A STUDY OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WOMEN EXECUTIVES

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ABSTRACT
Business organizations have recently begun to recognize the value of female leadership and management. Organizations with female leadership have a much more positive environment as compared to organizations with only male leaders. The presence of women provides important benefits at all levels of management and across all sectors. Women leaders have proved to be better mentors and guides to junior employees as compared to men. Although women are holding prominent positions in the management sector in greater numbers, there is a long way to go to achieve the closure of gender gap. Considerable efforts have been taken around the world to have an equitable workplace, but professional women still have to face barriers to becoming recognized leaders. Professional women fail to get their deserved respect and are unable to find sufficient opportunities for advancement due to the deeply ingrained attitudes and biases against women in the society. Being a good leader needs dexterity, and for women in these leadership positions, the task may be even more daunting. It is a fact that women have to take a lot of effort to prove themselves more than their male counterparts. They have to put in more hard work for gaining the respect of their peers. These women possess certain common strengths which help them in achieving success in their areas of work. The present study is aimed at finding out the strengths as well as weaknesses of successful women executives working at senior positions in different sectors.
Keywords: leadership, senior, strengths, women, weaknesses

Introduction

Strengths are a concoction of abilities, information, and skills. Everyone is born with different strengths, yet the majority of people are unaware of this. High achievers primarily utilize their strengths and concentrate on enhancing their abilities and controlling their flaws. Focusing on strengths and working at a job which matches our talents and skills can improve our productivity and also the chances of obtaining successful results.

Powerful women have the capability to handle risks, become wiser from failures, deal with unpleasant and negative remarks and opinions. They are strong enough to handle the stereotypes they are labeled and they have the courage to justify their beliefs. These women accept challenges and prove their mettle without giving up. A female leader needs to have immense strength and confidence to deal with every obstacle while working in a male-centric business world. Such women are strong enough to believe in themselves, even when people around them have no faith in their capabilities. They are an inspiration to other women who aspire to follow their lead.

We know that no individual is perfect. Every person has some or the other weaknesses. If one has to overcome one's weaknesses, he/she has to first of all identify them and then start working towards eliminating them. Significant challenges are often faced by professional women towards balancing work and family. These women frequently have the lion's share of household responsibilities along with the full-time jobs. They have to handle other responsibilities such as looking after their children, sick, or elderly family members and other household chores.

Female managers have certain weaknesses, but they have to face greater challenges to prove their worth. Generally in organizations men's assertive behavior is interpreted as their being strong, commanding, and

straight forward. However, women possessing the same assertiveness are viewed as aggressive, forceful, and piercing.

Finding your deficiencies and either fixing them or finding a method to make them become strengths is the key to improving yourself.

Review of Literature

Brewis & Linstead (2004) note that female managers make an effort to divert their male coworkers' attention away from their female bodies in order to show that they are equally capable of masculine behaviors and approaches. Nevertheless, the risk with this strategy is that gender is seen as something that can be managed and then discarded, much like a piece of clothing, which may not acknowledge the essential character of gender.

Chapman (1975) points out that in the past, women were considered to be passive, accommodative, and intuitive while men were considered to be aggressive, active, and authoritarian. The former are also thought to be more relations oriented in the way they lead than the latter. But, as their very survival in leadership positions depends on getting the work done, women may be more task-oriented than their male counterparts. And in an attempt to ensure congruence in their behavior as female persons and as leaders, they may exhibit a mix of motives.

Jardim & Hennig (1990) mention that the gender-centered approach has been used to describe the initial research's focus. This strategy was centered on how gender affects a person's preferences, aptitudes, and talents and how this affects how men and women perform in managerial roles.

Kottke & Agars (2005) have observed that four fundamental intervention techniques can be used to get around the obstacles women experience in the workplace. If initiatives aimed at women's career advancement are to have the desired effect, social cognitions, justice perceptions, any danger potential, and the utility of gender-based initiatives must be taken into account and controlled during the creation, implementation, and evaluation phases.

