

Making of the Trendsetter Generation of Women Leaders in India: Dimensionalizing the Impact of Economic Liberalization

Vipin Gupta* and Abira Saran**

To dimensionalize and empirically study the impact of economic liberalization on the making of the second generation of Indian women leaders, referred to as 'trendsetters', we identified, discussed and illustrated 4 levels x 3 elements or 12 dimensions. We interviewed a sample of ninety women, born after the year 1970, at different levels of managerial leadership in India. We analyzed the 12 dimensions of impact of economic liberalization using a review of academic and popular literature, and then enlivened these using snapshots of the lived experiences of our women trendsetters. Women trendsetters experienced accelerated leadership formation in the context of the freedom offered by various dimensions of economic liberalization, and were not slowed down or held hostage by the cultural traditions and entrenched systems. The experiences of women trendsetters in India offer valuable guidelines for constructing appropriate institutional codes that may have broader relevance.

Introduction

The economic liberalization in India has spurred the 'start of a quiet revolution in gender relations at work and family relations at home, comparable to the social transformation the United States experienced starting in the 1960s' (Schomer, 2010, p. 5). Many middle-class families are beginning to link their aspirations to a higher standard of living to having daughters and daughters-in-law, who are educated and can contribute significantly to the family income (Budhwar *et al.*, 2005; Handy *et al.*, 2007; and Schomer, 2010). Yet even educated women continue to face substantial career challenges in a nation where 60 percent of women are still illiterate (Khandelwal, 2002; and Basu, 2008). While a growing number of industry forums are beginning to help deal with the issues of women's career advancement (Lockwood *et al.*, 2009), only 5% of organizations have women in senior leadership roles, and only one-third are doing something about advancing more women to these roles (Gupta *et al.*, 2006). A recent catalyst study in India found the 26% of women, as compared to only 9% of men, report lacking role models as a barrier to advancement. That makes it difficult for women to believe they can be successful as leaders, and to fight stereotypes about women's aspirations

* Professor and Co-director, Global Management Center, College of Business and Public Administration, California State University – San Bernardino, JB 404, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA, 92407, USA; and is the corresponding author. E-mail: gupta05@gmail.com

** Senior Lecturer, EMPI Business School, CSKM Educational Complex, Satbari, Chattarpur Hills, New Delhi-110074, India. E-mail: abira.saran@empi.ac.in

and abilities (Bagati and Carter, 2010). Most men in India are not comfortable working for a woman boss, and would like the woman boss to behave more like a male boss.

The second generation of efforts to facilitate the pathways for women's leadership ought to consider both the challenges as well as the opportunities offered in a post-traditional society where the institutional codes are in a formative stage. While traditions, such as the cultural context of high power distance in India, add to the barriers, the deficit of institutional codes in the emerging market context offers the freedom for women and the organizations to find and create own pathways.

Our study seeks to dimensionalize the impact of economic liberalization in India, with reference to the forces shaping the opportunities and pathways for women leadership. We identify four levels of factors—individual, family, organizational, and societal and three elements within each of these factors. We rely on academic and popular literature to review and analyze the shifts taking place on these 4 x 3 or twelve dimensions, and their impact on the emergence and making of women leadership in India.

In addition, we present findings from the personal interviews of ninety women leaders born after the year 1970. We refer these women as 'trendsetters', because they represent a new 'second' generation of women leaders, who are confidently navigating their leadership journey in an accelerated time span. They have been riding on the shifts taking place in the individual, family, organizational and societal spheres, as a result of the economic liberalization. And, they are converting these shifts into positive opportunities for the growth and development in all multiple spheres.

Finally, we discuss the value of using the lived experiences of these women trendsetters to develop people's codes, and of using them as guidelines for constructing new institutional codes that are gender-sensitive and inclusive of women's talent for leadership.

Dimensionalizing the Impact of Economic Liberalization in India

We dimensionalize the impact of economic liberalization in India on the emergence and making of women leadership in India using four factors—individual, family, organizational and societal.

Individual Level Factors

Zippie Orientation: A major impact of the economic liberalization in India is the rise of Zippie orientation. Generation Z or Zippies born in the 1970s or later were referred by *Outlook magazine* (2004) as 'Liberalization's Children', oozing 'attitude, ambition, and aspiration'. 'Cool, confident and creative', Zippies are the first cohort 'to come of age since India shifted away from socialism' (Friedman, 2005). They believe in instant gratification of aspirations, and are obsessive about reaching the top. Zippie orientation has given a new sense of freedom to women—what their parents aspired to achieve materially in an entire lifetime is now expected by them from their first job.

