and violence at the workplace (Bhattacharjee S, 2016; Barria, 2014). A recent study estimates that 60% of women garment workers have been subjected to verbal, physical and sexual violence (Sisters for Change, 2016). Perpetrators of the assault generally include supervisors, contractors and co-workers (Fair Wear Foundation, 2016). Although it is a pertinent issue specifically in the garment industry, many factories lack adequate mechanisms for addressing sexual harassment including the absence of the Internal Complaints Committee (Bhattacharjee S, 2016). Verbal abuse is the most common form of violence that women workers are frequently subjected to humiliation and taunting by supervisors and failure to meet the production targets has been cited as a key reason for this (Bhattacharjee S, 2016). Women take it as a part of their job responsibility and are unable to view it as a violation of their rights (Lyimo, 2010). This normalisation of abuse is not just limited to the factory floors; it is in fact a result of the everyday abuse that women face in their family and home spaces.

Breakthrough, a human rights organization based in India, embarks on demonstrating the feasibility of an inclusive workplace intervention, supported by a community component to promote gender justice within the garment sector as part of its ‘*Stree Link*’ project aimed at transforming gender relations within the apparel industry, empower women workers to access their rights and advocate for behaviour change across the supply chain, and with men and women within the community. A rapid formative study was commissioned in the first half of 2017 in two select production units of a garment factory in Faridabad (near Delhi). Partners in Change – a local research organization – conducted the study and the report. The current paper is based on the report ‘Rungs not chains: Creating an enabling Environment for women workers in the Garment sector’. While the primary objective of the study was to understand perceptions around women workers and to find what mechanisms, and measures were needed to make women workers happy and garment factories gender-inclusive, and explore perceptions and attitude of the community towards working women, the current paper attempts to seek an answer to the question whether the workspace offered more gender sensitivity compared to two others spaces – home and public that the women negotiate daily in their lives.

## 2. Data and Methods

The study employed participatory approaches using a number of qualitative tools including daily activity chart, card sorting, safe space mapping, mapping of gender roles and group discussions. Data were collected from the women and their male colleagues and supervisors at the factory sites and also from the larger community at their residential areas. The following respondent groups were met and participated in the data collection process:

<b>Respondent groups</b>	<b>Number of interactions</b>	<b>Approx. number of respondents met</b>
Senior management	1	7
Women workers	4	31
Men workers	1	12
Supervisors	1	6
Women in the community – neighbours, relatives of the women workers	1	15
Men in the community – neighbours, relatives of the women workers	1	12

The mandate was to meet respondents from different groups and to meet women workers of the select garment manufacturing unit at the factory and within the community in which the women workers stay. The respondents were selected based on this criteria according to their availability and the Breakthrough team’s community mobilisation attempts.

The study used participatory methods and used the following tools with various respondent groups:

Tool	Purpose	Respondent
Daily activity chart	To understand the daily roles/ tasks done by women factory workers	~Women workers
Card sorting - Who is a woman factory worker	To understand perception of skill, characteristics, knowledge, attitude associated with a woman worker	~Men/ Community ~Women ~Factory Management
Card sorting - “Happy” woman factory worker	Cards were used to map characteristics of a happy factory worker	~Men/ Community
Safe space mapping	To understand safe and unsafe places that women workers encounter in the daily lives, a mapping exercise was undertaken. It also mapped conversations that women had in different spaces	~Women workers ~Community
Mapping of gender roles	Gender disaggregated look at all tasks and roles at a factory and why	~Men/ Community ~Women
Matrix scoring	To unpack the woman factory worker profile and perception around women workers	~Women ~Floor managers & supervisors

Although the overall scope of the study was large and addressed a number of issues mainly to find out the types of interventions needed to make the apparel industry to be gender neutral and conducive for women workers. The current paper highlights only a portion of the study findings that has mainly emerged from safe space mapping and other qualitative insights gained from the select women workers who participated in the study.