Mukherjee (2009) observes that the Indian business sector has seen a paradigm shift in the organization of its human resources, moving from a strict male-only environment to one where women executives are steadily making their way up to senior management positions in a variety of enterprises. Such a change was made possible by the grit and resolve of Indian business women to establish their worth in the field as well as by the corporate sector's understanding and acknowledgement of the potential and talent of women executives.

Patterson (2007) suggests that women are a natural fit as global leaders. They have many skills and behaviors that adapt more easily to the fast-paced, culturally sensitive global organization. At the same time, women need to be aware of the barriers like, lack of a mentor, no exposure to global business, little or no training or experiences in international relationships or work, and poor relationship building skills. The women, who will grow in these competencies and skills and overcome these obstacles, will successfully move up the corporate ladder of global organizations and eventually take the helm to lead organizations into the next decade.

Reif, Newstrom, & Monezka, (1975) examined the perceptions of women and men managers regarding formal and informal organizations. While the former viewed the organization as an integrated whole, the latter differentiated between formal and informal organization and clearly preferred the formal in terms of its value in satisfying their needs.

Roychoudhary (2009) remarks that the glass ceiling is not a recent phenomenon; regardless of whether it still exists today or not or whether it is getting thicker. It has existed since the beginning of time. The case of Razia Sultana was maybe the first incident of the glass ceiling in India.

Schein (2001) suggests that men continue to feel that they are more likely than women to have the abilities and personality traits needed for management positions, but women believe that both genders are equally likely to have these traits.

Still & Guerin (1986) are of the opinion that women are becoming more motivated to create their own networks as it becomes harder for them to enter male networks. These networks have advantages including better learning, confidence, and social interactions.

Objectives
1. To study the strengths and weaknesses of successful women executives.
2. To study the distinct qualities present in successful women executives.

Research Methodology
The four western Maharashtra districts of Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, and Pune were chosen for this study. 300 women executives working in the five industries of education, banking, insurance, medicine, and manufacturing provided the core data for the study through the use of a structured questionnaire and an observational method.

Selection of Sample Size
The number of female executives working in the manufacturing, banking, insurance, and education sectors, was determined using different sources. The College Principals and University Administrative Officers were chosen from the education sector.

The Karad Urban Cooperative Bank Ltd., State Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra, Bank of India, and Saraswat Bank were among the banks from which bank managers in the banking sector were chosen. L.I.C Branch Managers and Officers were chosen in the insurance industry. Physicians were chosen for the medical sector, and CEOs and managers of manufacturing businesses were chosen for the industrial sector.

In the cases where the number of women executives is less than 50, 20% of the women were considered for the study. 10% of the women in a certain area who number more than 100 women are used as the sample size. Nonetheless, more women were chosen in some instances where information was available. The cluster and purposeful sampling techniques served as the foundation for the selection process. On the basis of the universe as a whole, the sample size was chosen.

Tools of Analysis
The collected data is analyzed with the help of statistical tools such as, percentages and bar diagrams.

Sector	Dist.	Courage	Comm.	Lead.	Self-Conf.	Deci. Making	Posi. Att.	Versatility	Dedication	Total
Edu.	Sat.	8	9	10	11	7	11	10	0	66
	Sgl.	8	12	9	11	8	11	9	2	70
	Pune	9	11	10	12	10	12	5	3	72
	Kop.	4	8	7	5	6	5	5	5	45
	Total	**29**	**40**	**36**	**39**	**31**	**39**	**29**	**10**	**253**
	%	11.46	15.81	14.23	15.42	12.25	15.42	11.46	3.95	100
Bank.	Sat.	2	3	3	5	4	2	1	1	21
	Sgl.	2	5	3	3	5	1	1	0	20
	Pune	8	15	12	12	12	8	8	1	76
	Kop.	6	7	3	3	1	3	7	0	30
	Total	**18**	**30**	**21**	**23**	**22**	**14**	**17**	**2**	**147**
	%	12.24	20.41	14.29	15.65	14.97	9.52	11.56	1.36	100
Insu.	Sat.	8	8	6	7	5	8	9	2	53
	Sgl.	5	3	3	5	4	4	5	0	29
	Pune	10	10	7	10	10	14	14	3	78
	Kop.	5	6	5	6	4	5	7	3	41
	Total	**28**	**27**	**21**	**28**	**23**	**31**	**35**	**8**	**201**
	%	13.93	13.43	10.45	13.93	11.44	15.42	17.41	3.98	100
Medi.	Sat.	7	11	7	10	13	15	15	7	85
	Sgl.	3	7	2	5	9	8	8	1	43
	Pune	33	42	17	42	75	67	59	18	353
	Kop.	5	6	2	9	15	11	11	2	61
	Total	**48**	**66**	**28**	**66**	**112**	**101**	**93**	**28**	**542**
	%	8.86	12.18	5.17	12.18	20.66	18.63	17.16	5.17	100
Mfg.	Sat.	6	3	5	8	6	4	2	0	34