Swaraj (My Life) Orientation: In the past, home and family were the integral part of the women's life. But for the trendsetter woman, swaraj or having freedom to live her life on her

terms that respect her personal space and interests matters enormously. Instead of spending time visiting relatives, she prefers newer destinations, see the world, often socializing in 'a virtual medium, as it offers own-term entertainment' (Singhal, 2007). As many relationships evolve online, the trendsetter woman is bold and fearless about her relationships. Being empowered through financial independence, she does not accept abusive marriages as made-in-heaven. When the online matchmaking service for Indian divorcees SecondShaadi.com was launched in 2005, '60% of its more than 25,000 customers came from outside India's five largest cities and 36% from outside the 20 largest cities' (Giridharadas, 2008). Divorce rates are up from 5% in 1980 to 14% in 2006 (Datta, 2006).

Lage Raho (Carry On) Orientation: A socially influential Hindi movie, *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*, showed practice of Gandhian values as a way to protest, yielding quick positive results. Witness to the success stories of several women business leaders, the trendsetter woman is 'impatient' to traverse the trail and get to the other end. She has redefined reading from pleasure to essential—grabbing the essence for solutions to diverse challenges. All actions must generate tangible results. She is triggered to action only if personally convinced and rejects blind adherence to traditions.

Family Level Factors

Family of Birth: The earlier generation of woman was raised to embrace the goal as 'Get Married and Stay Married' (The Indian Homemaker, 2011). However, media exposure and governmental and nongovernmental efforts have resulted in a 'gradual realization that a girl with education has a better chance of negotiating her way around the world, be it in terms of earning a living, or holding her own in a marriage' (Sardesai, 2011). Parents are more willing to spend money not just for their daughter's marriage, but also their education, and to allow them freedom of choice in choosing their subjects. Marriage is no longer seen as the be-all and end-all of life for women (Sardesai, 2011). In the schools, innovative learning pedagogies such as teaching girls to ride bicycles to be more independent, exposing them to new ideas on excursions, and introducing them 'to successful women from all walks of life to fire their imaginations about the brave new world of opportunities that lie ahead' (World Bank, 2010) are also making a difference. Parents, proud of the girls' transformation, are beginning to stop seeing their daughters as liabilities and instead are seeing all children as assets.

Family Married Into: Earlier generation of woman had little inputs on whom she married but was expected to make her marriage work, with or without the support of her partner. She was advised to 'please adjust' to lack of freedom, restrictions in visiting her parents, interference in how she dressed, whether or not she worked, when she had her children, when she must abort a fetus, and what time she went to bed and woke up and how she spent her day and night time (The Indian Homemaker, 2011). But the trendsetter generation of educated, self-reliant woman is less likely submit to such pressures because she does have that option. She expresses a strong voice in whom she marries, and is choosing to live in nuclear families. She considers her husband to be an 'equal partner' who will step forward to fill the void when she is not able

to perform any of the chores at home or of the child. She looks for a life partner who respects her independence and individuality, and does not believe he is superior (Rastogi, 2007).

Family Raised: Improvements in women's education, health and employment rates have been gradually redefining motherhood in India from childbearing to childrearing (Ramasundaram, 2011). A growing number of working women believe that they present a different image to their children by coupling their traditional roles with achievement outside home. The working mother 'commands respect from her children because she exhibits the characteristics of an industrious person, full of self-confidence, maturity, decision-making capacity, intelligence and accountability' (Ramasundaram, 2011).

Organizational Level Factors

Walk with Movers: In the post-liberalization period, technological invasions have made age, gender, seniority and rank irrelevant as 'prima facie evidence of accomplishment or expertise' (Bennis and Thomas, 2003, p. 81). For the trendsetter generation, seniority is a function of how fast one moves with the pace of the knowledge economy and delivers. Their heroes include business leaders who have shaped the economic development of the nation. Unlike the public figures in political roles, these leaders can be trusted to actually deliver and transform the world for the common people in the nation.

