
BARRIERS TO WOMEN EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN PAKISTAN: IMPACT ON WOMEN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

As regarding to exploring, the barriers and issues which women educational leaders have faced in their career path to sustain their leadership and executive status in educational administration in sindh province of Pakistan, the study is also lustrating the impacts on their leadership development. Applying qualitative research study which is qualitative by method and descriptive in purpose, the data was collected from 16 women leaders currently working on higher level positions in education & literacy department of sindh, which are belongs to sindh. Using the semi-structured interview tool data from 16 women leaders were collected. The purposive Sampling technique was used in this research study. The design of this research study is phenomenology, the lived experiences about the phenomenon. the findings of the study were coming to light by the themes and lived experiences have a huge impact and importance on women leader's leadership development. Further that, Women leaders met to different barriers in their career path which lead to them in hard situations regarding their leadership development and effects on their capabilities and skills. To cope with these all barriers, the women educational leaders have pointed out the professional development trainings, overcome to gender discrimination, family support, overcome to socio cultural issues. The study therefore recommends that for empower women educational leaders to cope with the barriers successfully, professional trainings and workshops in order to educational leadership and administration must be arranged for educational leaders, an appropriate method of induction for new leaders, and some effective policy level changes are required.

KEYWORDS

Women educational leaders, professional practices, leadership development, gender discrimination

INTRODUCTION

Women educational leaders have faced so many challenges due to Underrepresentation they are facing different barriers regarding educational leadership in Pakistan. Research in the US context (e.g., Lopez, 2008) and the Asian context (e.g., Shamsodin, Saeed & Shahla, 2012) Reveals that the barriers which are related to leadership positions have a relation with women leader's underrepresentation to educational leadership development. however, some of researches have already addressing women's underrepresentation in leadership position in Pakistan. Therefore, current research explores the barriers to women educational leaders faced during performing their educational leadership responsibilities in higher level positions in Sindh province of Pakistan. It has been broadly illustrated that gender disparity at the top of organizations determines at least partially from inescapable gender bias and discrimination. Gender discrimination happens when "women get less leadership opportunities than men indeed with equivalent qualifications" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 67. According to Skard (2014) women in leadership roles are truly underrepresented. Not only is there still the perception of a glass ceiling, but women in leadership roles have a difficult time maintaining their positions due to several barriers which include balancing their careers and their personal lives, the inability to navigate role changes, and also the negative effects of gender. This study is exploring the realities that how countless barriers effect on their leadership skills and its effectiveness in their leadership path. Not only focusing the challenges faced by women educational leaders but in the sindh province of Pakistan but this research set down the useful suggestions to higher authorities to make beneficial policies, arrange professional trainings and skill development programs to help out the women educational leaders to lead them to successful career.

LITERATUREREVIEW**Educational Leadership**

Having good leadership skills any individual can be able to perform better leadership responsibilities in their field. The individuals are able to appropriate guidance, direction to success and manage operations of the educational organization with worthwhile and powerful leadership abilities (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008). Policy makers throughout the world consider educational leadership on first priority programs. Educational leadership plays vital role to purify the school outcomes by motivate the teachers and by improving teacher's abilities, also the circumstances of school. For betterment and improvement of quality education the operational

leadership plays very important role. Educational leadership can contribute to make provision of guidance on the main characteristics, job responsibilities of professional leaders in educational leadership area (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008).

Therefore, the elaboration regarding educational leadership focuses on higher level educational leaders, which are further more categorized of deputy DEO's and assistant directors, town education officers, deputy DEO's of education and literacy department, (Educational Leadership, 2015).

Women leadership

Women are half of the population of human being but unfortunately, they have not been given importance in all spheres as well as in leadership. According to (Harris, 2005) no doubt women can compete and understand that how they can take part in leadership and how they can express their views. Nevertheless, in different cultures and areas there are many problems for women as a leader. According to (Sharpe, 2000) so many issues were discussed in different newspapers and magazines which favored women's qualities as leader. Majority of the journalists were of the opinion that women were achieving positions in the management.