Indus.	Sgl.	5	2	4	7	3	4	1	1	27
	Pune	10	11	7	14	5	10	10	1	68
	Kop.	8	5	6	9	8	7	5	0	48
	Total	**29**	**21**	**22**	**38**	**22**	**25**	**18**	**2**	**177**
	%	16.38	11.86	12.43	21.47	12.43	14.12	10.17	1.13	100
Total	Sat.	31	34	31	41	35	40	37	10	259
	%	2.35	2.58	2.35	3.11	2.65	3.03	2.80	0.76	19.62
	Sgl.	23	29	21	31	29	28	24	4	189
	%	1.74	2.20	1.59	2.35	2.20	2.12	1.82	0.30	14.32
	Pune	70	89	53	90	112	111	96	26	647
	%	5.30	6.74	4.02	6.82	8.48	8.41	7.27	1.97	49.02
	Kop.	28	32	23	32	34	31	35	10	225
	%	2.12	2.42	1.74	2.42	2.58	2.35	2.65	0.76	17.05
	Total	152	184	128	194	210	210	192	50	1320
	%	11.52	13.94	9.70	14.70	15.91	15.91	14.55	3.79	100.00

Table 1: Strengths of the Women Executives
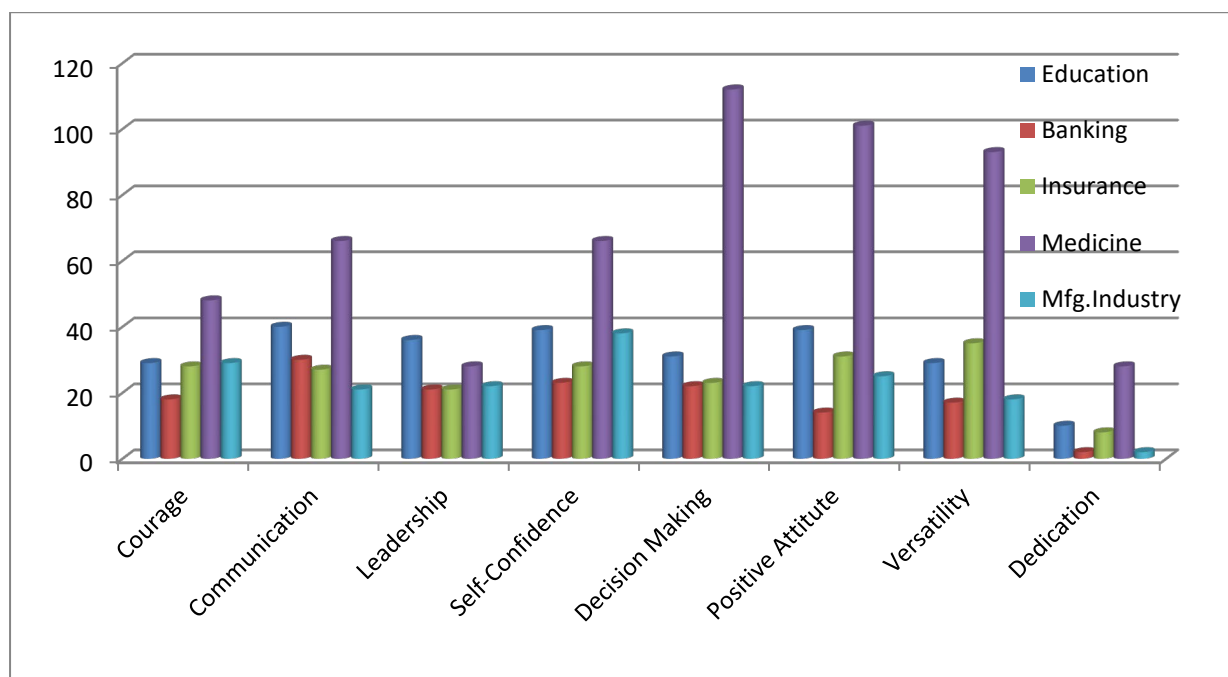
Graph 1. Strengths of the Women Executives