Home Away from Home: With rapid technological change, the bureaucratic, command, and control structure of the organizations have given way to flexible, organic and empowered environment that reflect the mood of the young cohorts. Practices like Friday dressing, cultural events, sports, health and lifestyle enhancement services, and outbound training have become popular ways to make organizations a fun place—a 'home away from home'. Women find these new places safe and refreshing, and do not feel that they have to fight the entrenched invisible structures to find their individual space. Surveys of attrition in India show 40% rates in the services sector, and 20% in the manufacturing sector, with highest rates found among the trendsetter generation (*The Financial Express*, 2007). But women's attrition rates are about half that of men. Women are less susceptible to quit for a marginal increase in compensation, and are willing to stay longer—even in the face of marriage or motherhood—if given the 'right environment', an environment where they can call their home (Prayag, 2007).

Experience the World: The ubiquitous availability of technology and globalization has replaced the concept of nine-to-five jobs with a 24/7 work culture. The pace of things has broken the barriers of distance, space and time, and invaded even the day-to-day lives of people at large as smart phones keep them wired. The same speed has extended to the conscious self of the trendsetter woman, who is perceptibly impatient to experience the entire world. She revels in adding diverse and multiple experiences to her portfolio, moving out of her comfort zone and seeking new, unknown and challenging work avenues. And when her present organization, job or assignment does not connect with her passions, staying with that organization any further is seen as constraining her vision. She finds meaning in loyalty not to life-time employment, but to her interests, ideas, passions and careers.

Societal Level Factors

Working Woman Is In: The matrimonial ads capture a social acceptance and willingness for working wives and daughters-in-law, ushering in 'age of the professionally qualified, physically perfect working woman' (Sethi, 2000). Educated and working women are seen not only helping supplement the family income by providing for more than just the necessities, but also providing better visioning and education for the children. In the cities, parents' education and their professional career have become important criteria for the admission of the child to the elite and better schools. While working, Indian woman always relied on in-laws, parents and maids as a strong support system especially when her child is small; this support system has become more understanding of the independent career minded women making it easier to live and sustain both professional and personal lives.

Management Profession Is Hot: The earlier generation aspired to join the civil services, engineering and medicine. For the trendsetter woman, the career aspiration is a job with a big brand organization, which offers the promise of a handsome salary, attractive benefits, and a bright future, taking her to leadership heights through the management route. Premier management institutions in India are making special efforts to admit and graduate more women students, such as by including the high school results in the admission decisions (girls outperform boys in the high schools, but fall behind in the colleges because of factors such as lack of good colleges near homes) and doing away with group discussions in the admission process (girls tend to be less aggressive in group discussions and are vulnerable to be seen as lacking leadership potential). Some, cognizant of the gender biases in the time pressured common admission tests, are even experimenting with giving bonus points in admissions to girls.

Alternative Careers Galore: India has moved directly from the agriculture to the services orientation, riding on the power of diverse sectors such as IT and IT-enabled services, financial services, media, retail, aviation, telecommunication, hospitality, tourism and healthcare. The trendsetter woman identifies herself as naturally advantaged in scripting this new context of customer orientation, and turbocharged by the servicization of the Indian economy, sees a professional career as almost a given, brushing aside social inhibitions of yore. She is bringing glamour and prestige to diverse out-of-the-box career choices traditionally shunned in the society, including e-tuitions, landscape designing, alternate healing, fitness, tea tasting, digital artistry, wedding planning and dog salons.

Results

We present excerpts of the key findings from the interviews of 90 women trendsetter leaders, born after the year 1970, on each of the 4 x 3 or 12 dimensions.

Individual Level Factors

Zippie Orientation: Academic excellence was a defining event for several trendsetters, as it gave them a sense of elated confidence and an air of certainty about themselves, building high aspirations and facilitating professional success. Trendsetter SA was brought up at a

small town called Ballia in the State of Uttar Pradesh. Though apprehensive whether her educational background would match up to the level of the students in larger towns, she chose not to continue graduation from Ballia, but instead join Gujarat University in the city of Ahmedabad for a better exposure. When she started doing better than other girls who came from big cities, it filled her with a fresh lease of confidence. She said, 'place does not really play an impending factor in your growth if you have family support and an appetite to excel. It is the place, the culture, the social ethos and the academics that I learned in my graduation that has helped me become what I am today.'