The data collection took place for about a month in the first half of 2017. A set of trained field researchers from Partners in Change were engaged for primary data collection from the work place and residential areas of the women workers in garment sector in the National Capital Region (NCR) in India.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The study aimed at unpacking the various dimensions of a woman worker. The profile of women workers in the garment industry is by and large similar – comprising women from poor or middle income families, pushed into the workforce either by the financial burden at home and occasionally driven by a desire to be financially independent. A majority of women workers fell in the age group of 26-40. While more than 55 per cent women had completed Class 12, the lowest percentage was of graduates. A majority of the women workers reported to have smart phones but most of them actually used phones for their basic functions of making and receiving calls. After returning from work, most of them reported to watch television while doing their household chores.

Most of these women stay in a typical migrant colonies having high density of people and poor living conditions. The residential colony in which the study team visited found that the families were largely migrant with a high majority coming from Northern and Eastern states

in India namely, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Odisha and West Bengal. In terms of religion, a majority of them were Hindus followed by Muslims and Christians.

While unmarried women were part of the workforce, after marriage, they tended to discontinue working. In fact, the senior management considered marriage to be one of the biggest causes of attrition. However interestingly, the workforce also comprised of a large number of women who started working post marriage purely to supplement the insufficient income in the family. Most of the women workers said that had the income in their family been sufficient they would not have stepped out of their homes. A few of the younger women expressed ambition to work well and move up the ladder at the factory.

Although the focus was more on understanding the challenges women workers faced in their work space at the garment manufacturing units – the second largest employer of women workforce in the country but it was not in isolation. Information was also collected to understand the relative challenges in other two common spaces - home and public, that these women occupy and confront every day in their lives. It clearly emerged from the study that the three large spaces which they negotiate are the factory space/workspace, the family space / community space, and the public space, each came with its own challenges and inbuilt rules and norms.

<b>Work Space</b>	<b>Family Space</b>	<b>Public Space</b>
Lack of empathy among supervisors	No sharing of tasks at home leading to increased burden of work	Some areas are either dark or poorly lit leading to safety concerns while traveling back home from the work
Public shaming and verbal abuse	Disrespect from in-laws in the form of taunts and jibes directed at their identity of a factory worker	Lack of safety in using public transport or using bus stop
Lack of peer support due to competitiveness among each other	Lack of empathy and understanding at home for the dual role played as a care giver at home and a worker at the factory	
No training given to a new employee	Increased mobility is accompanied with increased restrictions on who to talk to or smile at or how to commute etc.	

### **Woman workers in the factory work space**

The garment manufacturing unit under study had a considerably larger female workforce in comparison to its male workforce. For example, in its Unit 1 factory more than 70 per cent workers were female. However, the presence of a large proportion of female workforce in itself was no guarantee against gender-based discrimination.

The management team listed out the number of policy initiatives in place to make the factory a women friendly workspace. However, this was clearly not enough. They added that the turnover rate among women workers was still high. This was attributed to their lack of decision making power in their own families as well as in front of their husbands and in-laws.

“Women tend to quit after marriage because they either shift to a new location or are not allowed to work by their husbands and/or in-laws,” one of the respondents said. “Women thus lack decision making powers and negotiating skills within the household, making it difficult for them to stand up to challenges to their working”.

Women workers are also exposed to multiple hierarchies ranging from stereotyping by supervisors to gender divide with male peers to harassments and stress. As a worker, these women had to face the vulnerability vis-a-vis the supervisory class and senior management. Going by the literature, a worker was often seen as ‘object’ and that too, a liability. In this case, attitude of supervisors towards women workers resembled to the common knowledge as they shared that “the women workers took leaves more often”, “they came late more often”, “there was more attrition among women in the earlier years of employment”, “they lacked ambition” to list a few. At the same time, it was also evident that the supervisors were conscious about the struggles women had to face to do their job. One of the supervisors said: “Due to the burden of household work and now the additional factory work, women worked under a lot of stress. This affected their health on one hand and their performance at work on the other”. The women workers interviewed shared that they even had to face the challenge of the mind-set of male peers, who would not like to treat fellow women workers as equal. Until five years ago, women were not considered competent or skilled enough to be employed in the sampling department of the factory, which created samples that translated into work orders. It was commendable that a concerted and conscious effort was made to train and equip women to be part of the sampling department.

