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Empowerment and Job Performance at University Level: Case of Women Academic Leaders

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Abstract: The empowerment of women means granting them the authority they deserve to carry out their responsibilities. The purpose of this research is to ascertain how women's empowerment in academic leadership affects their performance on the job at university level. Semi-structured interviews provided the foundation for the qualitative research. The current study is based on interviews with 12 female Heads of Department (HODs) at different University of Education campuses located in Lahore, Pakistan. Interviews were conducted for data collection and then thematically analyzed. The objectives of this research study were to influence the ways in which the empowerment of women academic leaders affected their productivity at university level. According to results, majority of respondents felt that having power improved performance since it allowed them to respond to situations quickly and effectively. They can work with greater efficacy, freedom, and efficiency. They can develop into socially desirable, reliable, skilled communicators, and more likely to develop long lasting relationships as a result of women empowerment. Therefore, empowering women in academic leadership has a positive effect on their work performance at the university level.

Key Words: Work Engagement, Leadership, Empowerment, Job Satisfaction

Introduction

The idea of giving women the freedom to manage their own education firstly surfaced in the 1980s and became popular in the 1990s (Abu-Nasr, 2007). Male coworkers had changed their minds about recruiting women in academia in less than ten years. This was brought about by the broad movement for women's equality as well as the increasing demand for educated female workers in all industries (Tiao, 2006). According to Badah (2010), institutional empowerment has used to ensure the success of academic institutions. Moreover, even if the achievements of female faculty members have significantly increased, American Association of Professors, or AAUP, recognized in 2006 that there is still work to be done in terms of empowering women in higher education. Women are underrepresented in senior administration roles universities. Women continue to be systematically excluded from positions of high leadership in academic institutions, particularly in those headed by the men mostly. This is a concern that there are currently not enough spots in higher education for women.

Increasing the performance of employees through motivation and support need to be at the top of managers' and companies' lists of priorities. Therefore, it follows that empowering employees through administrative actions is compulsory. In two famous professions that use empowerment are management and education, with worker empowerment in management and teacher empowerment in education. By

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improving their relationship with the school, managers who support female instructors maybe help them take on further responsibility. The sign of teacher strengthening is explained first in the review, followed by the mind set of authority as a responsibility, and in the there is a poor relationship between instructors' obligations and their strengthening.Giving the authorities to employees, encouraging them to take the positive steps and making them good decision makers, mentoring, and demonstrating their confidence in their capacity to execute theset goals successfully are all examples of empowerment leadership that may be applied to individuals or teams (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). It is unlikely that managers who just practice empowering leadership behaviors will witness an improvement in performanceof workers, even if businesses depend on this kind of leadership to extract the greatest potential from their workforce. For instance, research has showed that in some circumstances, enacting a mandate rather than taking initiative may be a better way to stimulate the execution (Lorinkova and Sims, 2013).

Giving female faculty members the freedom to decide what and how to teach is a crucial aspect of empowering women. This includes allowing them to contribute to the establishment of academic school goals and policies. Collaboration may distinguish between the effective and non-effective site-based administration (Harpell et al., 2010). In order to empower teachers more easily, school administrators should figure out how to empower the faculty staff members. This will inspire collaboration among teachers and administrators' faith in the school's personnel (Harpell et al., 2010). The reality that lies at the core of administrative empowerment is that women still understand what it's like to be trapped in a position of relative helplessness and unable to progress to higher levels of making the decisions. The main difference is that they have only considered administrative empowerment from the perspective of their own potential for that role. They understand that if they don't feelempowered, it's either because they haven't arrived at that place or they don't want to. Administrative empowerment is the process through which an organization or person moves from a position of limited to authority and the ability to implement policies (AL-Rousan, 2014).

Scholars divided the concept of administrative empowerment into two categories such as mental growth or development and underlying support. Kanter (1977); Thomson, Laschinger, and Shamian (2001a); "Admittance to association structure within the work environment climate through correspondence lines, resources, help, and data," as defined by O'Brien (2010), is primary strengthening. It gives representatives with a voice in direction and helps them manage their assets and succeed professionally in an organizational setting. The concept of administrative empowerment has been improved by some of the same scholars to highlight the importance of organizational actions such as training, authorities, and the awarding of increased powers (Kanter, 1977).