Swaraj (My Life) Orientation: Some trendsetters took a stand on what is important to their life, such as taking up a job instead of deciding to pursue further studies, and in the process discovered decisiveness in being able to see things through. Trendsetter NJ, 17 and fresh out of high school, visited the US as an international exchange student for a year through the Rotary Club. Before she had never traveled anywhere without her family, now she had to stay for four months each with three families. Except for her teachers and a few outgoing students, nobody at her school in the US would speak to her. Feeling lonely, two months into her stay, she realized the initiative must come from her. She says, 'When I just decided to reach out everything changed for me. Everyone reached out to me and was more than willing to help me and got me involved in the community... Then on, I literally got just five hours of sleep every single day... And I was fine, I was still filled with energy, enthusiasm and positivity and I absolutely loved every single thing that I was doing.' Earlier a shy girl, happy in her comfort shell, she came back completely transformed and went on for two hours when asked to share her experiences at the club. She noted, 'My complete perspective on what is possible and what is not possible changed. The biggest learning for me... it is all about involvement'.

Lage Raho Orientation: The experience of failures in education made some women trendsetters realize the significance of diligence. Trendsetter SS did not fare sufficiently well in her tenth class board exams, and was not able to take the major of her choice. She then took up psychology, and fell in total love with the subject, digging deep into her books for 12+ hours a day for the first time in her life. The college chose her for special coaching to get a university rank. When the results came out, her name was up as the college topper, with fourth rank in the university. She proved to herself there were no barriers to what she could do. She just passionately enjoyed what she was doing, which let the energy, enthusiasm and hunger flow from within. Positive expectations proved transformative for another trendsetter, when on the last day of her school, the principal told her, 'I have known you and met your parents too and I am sure one day you will make it big and write to me when you do so—it will be that day that I will think that we have been able to instill the required traits in you'. That opened new dimensions of life for her, as she was charged to live up and be able to exceed those expectations.

Family Level Factors

Family of Birth: A majority (60%) of the women trendsetters identified their heroes within their kinship, and a substantial one-third considered business leaders as their heroes. This was similar to the geeks in the study of Bennis and Thomas (2003, pp. 80-81), who stated, 'perhaps to compensate for the lack of public figures worthy of that sort of regard, geeks chose

people closer at home, people of less monumental accomplishments, but people whose accomplishments were tangible (perhaps even verifiable?'. Kinship in most cases meant parents, who the women trendsetters admired for their values never compromised, sincerity, sacrifice, and honesty even in the face of adversity. They idealized their fathers, whose self-made journey they had watched for a distance. They admired their mothers for the strength of her character and for playing a compassionate, caring, nurturing, understanding and a binding role for the whole family. While many had mothers who did not work (see Table 1 for the statistics on parental occupation), they learned from mothers' self-sacrifice for marital and familial well being, while they pursued a path of professional independence.

Table 1: Parental Occupation of Women Trendsetters	
Father's Occupation	
Government Service	51.92 (%)
Private Service	17.30
Self-Employed (Entrepreneur/Business)	26.92
Self-Employed (Professional)	3.84
Mother's Occupation	
Housewife	57.14
Service (Private and Government Sector)	33.93
Self-Employed (Entrepreneur/Business and Professional)	8.93
Working (Total)	42.86

Family Married Into: Many women trendsetters saw their husbands as an equal partner, though most still assumed primary responsibility of family caretaker. One trendsetter AL said, she admires her husband the most, 'for his down-to-earth nature despite holding a high position. His single-minded devotion and honesty towards achieving his goal (is inspiring)'. Another, CS notes that both her father and her husband 'are forthright people, they have guided me to the right path, they are patient listeners, both of them have stood by me in every thick and thin of my life'. However, trials for some intensified after marriage or motherhood, if they were not lucky enough to have a family support system. They had to be resourceful to create a support structure to be able to responsibly attend to both work and family. Success in this galvanized them towards their leadership.

Family Raised: Technology-enabled telecommuting or freelancing from home while raising their young child helped some women trendsetters discover their multi-tasking and problem-solving capabilities. Others used technology in creative ways. SF, CEO of her family's business, began working from her home from the fifth day her son was born. 'She set up a video conferencing room at home and held meetings between 8 am and 10:30 am in the mornings and sometimes even between 6 pm and 8 pm in the evenings. On days, when she had two-three video conference meetings, she took breaks time and again to breast-feed her baby' (Amarnath and Ghosh, 2005, p. 237).