Women leadership challenges

Here in Pakistan various barriers are faced by women educational leaders in their career path, and one of the is Underrepresentation of women leaders in educational leadership in Pakistan. There are in too many researches are present in literature review such as, Research in the US context (e.g., Lopez, 2008) and the Asian context (e.g., Shamsodin, Saeed & Shahla, 2012) explored the realities that some of the administrative issues are cause of underrepresentation of women leaders in educational leadership and management. researches are associated the barriers faced by women educational leaders' underrepresentation to the obstacles concerned with different components which are related with different levels or context for example: responsibilities of family and issues. (e.g., Barmao, 2013; Coleman, 2012; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Miller, et al., 2006; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Montz & Wanat, 2008; Shamsodin, et al., 2012), structural and social factors such as recruitment and gender (e.g., Manfredi, et al, 2014; overall, gender bias, organizational structure, culture, structural factors, and family related issues disturb to women leaders' abilities not only making it to the leading position but also preserving them in education and as well as other fields.

It can be analysis in figure 1 that which through light on prominent barriers which women educational leaders faced in their career path and they faced difficulties to obtain as well as to sustain the leadership positions are: cultural norms, social practices, community behavior with women leaders and board members' gender

discrimination, political pressure.

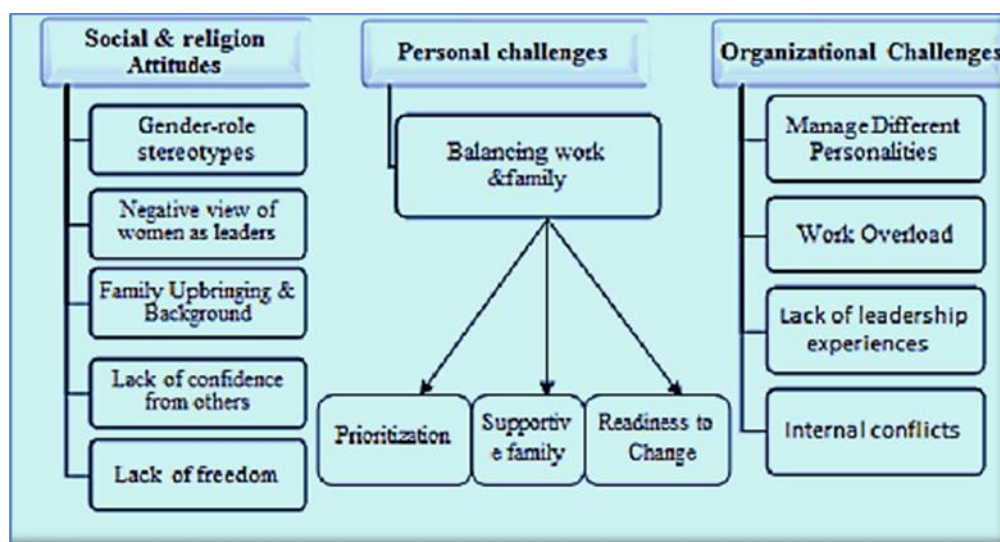


Figure 1: types and the root causes Challenges to Women Educational Leaders

There are countless research studies have highlighted the issue about the challenges to women educational leaders in their career development path jobs (e.g., Alston, 2005; Anderson, 2000; Polka, Litchka, & Davis's, 2008; Quilantan & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004; Reed & Patterson, 2007). the mentioned above researches are those who explored that what are the challenges faced by women educational leaders in their career and how they deal with them and how they use different strategies to overcome those barriers which are: improvements in academic qualifications, professional, mentorship, focused aims, and collaboration. Nevertheless, women in leading educational leadership jobs are yet to be highlighted the context of Pakistan, which this study revealed to explore.