As per the literature review, women in the garment sector face sexual abuse and violence, especially if the power rests with someone who assumes that the hierarchical power could be used beyond work benefits. Ranging from double entendres, complaining against which will only invite ridicule, to directly seeking sexual favours, women are seen as an “object” here too. As one of the respondents said: “*manager chance leta hai ki agar ladki pategi na nahi* (the manager makes an attempt at wooing the employee)”. Moreover, the women expectedly faced difficulty in seeking redress of their problems either from unions or higher authority since in the higher ups the number of women were few and far between. However, the factory is a common work space in which a bevy of women workers work together in the same floor giving an opportunity to come together and form bonds over time even amidst professional rivalry, competition and less scope under tight work pressure and close supervision. A mapping of their daily conversation among female peers had produced the following outcome (see the Table below).

Space	Topics	Time
Travel to the factory in groups in a three-wheeler (auto-rickshaws)	Work; Conversations about anything that happened in the morning before leaving for work	15 minutes - 45 minutes
Production line	Jokes; health related conversations problems at home, including occasionally, reference to sexual activity	2-3 minutes of conversation at each point
Lunch break	Problems at home; problems at work	30 minutes
Toilets	Jokes; work pressure	2-3 minutes in case there is a queue

Water break	Less or no time for conversation	Less than a minute as it is in the open and workers are not allowed to gather there to talk
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It clearly showed that the lunch break and travel hours were the most common opportune moments for fostering friendship and camaraderie with fellow female workers. It was an informal support network even amidst a score challenges and hardships.

### Women workers in the family space

The family space of the woman workers was governed by the presence of three primary stakeholders - the women themselves, their families and their neighbours. In most cases, not only does the woman had to keep pace with the double burden of domestic work, but also not let social stereotypes about working women or marital relations pulled her down. There were manifold predicament of women factory workers in garment industry. Perhaps the same predicament is faced by other women workers in other industries too. This can easily be generalized for working women from poor and middle income families.

A woman who was thus far engaged in unpaid domestic work moved to a *remunerated* occupation, thereby donning a ‘male imagery’ of a ‘*busy*’ person going to work in the morning and returning in the evening. The wage, which she earned, got pooled into the household economy and she got valued by the rest as an active, economic agent. However, at the same time, there were two ways in which this became a problem for the women. On one hand, women got caught in a cycle from which they could not escape – for example, a respondent mentioned how she initially found work to get through a difficult phase. But once the salary started coming in, she was unable to leave the job. On the other hand, though women earned the money, they still did not have much control over it. Just three women workers acknowledged that their husbands supported them with the household chores. The more common image was of a woman caught between her new economic role and her traditional role of home-maker. The women workers faced the double burden of managing both the fronts.

Women said that with the new job, at times when they went back home, they would feel as if all they wanted was someone to offer them a glass of water, but even this was not forthcoming. Even children at times put pressure on their working mothers. One woman said, “My children asked me why I needed to go out to work? They were too young to understand the pressures.” One woman said that her husband encouraged her to go to work, at the same time telling her that he needed his food packed on time, clothes washed and pressed in order, the house cleaned and the children’s homework completed. It was his way of showing her who the boss was.

During the interaction with women workers, they said that unmarried women had greater acceptance than married women if they opted to work. While a few families are more supportive of their daughters-in-law going to work, the respondents spoke about how a working woman is perceived by her husband and in-laws. “*Auratein kam karti hain to purushon ko lagta hai ki unki shaan kam ho jaygi aur parivar ka maryada khatm ho jayega* (When women go to work, men think their pride and honour will be at stake)”. A common perception was ‘if a woman goes to work, her husband will lose control over her’. The above perception is voiced in two ways – a working woman is more independent and; a working woman will get out of hand. Such narratives encourage male members to react and tame the woman– either by violence or by emotional abuse. Women acknowledged that many



instances of domestic violence were triggered by men unable to accept their wife's newfound mobility. However, the respondents said that domestic violence was common even among women who did not go to work. They added that in the case of the working woman, there was an additional reason for the violence.