Table No.1 shows that the most important strengths of women executives in the Education sector are: communication skills, self-confidence, Positive attitude and leadership.

For the women executives in the Banking sector, the major important strengths are communication skills, self-confidence and decision making.

The major strengths of the women executives in the Insurance sector are Versatility, Positive Attitude, Courage, Self Confidence, Communication skills.

The most important strength of women executives in the Medical field is Decision making. The other important strengths of the respondents in this field are Positive Attitude, Versatility, Communication Skills and Self Confidence.

In the Manufacturing Industry, the major strengths of women executives are self-confidence, courage, positive attitude, leadership, Decision making, communication skills, and versatility.

The overall result shows that the major strength of the women executives is Positive Attitude and Decision Making. The other important strengths are Self Confidence, Communication Skills, Courage, and versatility.

Sect.	Dist.	Infle xi.	Procr ast.	Lack of Conviction	Impati ence	Inab. to Manage Sub-ordinates	Prejudi ce	Impul sivene ss	Compro. Nature	Total
Edu.	Sat.	1	2	0	8	0	1	2	2	16
	Sgl.	1	0	2	5	2	1	6	3	20
	Pune	0	1	0	7	0	0	6	2	16
	Kop.	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	6	12
	Total	**2**	**3**	**2**	**23**	**2**	**2**	**17**	**13**	**64**
	%	3.13	4.69	3.13	35.94	3.13	3.13	26.56	20.31	100
Bank.	Sat.	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	1	7
	Sgl.	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
	Pune	0	0	3	6	0	0	12	2	23
	Kop.	0	0	0	3	0	0	4	1	8
	Total	**0**	**0**	**5**	**12**	**0**	**0**	**23**	**4**	**44**
	%	0	0	11.36	27.27	0	0	52.27	9.09	100
Insu.	Sat.	1	2	0	8	0	1	2	2	16
	Sgl.	1	0	1	4	0	0	1	0	7
	Pune	3	0	7	10	3	3	0	0	26
	Kop.	1	0	0	1	0	0	5	4	11
	Total	**6**	**2**	**8**	**23**	**3**	**4**	**8**	**6**	**60**
	%	10	3.33	13.33	38.33	5	6.67	13.33	10	100
Medi.	Sat.	2	2	0	0	7	7	8	5	31
	Sgl.	2	1	0	0	7	5	5	3	23
	Pune	17	8	0	0	50	50	50	17	192
	Kop.	5	0	0	0	9	8	12	2	36
	Total	**26**	**11**	**0**	**0**	**73**	**70**	**75**	**27**	**282**
	%	9.22	3.9	0	0	25.89	24.82	26.6	9.57	100
Mfg. Indus.	Sat.	0	0	0	3	0	0	5	0	8
	Sgl.	1	0	0	3	1	1	2	0	8
	Pune	1	0	0	8	0	2	4	1	16
	Kop.	0	0	0	3	1	1	4	1	10
	Total	**2**	**0**	**0**	**17**	**2**	**4**	**15**	**2**	**42**
	%	4.76	0	0	40.48	4.76	9.52	35.71	4.76	100
Total	Sat.	4	6	0	20	7	9	22	10	78
	%	0.81	1.22	0	4.07	1.42	1.83	4.47	2.03	15.85
	Sgl.	5	1	5	14	10	7	16	6	64
	%	1.02	0.2	1.02	2.85	2.03	1.42	3.25	1.22	13.01
	Pune	21	9	10	31	53	55	72	22	273
	%	4.27	1.83	2.03	6.3	10.77	11.18	14.63	4.47	55.49
	Kop.	6	0	0	10	10	9	28	14	77
	%	1.22	0	0	2.03	2.03	1.83	5.69	2.85	15.65