By addressing the causes of current experience of employees in the workplace and psychological empowerment are helpless. However, aims to increase the worker's confidence in their own skills (Ghani et al., 2009). Scientists define these viewpoints by pointing out situations where perception of representatives of their own productivity is strong and where they can potentially influence their job within the company (Spreitzer, 1995).When studying the higher education, researchers cannot agree on whether physical or psychological characteristics have a greater bearing on the definition of empowerment. Some scholars contend that presenting both halves enables a more thorough understanding of the concept. Academic women need to have the same freedom of thought and action as men in the academia, if they are to be fully empowered as change agents on par with their male counterparts (Gholipour et al., 2010).

Women academic leaders have the ability to empower the other women in academia by providing possibilities for effective leadership and career development. In higher education, there are still many obstacles that women academic leaders must overcome in order to execute their jobs in well way. The success of women academic leaders is greatly aided by empowerment programs including support groups, training courses, and mentorship, but more effort has to be done to remove societal and institutional hurdles. Developing and using performance measures frequently entails fundamental changes that could be dangerous for an organization, regardless of their potential worth in a given situation (Julnes, 2001; 1996 Marshall; 1996 Merjanian). The internal determinants are leadership and internal management commitment, in line with Sanger's (2008) contention that a dedicated leader prepared to provide important managerial investment and rewards is necessary for the successful deployment of the performance metrics. Leadership is necessary for development and implementation of the effective

performance measurement systems. However, only with the active participation of managers and top executives can performance measurement systems be made more effective. Despite of that, execution estimation frameworks may need a significant time and effort commitment, especially in the early stages of the improvement engagement. In this sense, a foundational element for improving the board's viability of execution could be its hierarchical culture (Posner, 1992).

Empowering employees takes place in two levels such as involvement and participation. There is a big difference between the two terms. Although there may be some overlap, the concepts are different and should be kept apart. The t initiative procedures of involvement of employees are started by management with the goal of increasing the knowledge of staff. Staff members will feel more a part of the organization. As defined by Lashley, C. (1996), "employee involvement" encompasses a range of managerially inspired, created, and launched processes aimed at fostering better communication with staff members to increase employee contribution to the firm and foster strong commitment. It is thought that increased employee involvement will result in higher levels of satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to the determined objectives and values of the company. Resultantly, they will also become more productive. However, the process by which employees have a greater influence in the dynamic cycle is hinted to by the support of representatives. According to Rodrigues (1994), essential elements underpin such as participation, influence, engagement, and information sharing. Thus, whilst support provides employees with a crucial opportunity to influence or participate in discussions about issues impacting them and their work, contribution is meant to simply increase the data provided to representatives in order to upgrade their commitment to the association. The feeling of mental empowerment strengthens in women at time when they acquire the knowledge required to be capable and powerful (Spreitzer, 1996).

Research Question

Following is the research question of this research study:

1. What effect does women's empowerment as academic leaders likely to have on their performance at university level?

Methodology

The qualitative methodology was used to explore the empowerment and job performance of female Heads of Department (HODs) at the university level. To analyze the data and draw conclusions, the research employed qualitative approaches. The total 12 female HODs from the two campuses of University of Education, Lahore Pakistan were the sample size for this study. Researcher used purposive sampling technique and acknowledged the concerns of the female HODs in semi-structured interviews in order to collect data. The researchers acquired informed consent by furnishing participants with comprehensive written information regarding the aim, methodology, and anticipated results of the study.

Seven research questions were addressed by the interview questions. Interview derived information was analyzed by using thematic analysis technique. The interview tapes were listened, typed, and most important answers were highlighted by researcher. The subjects were abstracted, and the identical answers were gathered at the same spot. Before conducting interviews, researcher took the respondents' agreement. The participant is given the assurance by the researcher that their responses would not be disclosed. Additionally, the researcher told the participants that their information would only be used for this research only. The researchers followed the legal norms, legal obligations, and social regulations when collecting the information. The information, findings, methods, and processes were all appropriately reported after analyzing it.

Data Presentation and Findings

Q1: How Freedoms in the Use of Authority from Your Higher Authorities Effect Your Performance as an Academic Leader?

According to the data, researcher made one major theme (Power of Freedom) in response to this study question. Goals, vision, and motivation are the sub themes.