Organizational Level Factors

Walk with Movers: The women trendsetters aspired to get a good job first, after their education, in a big brand private sector company. Some learned that though there were opportunities galore, they would not fall on their lap, and they must show hard work and sincerity. They felt pride when they joined an organization of repute, such as after pursuing their MBA and did something significant. Others prodded along to rise beyond any limitations in their academic excellence, professional training or field of expertise, to find a career path that takes them out of the constrained environment and will enable them to succeed. They recounted getting their first job, first project and their first assignments, which gave them their initial taste of professional self-worth. One trendsetter learned important lessons in leadership observing how her boss conducted herself professionally, carried herself and made her decisions. Working closely with her boss, she acquired many skills required for understanding and managing people. Many had to be proactive, take and accomplish more responsibility and win the confidence of their seniors, peers, as well as juniors. Winning this confidence and public appreciation catalyzed them to work hard and to motivate and mentor the team towards better performance.

Home Away from Home: As the organizations built more personal connection with women trendsetters, they became more open about letting women trendsetters know how much they value them. When her organization was going through a rough patch, trendsetter NA received a job offer from a much bigger organization with a higher pay package. Her CEO asked her, 'Would you stay if I ask you to stay?' Her answer was 'Yes', and so he said, 'Then please stay and do not go'. For the first time in her life, she felt as though she was needed outside her family and that she was adding value to this 'family' as well. She says, 'It gave me a sense of pride because that is what we work for. We just do not work for our pay cheques.' She went on to help the organization bounce back.

Experience the World: Getting out of the comfort zone and moving to distant places to chase career aspirations was a transformative phase of life for some. Trendsetter AS noted, 'I was scared yet wanted to fly. I was skeptical at times, yet deep within, I wanted to take the plunge. I felt liberated and yet lonely somewhere deep within, but surely I was determined.' Unlike their predecessor cohort of women leaders, who changed jobs on an average every three years, women trendsetters in our sample changed jobs every 1.5 years of her working life – sometimes even changing cities.

Societal Level Factors

Working Woman Is In: Social acceptance and recognition of working women is encouraging many women trendsetters to seamlessly bring their family sphere talents to the workplace, and workplace talents to the family sphere. Trendsetter RA noted, 'My generation is more focused and able to maintain a healthy work-life balance, as compared to my parent's generation for whom work was not a priority.' Such ability helps women trendsetters seamlessly move from home to work, and from work to home, maintaining the same holistic self-personality, and not needing to switch into a different shoe. They are effectively able to integrate their two lives, not needing to strike major tradeoffs.

Management Profession Is Hot: Most women trendsetters were keen observers of the best practices and trends in the management profession, and adopted a genuine, tolerant, empowering, team-oriented, and nurturing leadership style, focused on bringing out the best within their team members. They strived to reduce the power distance, and be seen as approachable—they encouraged people to come up and speak their mind freely. They demonstrated a strong sense of consciousness and fair play. One trendsetter noted, 'Being in a leadership role one of my self-imposed tasks is to ensure success for my people, ensure that I get them to taste success, ensure that I work with them in a way wherever if I can directly or indirectly contribute so that they see success. And I have this faith that once they see success they are on a path and they will never look back. So that first stage to success I take upon myself as my personal responsibility'. At the same time, women trendsetters were tough-minded and forthright and not populist in their approach. They did not hesitate to express their displeasure or disappointment, but made it a point to be sensitive. Thus, a trendsetter contended that she is demanding and would push her team members towards the desired goal but if something went wrong, she would not make someone the scapegoat. She said, 'I am firm but not rude'.

Alternative Careers Galore: The availability of alternative career options gave women trendsetters a strong sense that success is 'to be able to spend your life in your own way' (Morley, 2011). Operationally, this meant 10 aspects: (1) the accomplishment of challenging self- or organization- defined goals; (2) being able to progressively stretch oneself and push the limits of achievement by constantly bettering one's own performance; (3) being able to deliver more than what is expected, finding unique answers and solutions and thereby adding value; (4) having the freedom to make her own choices and decisions, and pursuing her aspirations and dreams; (5) carrying a feeling of contentment and peace that she has given her best through right and ethical means and contributed to the growth and development of self, her team members and her organization; (6) earning recognition and respect, and positive image, for the value she brings, and her professional competence, credibility, and integrity; (7) role modeling, i.e., a large mass of people drawing inspiration from her and seeking to become like her; (8) being remembered as a good, helpful person who brings about a difference in the lives of people she works with; (9) humility and compassion, in spite of all that she may have achieved globally, allowing her to continuously learn and adapt; and (10) focus on core values, giving her the courage to stand up, voice her views, to influence others and to deal with the situations, and also an edge over those who compromised them. They held that just as failure should not devastate and break her down from getting up and trying again, success should not get into her head and make her forget her roots and values.