While, there have been existence of barriers during the course of women empowerment and these have been stated as follows:

Restraints on Education – In rural areas, in most cases as compared to the urban, women are restrained from going to school and even developing their basic literacy skills. The poverty-stricken people and the individuals belonging to deprived, marginalized communities possess this viewpoint that women are not meant to study and they can only perform the household chores, prepare meals and bring up the children, hence, restrictions on education is a barrier within the course of women

empowerment.

Restraints on Employment – Employment is regarded to be a crucial aspect which all individuals desire, men as well as women. In rural areas, too women feel that they should get engaged in agricultural activities or other minority jobs and earn some money and not remain dependent upon the male members of the household. On the other hand, in urban areas, if the women are well educated and do not work they are married off and are meant to perform only the household chores, then that proves to be a hindrance within the course of women empowerment. Therefore, employment and work opportunities should be opened up for women.

Female Feticide and Infanticide – The prevalence of the practices of female feticide and infanticide are considered to be major impediments to the empowerment of women. Female feticide is killing of the female unborn child and infanticide is killing the female new born child. These are the practices, when the women are deprived of their basic right that is the right to live. There has been formulation of policies and programs that girls should be allowed to live and they should be provided with all kinds of opportunities that would lead to their empowerment.

Crime and Violence – In rural as well as in urban areas, women have been subjected to different kinds of criminal and violent acts such as rape, sexual harassment, exploitation, intimidation, murder, beating, physical abuse and verbal abuse. The violent and criminal acts have been imposed upon women of all age groups, even girls who are below ten years of age are subjected to these kinds of acts. When women from disadvantaged and under-privileged groups come to urban areas in search for employment opportunities, then normally they obtain jobs of domestic helpers and they are in some cases mistreated and get subjected to violent acts.

Child Marriage – In rural communities, there has been a system of child marriage. People long for a male child and believe that males can bring wealth and prestige to the family, whereas, females are only considered to be a burden. They believe in early marriage of their girls. When a girl is married off early, she is not permitted to attend educational institutions, she is not mobile and remains confined within the house, performs the household chores, then all these factors prove to be hindrances within the course of women empowerment.

Work Participation – Women are normally at the lower position within the labor market as far as participation in work activities and pay is concerned. They basically occupy low status and low paying jobs, even if they have the similar skills and work ethics as men. The unemployment rate amongst the women is higher as compared to men even in the informal sector. In the organized sector, the number of women is

significantly less, even if they possess the skills and the qualifications. Therefore, when the women are not considered at par with men, when they are looked down upon, then they will certainly encounter barriers within the course of empowerment (Chakravarty, Kumar, & Jha, 2013).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To explore the barriers in front of educational Women Leaders in their career development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the barriers faced by women educational leaders in their career path in Pakistan?
2. how do women educational leaders experience difficulties in work life balance?
3. What are the societal, gender discrimination and politics bothers women leaders in their career development?
4. is doing good quality work an issue for educational women leaders in Pakistan?
5. what are the impacts of those barriers on women leader's professional performance in Pakistan?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Current research study is qualitative by method and descriptive by purpose. Qualitative study is an in-depth study (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). which explored the lived experiences of educational women leaders working now in the field and their experiences on their work place. Qualitative research study allows to Explains in depth about the problem or research statement (Creswell, 2014). the qualitative research is helpful to understand the lived experiences of the people which the researcher wants to explore on. The Phenomenological research studies investigate the human experiences through the perceptions which are shared by the individuals involved, which experiences are known as lived experiences of participants. The phenomenological approach empowered the researcher to be able to conduct semi structured interviews to memorize around the participant's lived experiences. It contains the research questions, a elaboration of data collection, data analysis, along with through the interview questions an explanation of the study individuals. The qualitative research study poses questions which have clarity to the interpretation. A qualitative research study is concerned with reality, knowledge, and the crucial role of the researcher (Gay L., 1976). Qualitative research provides an opportunity to understand the social, human factor. The experience of educational women leaders, as an executive in their career path, and that was the reason I chose qualitative method for this research study.