Power of Freedom

When asked about decision making authorities, majority of females responded that an academic leader's performance can benefit from having flexibility in how they use authorities. Only a small percentage of respondents said that there may be both advantages and disadvantages.According to words of one respondent:

While playing the role of a leader in academia, I create a collaborative and encouraging work environment, when it is allowed the flexibility to make their judgments, innovation, creativity, and productivity. I overcome on the barriers that stand in their way of professional advancement, which will boost my commitment, engagement, and job satisfaction.

Motivation

A leader in academia will behave differently when their level of motivation varies, as motivation plays animportant role in their desire to do anything.As stated by one of the respondents:

It could be difficult for academic leaders to take actions and make decisions that are beneficial for an organization if they have limited autonomy powers in how they exercise their influence. Long-term success may suffer as a result of their decreased motivation.

Vision and Goals

Vision of an organization outlines its desired future state and its mission describes why it exists. The mission statement gives a framework for prioritizing and making the decisions by emphasizing the value that the business creates. Vision of a leader is essential in success of an organization.As stated by one of the respondents:

The academic leaders can make decisions and take actions that support the objectives of the organization if they are granted the appropriate latitude in using their influence. Since they are aware that they have the support they need to realize their vision and objectives, they can exercise with confidence in their leadership.

Q2: How Does the Decision-making Authority Bestowed upon you by Your Higher-ups Impact your Effectiveness as an Academic Leader?

Based on data from the respondents, the researcher made one major theme (Decision Making Power). Accountability and Collaboration are subthemes.

Decision Making Power

When asked about decision making authority, the majority of women academic leaders said that a woman's ability to make decisions can have a big influence on how well she performs at work since she has decision-making authority granted to her by a higher authority.One of the participants categorized that:

Academic leaders who possess decision-making authority are also better equipped to react swiftly and efficiently to new possibilities and challenges. For example, a leader in academic setting with decision making power can move quickly and forcefully to resolve the issue if a new program is going to be launched or if a current program needs to be updated with bold steps.

Accountability

It is clearly conveying their objectives, targets, and crucial results to their teams, the accountable leaders foster the coherence and the team focuses.Among the all respondents, one stated that:

Academic leaders may face difficulties to make choices that are optimal for their institution, if they have little decision making authority. This may cause them to become dissatisfied and lack accountability, which will ultimately impair their effectiveness.

Collaboration

The academic leaders can build a positive workplace culture and make clear expectations for their teams by cooperating well.A respondent said the following statement:

The academic leaders need to be adept at handling conflicts of interest, navigating intricate political and organizational frameworks, and striking a balance between conflicting agendas. Furthermore, they are must be able to reach consensus, manage ensuing conflicts, and effectively communicate or collaborate their conclusions to stakeholders.

Q3: How power or authority of autonomy given to you from your higher authorities which effects your performance while playing the role of a leader in academia?

Based on data, the researcher shaped one major topic (Autonomy Power) in response to this research question. The subthemes include creativity and independence.

Autonomy Power

When it asked about autonomy power, majority of women academic leaders responded that their work performance impacted by autonomy power granted to her by her higher authority. The only a few female respondents said that an academic leader's autonomy, granted by their higher authority, can affect their performance in both positive and negative ways.From one of the respondents:

The higher authority can provide academic leaders with more autonomy powers, which can have a couple of good effects on their performance. More autonomy, would allow them to act more effectively since they would not need to get permission from a higher authority before making any decisions.

Independence

The academic leaders, who like to try new things in learning environments, assist students and their careers. In this case, teacher autonomy entails providing educators with more chances to engage in tasks and endeavors.One of participants declared that:

Degree of independence as an academic leader possesses in making choices and carrying out their duties is referred as autonomy. An academic leader can exert more control and influence over the course and functioning of their department when they have a high degree of autonomy.

Creativity

There are many professions require creativity and inventiveness in order to lessen the load. The capacity to give one's own ideas shape makes someone creative.According to words of one of the respondents:

The academic leaders may be able to resolve the academic problems more inventively and creatively if they have greater liberty as opposed to being restricted by rigid norms, regulations, or institutional policies. Making good decisions and solving the problems can lead to the adoption of fresh, successful tactics in academia.

Q4: How self-efficacy power and authority given to you by your higher authorities effects to your performance as a leader in academia?

Based on the participant data, the researcher made one major topic (Self-efficacy Powers) in response to this study question. Confidence is the subtheme.