Discussion

Research on the formation of women leadership in the emerging markets at a nascent stage. In the industrialized markets, the focus of such research has been on the gendered constructions of women (Wilkinson and Blackmore, 2008). Gendered constructions include

various embedded structures and deep-rooted cultural beliefs that present a discriminatory scenario for women leadership. Emphasis is on how some women successfully challenge and transform institutionalized structures and beliefs through their own risk-seeking (Maxfield *et al.*, 2010), and through the support of sponsors and of aware and enlightened organizational initiatives.

Author pl
chk, not in
refs

A major weakness of the emerging markets is their underdeveloped and immature institutions, which make it difficult and costly for the parties who might benefit from particular exchange to find one another and to negotiate and strike the exchange transaction. In the context of industrialized nations, markets for leadership talent suffer from institutional codes that are highly gendered. Much effort has therefore been required to try to (1) first develop a market-wide recognition of the gendering of the institutional codes; (2) then to identify the various levels of this gendering, and various elements within each level; (3) thereafter to develop macro mechanisms for driving and enacting the institutional reforms on each of the elements; and (4) finally to construct micro-level capacity and resources to implement these reforms at the organizational level, and in other contexts, particularly education and media, that influence the lived experiences of women and their leadership potential.

In the context of emerging markets, a deficit of institutional norms implies that the people have greater freedom to construct each level and element of their lived experiences in a way that is inclusive and fair to the talents of both genders. Historically, the capacity of the people to exercise this freedom has been constrained by the lack of access to education and media. The economic liberalization has offered an opportunity for people to construct their lives in a way that allows true democratization and decentralization of the power to lead people.

Our research on women trendsetters in India underlines the significance of the ‘people power’ in their successful leadership formation. As a result of the institutional liberalization in India, people have felt empowered to bring about positive changes in their lived experiences at multiple levels—individual, family, organizational, as well as societal, and in multiple dimensions of elements at each of these levels. Education and media played a particularly important role in the sense of empowerment and freedom to make a difference experienced by the people. Young women trendsetters in this study sensed this opportunity and celebrated the freedom it offered to them to paint their own path on the life canvas at each of the four levels. And, paint they did by defining this to be a path of leadership, a path of change and making a difference, a path of conviction and integrity, and a path of humility and inclusion.

The experiences of the women trendsetters in India suggest fresh research questions about the issues of women’s career advancement. Is it really essential to always take institutional codes as given and constraint, and to try to discover the fixes required, and to build a case for each fix one by one, and to try to build the capacity and resources to implement that at the organizational level? Is there a way the process could be accelerated, and the costs of change mitigated? These questions gain particular significance, given that

the Western organizations are facing huge competitive pressure of low costs and high skills from the emerging market firms. Inclusion of women in leadership roles in the emerging markets will only add to the pressures. Historical experiences suggest that in times of diminished economic opportunities, the challenges for women in economic participation and advancing to leadership roles only accentuate. Therefore, it is imperative to look for the approaches that can help mobilize people power to bring about accelerated change, not constrained by the institutional maturity. And, in this respect, the experiences of India in evolving the practical codes for inclusion and advancement of women leaders can be valuable for starting a dialogue.

Conclusion

Recent research on women leadership in India has underscored a surge in organizational interest and initiatives for gender inclusion and advancement. While there has been some progress in addressing the issues deemed of particular relevance to women, such as safety, work-life flexibility, and work climate, new research shows that more efforts are needed on issues that concern both men and women. Specifically, the high power distance culture in India results in the exclusion of the employees from the networks of the higher-ups, lack of sponsors or mentors, ignorance of organizational politics, absence of critical feedback on their performance, and denial of special assignments valued by the higher-ups (Bagati and Carter, 2010). Women are particularly vulnerable to these culturally-pervasive tendencies, perhaps because of their socialization in Indian culture to be patient and to fit-in so as not to upset the entrenched structures of power that might destabilize the entire system. They are more likely to adopt a 'waiting for' approach, as compared to men's proactive 'seeking' approach (Bagati and Carter, 2010).

The present research highlights the factors facilitating the emergence of a second trendsetter generation of women leaders in India, in the backdrop of economic liberalization. They have been shaped by multiple levels and multiple dimensions of elements.