Population

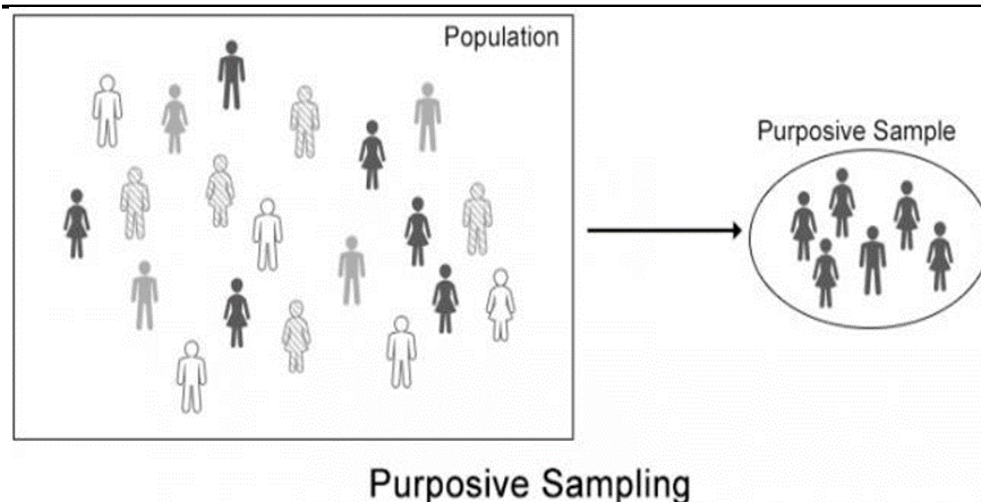
The population is the bunch of people which is under the main focus of a researcher's area of interest to discover for research purposes. According to Creswell (2012), the population is the bunch of individuals having some common attributes which researcher can recognize from the study. Neumann (2006) also defines a population as an exact group of cases from which a researcher takes out a sample for the research study and the results can be generalized to the whole population. so the population of the current research study is 15 women educational leaders currently appointed as higher level leadership positions I education and literacy department in Karachi region.

Sample

The sample is a subset of the population: while the sample size is the number of participants assumed in a sample. In an ideal situation, the sample can be selected who are representative of the entire population. It is a sub-group of the case of some population of possible cases (Hill, 1998). The researcher begins to conduct the sampling method by going there is the maximum possibility to have participants over there. According to (Bhattacharjee ,2012) the sampling as the numerical process to selecting a sample from the population to conduct statistical conclusions about that population. Miles & Huberman (1994) said that, the sample should be clear about what you want to study and why. The sample for the current research study is acquired from the targeted population. In this research, the participants of this research are educational women leaders currently working on higher level positions in education department, in this regard the population of this research study is higher level women educational leaders of public sector schools' education & literacy department government of Sindh, who are currently appointed on the executive positions in public sector. Qualitative research is commonly non numerical study. Data observation process happen to study the elements in their natural perception.it give a clear sense that how to measure or interpret that what impacts are those elements on human beings and all living things as well. Generally, there are three main types of qualitative sampling techniques (Maxwell, 2012), which are as under: Purposive sampling, Quota sampling, and Snowball sampling.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is the qualitative sampling strategy in which objects are selected due to the reason that they have those characteristics which you need in your sample. In simple words, units are selected "on purpose" in purposive sampling technique. which predetermined criteria about the phenomena anyone has particular and deep information about the phenomena (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2014).