In general, at home space working women spend a large amount of time caring for others with little or no help from husbands or other members (See the Table below):

Time	Women	Men
5 am – 7 am	Sweeping, cleaning, filling water, washing clothes, getting children ready for school, bathing	Wake up, get ready for work
7 am - 7.30 am	Cutting vegetables, cooking	Cooking in case wife is unwell, or there is any other emergency
7.30 am – 8 am	Leave for work	Leave for Work
5:00 PM	Return Home	Return Home
5 pm – 5.30 pm	Rest, drink tea	Rest, drink tea
5.30 pm - 8.30 pm	Sweeping, cleaning, cooking, watching television (1-2 hours while working)	Return home, rest, occasionally help with cooking
8.30 pm - 11 pm	Have dinner, clean up, wash utensils, watch television	Have dinner, watch television

Not only the additional load of work, the notion of the home as a safe space seemed to be problematic as a few women mentioned being subjected to violence at home as well. Although discussions on the issue of domestic violence were not very detailed, the acknowledgement of the home being safe despite facing violence reflected patriarchal notions that needed to be countered.

### **Women workers in public spaces**

While talking about unsafe spaces, the respondents mentioned the public space as most unsafe. The woman worker's foray into the public space came with her engaging with different kinds of narratives about her. For the women workers, the unsafe spaces revolved around the commute to work and back. While travelling back from work, many places were dark and not well lit. Especially in winters, because of early sunset, the commutes were mostly unsafe. Auto rickshaws were the primary mode of transport to and fro from work. Around 10-12 women traveled in one rickshaw. The overcrowding could cause issues of imbalance leading to accidents. Too few passengers were also problematic, as it could pose a threat to the woman's safety. Women did not prefer the train or metro as a mode of transport as some of them had heard about incidents of eve-teasing and other forms of harassment while travelling in crowded trains. Sites for eve-teasing included alcohol shops on their daily route to work. Women shared that crossing the alcohol shops on their way back home, especially after sunset, posed a security threat for them. An interesting fear related to public spaces was the fear of losing one's way. Women workers enumerated several issues that they faced specifically with respect to transit spaces. The general understanding was that any space outside home is definitely unsafe as one did not have any control over the behaviour of others.

The study found women workers were by and large from poor or middle-income families, pushed into the workforce by either by the financial burden at home and occasionally driven by a desire to be financially independent. They largely belonged to migrant families. Within the three spaces – work, home and public, discriminatory practices based on gender were abundant. While power structures steeped in patriarchy restricted the women from making informed choices and taking decisions in all three spaces, women workers themselves perceived the workplace to be less controlling than their homes and the public spaces.

The impact of social customs and mores derived from patriarchy might actually be less in workspaces than others. Especially in a factory where women form majority of the workforce, women had reason to assume that such workspaces were spaces with a potential for gender equality unlike the family spaces. Many would probably find even a vulnerable workspace a happier one for that would offer more freedom than the family or public spaces. For many, the job offered the freedom to be on their own, even if it meant additional work at home. Additionally, although discrimination did take place within the factory at various levels based on gender, however on the shop-floor the identity of a worker did take precedence in many instances with regards to rules and regulations. The workspace actually introduced the women to a number of discourses of rights based on work as well as gender. The mere existence of certain provisions specific to women made them conscious of the fact that there was recognition of the fact that the people were aware that women were being discriminated against.

#### **4. Summary and Conclusions**

In brief, a female worker, over the period, recognizes that she challenges the stereotype at three---spaces - all at one time. Thus, while economic reasons have pushed families to move past the social taboo of women working outside the home space, mechanisms to accommodate this new role for women are still inadequate. In this scenario, the woman workers had more hopes on the workspace than on the family and public space. Garment industry often maligned for their less sensitivity towards gender can create a pocket, within the larger environment, that is free of the gendered stereotyping offering a conducive environment for the women workers to work freely and flourish.

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