	Total	36	16	15	75	80	80	138	52	492
	%	7.32	3.25	3.05	15.24	16.26	16.26	28.05	10.57	100

Table 2: Weaknesses of the Women Executives
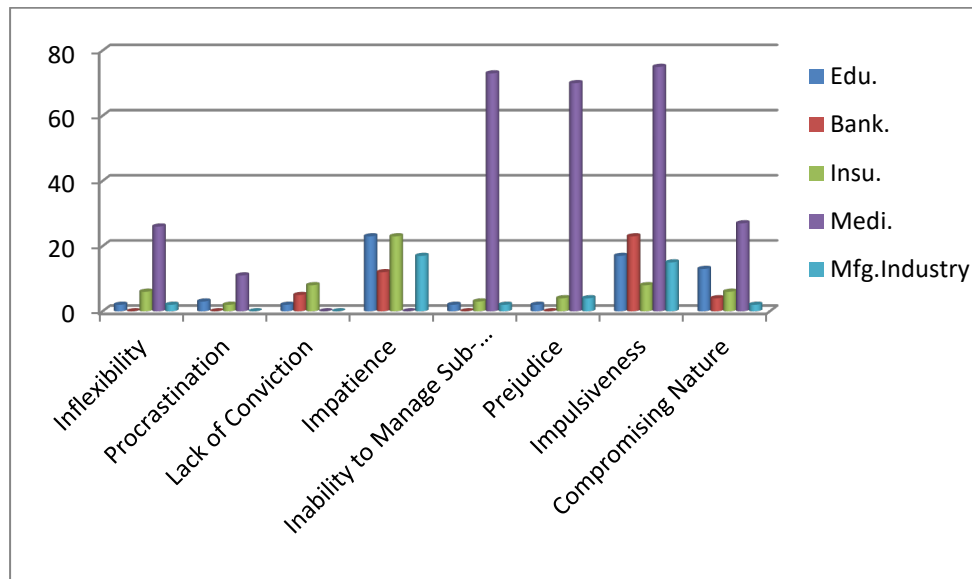
Graph 2: Weaknesses of the Women Executives

Table No. 2 shows the major weaknesses of the women executives in the education sector, which are: impatience and impulsiveness as per 35.94% and 26.56% responses respectively.

It observed that the major weaknesses of the women executives in the Banking sector are impulsiveness (52.27% responses) and impatience (27.27% responses). According to 38.33% responses from the women executives in the insurance field, it is seen that their major weakness is impatience.

The main weaknesses of female CEOs working in the medical industry are impulsivity and inability to manage subordinates. The possible reason behind not being able to manage subordinates could be due to insufficient training provided to them in the administration and management since their profession is more concerned with saving lives along with improving the quality of human lives. Impatience and impulsiveness are the major weaknesses of the women executives in the Manufacturing Industry.

A look at the overall weaknesses of women executives in all sectors and all the districts under study shows that their major weaknesses are Impulsiveness, Impatience, Inability to manage subordinates, Prejudice, Compromising Nature, Inflexibility, Lack of Conviction and Procrastination.

Conclusion

This study clearly shows that women executives have achieved success and are working efficiently at higher positions because of their positive attitude, strong communication and decision making skills, self-confidence and versatility. It is also observed that these women have certain weaknesses as well. All the weaknesses observed can be linked with emotions because women are found to be more sensitive and compassionate. It is seen that women always try to step into the shoes of the other person before forming an opinion. They consider the feelings of other people while dealing with them. This sensitivity in fact can be viewed by organizations as a strength because it gives all the actions and decisions an emotional touch and makes women transformational leaders involving nurturing aspects.

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