Data analysis

Qualitative study has in-depth and broad data analysis procedure, therefore the researcher faced a lot of difficulties during this process. firstly, researcher transcribed the audio recordings of interviews, after this researcher made notes in the margin after the reading the transcripts. Converting audio recordings not the written information is called the of transcription procedure. And for the purpose of analysis of data there were some important steps which are performed by researcher very carefully. The first step was the coding of was completed. The coding process is consisting of to highlight the main points such as phrases, words and sentences which are written in the study. Second step after coding is the put down those codes into the existing and emerging themes, both description and themes representing the findings by the way of optical and in text form presentation. After this the next step is to categorized all the themes which are followed by report writing (Creswell, 2012). The use of Verbatim quotations is also done as the strength of arguments cannot be represented by categories, frequencies and keywords.

Describing and developing themes from the data

Entirely procedure of data collecting and analyzing was very attentive, step by step must be adopted to get accurately and genuine results. we tried to link the codes to each other and to generated themes into categories and sub categories. We also organize all the categories in similar way to show the connection between various categories in the form of themes that are discussed below.

Participant interview

All the higher-level women leaders currently working on leadership positions in

education and literacy department of Sindh were interviewed by asking semi structured questions, by answering the research study the questions are shared.

DATAANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Work family balance

In order to reply the question about the work family balance, most of them were reported that their families are in fact supportive to women educational leaders in their professional life. However, the question about work and family life balance by the researcher has a huge implication then initially was realized by the educational women leaders. In fact, the family life also included the cultural norms and person and family threats. Therefore, we conclude that family definitely play a vital role for the professional life of educational women leaders. educational women leaders disclose that they have to deal with threats to their families during performing their professional assignments. one of study participant told she have to face strong personal threats for not obeying teachers and clerks' union unreasonable demands. participant also lay claim to, that "We women mostly keep away our men from involving in official matters". however, most of such situations are not often controllable for us. another participant of the study said that she had balance work and family life. She talks about her experience and said that at one point her family saw the wrong stuff on media about her, and have decide to Campaign against the unions as they took it a challenge to their personal honor. She described that the case was entirely professional but it was only for the reason of "official agenda". But that incident generates the issues to her family. further this given statement above statements shows that the educational women leaders want to remain so far from these types of disturbances and wants to carry out such activates which they may not willing to do in order to their families. women educational leaders were stressful to avoid personal and family threats which are the wrong allegations and blames of corruption which eventually affected their family and personal life.

Gender discrimination as a challenge

The women educational leaders which are the participants of this research study also reported that they are facing different societal issues as like gender discrimination in their career path. As told by a participant in higher level position in education department they often discrimination as the male leaders choose the most skillful and hardworking clerical staff in comparison with women leaders. Further she said that, due to having more men in clerical staff at government education offices the clerks also do blackmail women leaders and due to their less expertise and less professional trainings women leaders avail illegal interest and Taking advantage of wrongdoing. One of the participants which is a deputy DEO told that, even though there is no any proper place to sit on work place because in the office there are several rooms occupied by male officers so that is why she faced a lot of difficulties due to sit with combine

office with male staff. Some of participants also reported that another problem is also that mostly in Karachi there is offices situated on second or third floor, so it is very hot and not suitable for women to work in it. Women leaders face gender discrimination in their offices which is a general social problem in Pakistan.

Lack of supportive mentoring/networking programs as challenge

Usually three or six-month training is provided to newly selected as women leaders but this training cannot be considered sufficient to develop their leadership skills and to prepare them to cope the hardship and to understand their job descriptions. further that the training is provided in the form of different workshops which more decrease its effectiveness. This study disclose that the women leaders were deprived to get effective and useful professional trainings which can be beneficial for their better performance. However, one of the positive results of those workshops was that they form groups and stay connected to each other. Like, one of the participants said “that the initially provided training was not so beneficial regarding to develop expertise to women educational leaders to make them perfect for their job descriptions instead we learned from each other experiences”. She regretted, “there is huge gap of professional development chances, she admitted that they are learning only through their own experiences of work rather than any official support”. Another Participant which was assistant director in education and she was very bold woman she said, “that regular mentoring is a much more support for women leaders as more women are newly appointed as an educational leader so we hardly need mentorship to better performance in the field”. She said all of us are new in this field so no one is the expert here so we wish to have any expert among us as we can learn more. This study found that the most of participants were said that the male leaders are more competent as compare to women leaders. For example, one participant said “I agree that statement that male leaders are more competent but the reason is their exposure”. Usually men are ore socialize, and due to this reasons they also get more opportunities to utilize their knowledge and to learn more.... they are more competent”. They shared their contact to each other is great benefit for them in performing their job descriptions.