At the individual level, they have the confidence that sky is the limit and are obsessive of reaching the top, even if they have nothing to start with (*zippie* orientation), they value and practice living life with total freedom and on their own terms (*swaraj* orientation), and they demonstrate diligence and perseverance to bring about transformative change for bettering their and everybody's life using peaceful Gandhigiri (*lage raho* orientation).

At the family level, their parents (family born into) see them as assets, and are willing to invest in their education, so that they do not have to fit into any entrenched power structures and can be economically independent and live a good life. Their in-laws and husbands (family married into) act as their pillars of support, see them as equal partners, and value their earning capacity that can help them go beyond the basic necessities and actualize the aspirations of higher standards of living. And, their children (family-raised) find a sense of pride, inspiration, and co-participation in making a success of their leadership journey.

At the organizational level, these women trendsetters aspire to walk with and role-model the movers who are making a difference—either at the macro level through their celebrity-like leadership in business or other domains, or at the micro level from among their parents or other kin they have personally observed (walk with movers). They find a connection with the organizations that provide a homelike climate at the workplace, so that they can be their own self and not have to adopt dual identities—one at home, and another at the workplace (home away from home). But they are connected first and foremost to their own passions, and the diversity of tech- and globalization-enabled experiences that support their growth and development (experience the world).

At the societal level, the emergence of these women trendsetters is being facilitated by society-wide acceptance and even preference for working women and working mothers (working woman is in). Their accomplishments, even when not having the premier B-school credentials, have made people take notice and inspired the premier management schools to find creative ways to enable more high potential women to make it through the highly gender skewed competitive admission process (management profession is hot). Finally, and perhaps most significant, is the boom in the type of career options that are now open to women, because of the exemplary accomplishments demonstrated by the previous generation of women leaders, and the new generation of women trendsetters. These alternative careers have given a choice and brought recognition of the value women leaders are creating (alternative careers galore).

Our findings from the interviews of ninety women trendsetters across various leadership positions in Corporate India affirm the significance of these four level of factors, and twelve dimensions of elements. The findings suggest accelerated leadership formation of many women trendsetters that has not been slowed down or held hostage by the cultural traditions and entrenched systems. The experiences of women trendsetters offer valuable directions for the construction of appropriate institutional codes, which are grounded in the inclusive experiences of the people of the nation in a contemporary post-liberalization context of enhanced freedom and elimination of convoluted institutions of the yore.

Guidelines may be formulated based on the experiences of women trendsetters in our study. Specifically, the institutional codes should facilitate:

At the Individual Level

- Filling the exposure gap of women from rural areas and small towns, and avoiding using criteria that select out talent for the lack of exposure to ‘metro’ contexts whose relevance is in any case transitory in an era of rapid global change.
- Short-term/yearlong international academic exchange to help women of India emerge out of their protected shells, and discover their unique potential that may be lost in the crowd of their peers while in India.
- Counseling of girl students so that they are able to choose subjects they can be passionate about, and their targeted training to help them actually excel in these areas.

At the Family Level

- Celebration of the role of parents and other family members in the education and upbringing of their daughters, such as via a designated national day, and media and school communique.
- Support systems for working mothers, such as by exposing children to the image of women and men as equal partners in a marriage through school curriculum.
- The infrastructure for inculcating pride about mother's multifaceted roles and accomplishments among children.

At the Organizational Level

- Ensuring the first assignment in an organization for a newly hired woman does justice to her professional self-worth, so that she gains confidence about what she has achieved and aspires for more.
- Ensuring women are informed when they are being asked to participate in areas where it is believed that they are capable of adding high value, so that they do not feel undervalued working in lower valued areas.
- Ensuring women are offered targeted transformative opportunities to get out of their comfort zones and to explore new frontiers on regular intervals, at least once a year, to help them gain a sense of growth and rejuvenation.

At the Societal Level

- Creating awareness of the skills from workplace that are relevant for women at home, and the skills from home that are relevant for women at workplace, so that women are able to multi-task more effectively.
- Creating awareness of the best practices and alternative practices of management being pioneered by women.
- Celebrating multi-aspect successes of women in a range of careers.

Notably, all these guidelines are of potential relevance even for the industrialized markets, and for promoting leadership opportunities for men also.