Self-Efficacy Powers

When the researcher asked about their level of self-efficacy, majority of women leaders said that their ability to perform at work can be greatly impacted by the level of self-efficacy that their higher authority has bestowed upon them. They have sufficient backing for their autonomy. One of the participants mentioned that:

Academic leaders' performance can benefit from self-efficacy power in a couple of ways. Firstly, academic leaders who possess a high degree of self-efficacy are inclined to establish challenging objectives for their department and university as well. Furthermore, they are more likely to devise plans of action to accomplish the objectives and persevere in the face of failure.

Confidence

The confident leaders are less prone to assign problems and conflicts to their staff members or to process them themselves. As stated by one of the respondents:

Higher authorities can support the academic leaders and help them to develop self-efficacy by giving them resources. Academic leaders, might profit from coaching, training, and other chances for development that may help them increase in abilities and self confidence to do any task or goal.

Q5: How communication, socially attractiveness and trustworthiness were given to you by your higher authority's who affect your performance as a leader in academia?

Based on the data, researcher created three primary themes in response to this study question such as social attractiveness, trustworthiness, and communication.

Communication

The effectiveness of academic leaders can be influenced by a couple of critical elements, including communication. One participant mentioned that:

To succeed in their positions, the academic leaders must have effective communication skills. Academic leaders that possess strong communication skills are more adept at sharing their vision, objectives, and standards with their relevant parties.

Social Attractiveness

Thesocial effectiveness can be influenced by a number of critical elements including social attractiveness. One participant mentioned that:

Academic leaders that possess social attractiveness are more likely to be well-liked, respected, and trusted by their stakeholders and colleagues. In result, the increase in cooperation, teamwork and production within the institution may be found.

Trustworthiness

The effectiveness can be influenced by a number of critical elements including trustworthiness. The expectations about person's actions are the foundation of trust and confidence.One of the participants mentioned that:

A successful connection between academic leader and higherauthorityis based on trust. Academic leaders are more inclined to adhere to their vision, accept advice and take action on their criticism if they have faith in their seniors. Trust makes the academic leader more honest, it also facilitates good communication that can improve decision making and problem solving within the institution.

Q6: How professional growth or development provided to you by your higher authoritiesaffects your performance as a leader in academia?

Based on the data, researcher created one major theme, professional growth or development, in response to this research question.

Professional Growth or Development in Academia

In order to support academic leaders in developing their leadership skills and other areas of competence, universities should provide them with chances for ongoing professional development. One participant replies as follows:

The academic leaders can enhance their effectiveness by acquiring new skills and talents through professional growth or development. Academic leaders can enhance their effectiveness in their professions by receiving training in project management, communication, or leadership skills.

Q7: How your higher authorities provided you academic support affects your performance as a leader in academia?

Depending on data, the researcher created a primary theme that academia supports in response to this research question.

Support in Academia

The provision of academic aid has the potential to significantly increase the efficacy of academic leaders. Academic leaders who have the support of individuals in higher positions of authority can achieve greater success and overcome more barriers. One of the participants responds in this way:

The academic support comes in many different forms, including opportunities for training, coaching, mentorship, funds, resources, and technology access. Higher authorities give academic leaders support for attending conferences and professional development activities, financing for research initiatives, and access to resources and technology.

Main Findings

In line with the objectives and research questions, following are the main findings derived from the collected information:

1. The majority of female academic leaders claimed that performance was positively impacted by general empowerment.
2. The desire to accomplish something significant involves motivation. The leaders of academia are likely to feel empowered to perform at highest level if they are allowed to make self decisions and take actionsthat are consistent with their values and objectives.
3. The ability to make decisions that female academic leadersare granted by higher authority can have a big impact on how well they performs at work.
4. The autonomy powers of a woman academic leader granted by her managerial authority can have a big impact on how well she performs at work. A few female respondents said that an academic leader's autonomy, granted by their higher authority, can affect their performance in both positive and negative ways.
5. The level of self-efficacy power bestowed by their seniors can have a substantial effect on how well they perform at work. They have sufficient backing for their autonomy powers.
6. The academic leaders who possess a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to take on additional responsibilities and lead with more effectiveness. This could be advantageous for the general morale of workplace.
7. The performance of academic leaders can be influenced by various elements, including social attractiveness, trustworthiness, and communication. Academic leaders are more likely to forge close bonds with their peers and stakeholders and to be successful in their positions when they are perceived as socially appealing, reliable, and skilled communicators.
8. If the academic leaders take part in professional development program, they may get new insights into emerging trends and best practices, improve their interpersonal and communication skills and come up with creative solutions to overcome on challenges.