Political interference as a challenge

Another big issue confronting Educational leaders in their professional life specially women educational leaders are more afraid from that issue which is the political pressure. The situation becomes more critical for them to neither ignore the political references and nor can obey to going beyond the rules. DEO clearly discuss the issue, she says that the there is a great extant political interference. “We are like a puppet in front of politicians”.one other women leader faced challenges by teachers’ unions. She said that teacher unions are supported by influenced politicians and They forcefully obey their words whether they are right or wrong. “I don’t want to do anything which is wrong”. Most of women leaders reported that they are facing

political interference during performing their jobs.

Lack of resources as a challenge

This study found that there was a too much shortage of resources was also a big issue for the leaders. As well as there was in offices the computers were available but they are useless because of unavailability of generators in condition of power outage (load shadings) and unavailability of internet is a great issue to utilize them effectively. Due to offices located at second or third floor the room were very hot in summers, and the air conditioner were not properly working even air conditioner was missing in one of the DEO office that is why they said it is also a problem for us as they all are 45 plus age they said we cannot afford to work in that environment in summers specially.

Similarly, in one district the female officer and staff were sitting in a room made low level staff members. And similarly, one TEO (Town Education Officer) had no any proper office, she was sitting in the room of a primary school building and it is not right to disturbing the school environment because in office all the day public came to discuss their issues and academic proceedings can be disturbing for students and teachers.

As per rules they were supposed to provide with the facility of kitchen, restroom and a room for training, however, in practice they were not provided any of these. In fact, it is mandatory to provide vehicle for visiting posts and DEO circles were supposed to monitor all schools of districts on daily basis, one of the DEO (District Education Officer) said, “that it is a big issue for us to visit all school without any vehicle facility and one of DEO said she is facing issues for not properly trained driver given to me that is why it is totally risk to go out for visit with an untrained driver. This serious scarcity of physical resources is significant challenge to female officers.

Corruption in department as a challenge:

On the question about corruption in department all the women leaders agreed to apparently faced a lot of corruption issues in the system, they all said, the system is full of corrupt practices and it is so difficult to deal with these issues. They further said that “we have to deal with corrupt practices on workplace even all level corrupt people are involved, which are political leaders even clerks and office boys are involved. Participants reported that, there are various complains received for teachers and other staff of schools but almost staff have political approaches so we cannot take any action against them because they have strong political back. However, one participant opens the truth that, there is a huge corruption issues in department even DDO’s itself involved to take bribe from under inquiry staff to release the form the complaint or to get them transferred or posted on their favorite place, or allowed them to perform duty in the examinations.

DISCUSSION

Findings of current study revealed that the participants faced various barriers due to personal threats prone to being transferred to undesirable far flung areas, disbelief in their abilities, aversion to share office-concerned affairs with their family due to unwanted punishments and outcomes. Those all the factors disturbed the women leaders 'all powers in administrative matters.in specific circumstances they looked like impassive to take effective decisions to ignore the negative outcomes. As mentioned in the previous researches (e.g., Barmao, 2013; Coleman, 2012; Uwizeyimana & Mathevula, 2018), that, family worked as an h to women secure and sustain leadership positions. So far, current research study show that family Does not cause challenges to women leaders in attainment access to the leadership position, in fact it did the opposite. All the participants appreciated their family's support to their job responsibilities. While, the families of all participants are not directly against to women leader's aims and objectives, rather certain family-concerned sociocultural norms like 'ales considered as responsible to shelter their women' and the women are responsible for evade circumstances that might put at risk family's respect and notability, and therefore they force them to go opposed to their will in decision-making in such unavoidable environments. similarly, gender stereotypes are widely discussed in social science research studies. Such, Brunner (2000) explored by his study about twelve female superintendents and found that constantly accruing gender discrimination on workplace is hard to escape. Gewertz (2006) also mentioned that three of women leaders have resigned from the job due to gender discrimination barriers. While not any single women participant clearly acknowledged challenges concerned to competencies, it was clear that they were completely prepared to undertake their positions as individualistic leaders having wholly unlike demands compared to their former teaching responsibilities.