In conclusion, understanding the people's codes for leadership formation in a context of economic freedom offers a useful approach for developing fresh institutional codes. The lived experiences of the women trendsetters in India offer useful first guidelines towards this end. In our study, these trendsetters come across as multidimensional, multilevel and multi-talented, for whom the enormous traditional and historical baggage of gender stereotypes and barriers have had little meaning, and who are redefining the Corporate India through their aspiration, creativity and risk-seeking.🌀

References

1. Amarnath N and Ghosh D (2005), "The Voyage to Excellence: The Ascent of 21 Women Leaders of India Inc.", Pustak Mahal, Delhi.
2. Basu S (2008), "Gender Stereotypes in Corporate India: A Glimpse", *Response Books*, New Delhi.
3. Bennis W G and Thomas R J (2003), *Geeks and Geezers: How Era, Values, and Defining Moments Shape Leaders*, Magna Publishing Company, Mumbai.
4. Budhwar P S, Saini D S and Bhatnagar J (2005), "Women in Management in the New Economic Environment: The Case of India", *Asia Pacific Business Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 179-193.
5. Bagati D and Carter N M (2010), *Leadership Gender Gap in India Inc.: Myths and Realities*, Catalyst, New York.
6. Datta D (2006), "The New Laws of Marriage", *India Today*, December 4, pp. 61-68.
7. Friedman M L (2005), *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.
8. Davis J, Chatterjee S R and Heuer M (Eds.), "Management in India", *Response Books*, pp. 285-312, New Delhi.
9. Giridharadas A (2008), "With India's New Affluence Comes the Divorce Generation", February 19, *International Herald Tribune*, Asia-Pacific, available at <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/02/19/asia/divorce.php>
10. Gupta A, Koshal M and Koshal R K (2006), *Women Managers in India: Challenges and Opportunities*. In H.
11. Handy F, Ranade B and Kasam M (2007), "To Profit or Not to Profit: Women Entrepreneurs in India", *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 383-401.
12. Khandelwal P (2002), "Gender Stereotypes at Work: Implications for Organizations", *Indian Journal of Training and Development*, Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 72-83.
13. Lockwood N R, Sharma R, Kamath R and Williams S (2009), "Perspectives on Women in Management in India", Published by *The Society for Indian Human Resource Management*, India.
14. Morley C (2011), "Christopher Morley", Quotes.net. STANDS4 LLC, <http://www.quotes.net/quote/5528>
15. Outlook (2004), "The Zippies are Here", January 12, available at <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?222563>
16. Prayag A (2007), "Gender Difference in Attrition Levels?", *Business Line*, January 15, available at <http://www.blonnet.com/2007/01/15/stories/2007011502321500.htm>

Author pl chk,
ref 8 is not
cited in text

Author pl chk,
ref 10 is incom-
plete

17. Ramasundaram A (2011), "The Working Mother, a Winner All the Way", *The Hindu*, August 14.
18. Rastogi T P (2007), "Shaadi No. 1 'Brunch'", *Sunday Supplementary Magazine of the Hindustan Times Newspaper*, January 14, pp. 5-8.
19. Sardesai K (2011), "Done Parents Open Doors of Education for Daughter", *Times of India*, April 2, available at http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-04-02/pune/29374446_1_girl-child-child-rights-pmc-school-board
20. Schomer K (2010), "Professional Women in India: Changing Social Expectations and Best Practices for Global Corporations", Working Mother India Research Report, Sponsored by Deloitte, India.
21. Sethi K (2000), "Branding Brides and Grooms in India: An Analysis of Matrimonial Advertising in India 1967-1997", McCann Erickson's Consumer Insights, available at <http://www.brandingasia.com/columns/mccannerickson5.htm>
22. Singhal A (2007), "The Passive Pleasures", *The India Today*, February 19, p. 49, available at <http://archives.digitaltoday.in/indiatoday/20070219/youth-gc-arvind.html>
23. *The Financial Express* (2007), "Attrition Rate @20%, India Inc Feels the Heat", June 14, available at http://www.financialexpress.com/old/latest_full_story.php?content_id=167148
24. *The Indian Homemaker* (2011), "Discussing Issues Concerning Women", Voices of the Month, Interview by Vani Viswanathan, *The Spark Magazine*, March 5, available at <http://www.sparkthemagazine.com/?p=1340>
25. Wilkinson J and Blackmore J (2008), "Re-Presenting Women and Leadership: A Methodological Journey", *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 123-136.
26. World Bank (2010), "Reaching Millions in India: Primary Education for All Children", available at <http://go.worldbank.org/7PREXMG1E0>

Reference # 33J-2013-06-0x-01