Discussion

The researcher examined the findings in light of the goals of the investigation. Exploring the impact of women empowerment as academic leaders on their job performance at university level was the aim of study. The results of the analysis of the collected data were consistent with the body of existing literature. The main purpose was to close the gap by exploring the connections between empowerment of female academic leaders and their success in higher education level. Most research studies on leadership and empowerment of women isfocused on the barriers or obstacles that women face in academia rather than the opportunities they have or the ways that have advanced their careers in academia. This study also presents some novel and important findings on women's leadership empowerment in higher education. Their effectiveness as an academic leader is influenced by their freedom level, autonomy power, self decision making, and their self-efficacy in the use of power. Their performance as an academic leader is impacted by the decisions they make on the use of authorities. Women performance as an academic is impacted by socially appealing, reliable and skillful communications provided to women academic leaders by their higher authorities. The academic performance is impacted by the support and opportunities for professional development that women academic leaders receive from their higher authorities.

According to this study, academic leaders at universities frequently have access to chances for ongoing professional development, which helps them advance their leadership skills and knowledge. By taking part in seminars and trainings, they may develop as more professionals. The authority can encourage academic leaders to take advantage of growth prospects which can increase their efficiency in this area. In a similar vein, William et al. (2017) demonstrated in a previous study that the performance of academic leaders is impacted by their professional skills, growth, and legitimacy, all of which are enhanced by academic leader empowerment.

According to the results, social attractiveness, communication skills, and reliability are the important elements that can affect the performance. However, this is especially true for women academic leaders. The academic leaders are more likely to forge close bonds with their peers and stakeholders and to be successful in their positions when they are perceived as socially appealing, reliable, and skilled communicators. Reasonable expectations about the behavior of another person are the foundation of trust and beauty. Similarly, Bar (2018) stated in a prior study that authorities build trusting relationships and promote efficient communication among academic leaders through problem solving, social activity planning, self promotion and being approachable.

Conclusion

This study focused to investigate the women empowerment as an academic leaders' affects their job performance at university level. According to the findings, majority female academic leaders said that their empowerment had a good impact on their work. The conclusions of this study demonstrate a range of perspectives on the subject of how independence affects women's effectiveness as academic leaders. The majority of respondents said that an academic leader's performance can benefit from having flexibility in how they use authority. There is only a small percentage of women asserted that there may be both advantages and disadvantages. The majority of respondents said that an academic leader's performance can benefit from decisions made about the use of authorities. Academic leaders are also better equipped to act swiftly and decisively in the face of opportunities and challenges when they possess decision making authority. Autonomy power granted by higher authority can have a big impact on how well she performs at work. Few respondents said that autonomy, granted by their higher authority, can affect their performance in both positive and negative ways. When academic leaders are given greater freedom to respond to challenges of their respective institutions, efficiency, effectiveness, and independence may all improve. The effectiveness of academic leaders can be influenced by a number of elements including social attractiveness, trustworthiness and communication.

The academic leaders are forge close bonds with their peers and stakeholders and to be successful in their positions when they are perceived as socially appealing, reliable, and skilled communicators. The reasonable expectations about the behavior of another person are the foundation of both trust and beauty. The higher authorities can increase effectiveness of academic leaders by promoting their involvement for professional development. According to the respondents, the ability of a woman academic leader isto succeed at work can be greatly impacted by the academic assistance she receives from her higher authorities. The academic leaders who have the support of individuals in higher positions of authority can achieve greater success and overcome more obstacles and barriers.

Recommendations

Following are the recommendations made by researcher on the basis of findings.

1. It is recommended that mentorship programs, government policies and training should be provided to women academic leaders who hold influential positions in the institutions.
2. The results show that organizations ought to start creating initiatives that support women in leadership roles. These programs ought to give students access to continuing education opportunities of advanced degrees.
3. The researchers were only able to conduct interviews for this research study due to scheduling constraints. Consequently, it is imperative to augment the quantity of samples and ensure that they originate from disparate regions of Pakistan, given that disparate locales may possess disparate traits.

4. In order to gain a deeper understanding of women leadership, comparative studies utilizing a range of research processes (mixed methodologies) would be advantageous. Future researchers may find through quantitative research studies at different levels.

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