Another kind of challenges that the women leaders reported that associated to the different functional and structural aspects of social settings and having political nature involving deep- rooted cultural norms and conventional in Pakistan. Pervious researches mentioned that the political interference in educational system in Pakistan is a serious matter and Pakistan is no exception. For instance, Komatsu (2009) has explored also same political interference in education system. there is need to take some necessary efforts to work on, to ignore illegal political practices in education system, for example, to reduce politician's parts in recruitments process, rebuild transfer and posting rules and legal exemption to educational leaders in the situations like to misuse of jurisdiction. While, the current research study explored the perceptions and lived experiences of women educational leaders currently working in education and literacy department Sindh province in Pakistan. the qualitative phenomenological study explored multifaceted, and multi-dimensional challenges to women educational leaders in their professional life. It will impressively add more to

women administrative development in the particular setting. most significant and out of tolerance barrier to women leader's career path which reported by the participants was ' Being a woman which is already investigated through different researches (Chugh,2007; Halpern and Cheung, 2009). Portrayal. Various hindrances and barriers women educational leaders faced is to be heard and paid attention to, gender discrimination in leadership career and opportunities, glass ceiling effect, to deal with hard bosses, lack of professional trainings and mentoring, lack of opportunities, mental pressure due to investing extra energy to prove themselves and shuffling their individual lives and career to keep the ball rolling. Women leaders revealed that the most important support of educational leadership development is to make sense of carry on in the best way, how to get out from the safe zone and comfort level, what is the way to organize resources and to manage time, how to demonstrating constancy and work hard for those difficulties and challenges which they have observed in their career development path. Learn about situational leadership and generate more leaders in future is considered as the to be the most important component leadership path to destination. In the same way, showing durability, perseverance and dedication accomplish the goal of compete the barriers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Women educational leaders are working multifaceted surroundings and This is also expected from them to fulfil political, personal, cultural and official demands. usually women educational leaders believed that it can't be possible to take on leadership roles in future without motivate, strengthen and support their team members. Having various roles in their personal and professional lives to deal with their families, and other relatives and as well as their workplace environments make them multitasking personalities. In Pakistan it can be possible to change the financial conditions conventionally, politically and socially by providing the facilities to women educational leaders. Current research study such as recommends the given bellow suggestions to authorize to lift up the confidence of women educational leaders to provide the quality education.

- Educational leaders must be trained through teachers training institutions by providing the different degree programs and professional management trainings to make educational leaders more skillful and knowledgeable as they can easily tackle the problems and perform their leadership responsibilities in better way.
- In-service teacher' training institutions, such as PITE should to have an effective mechanism to recruit future managers suitably. the inductive training which provides management skills should be mandatory for all newly appointed educational leaders to aware them planning and development and financial management of an organization.

- Women ought to be provide opportunities, even to enroll at the college and university level and get higher education. Education is empowering to someone to lead to their advancement and to control all the challenges and hindrances.
- The Ministry of Education, both at the Centre and State levels should formulate strategic procedures to empower the women leader by giving legal control and power to take decisions without any fear.
- Policy makers should to make policies which guarantees job security and freedom to women leaders in their jobs. such as, education should be de- politicized so that political leaders have no any involvement either in enrollment, transfer, or requirement rules.

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