A Case Study Measuring the Effectiveness of Leadership Training for Women Leaders Across Bangladesh

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Abstract: Bangladesh is currently undergoing a transition of rapid growth to emerge as a developed nation of the 21st century. In this progression developing pragmatic women leadership at decision making levels is a pre requisite to attain gender-equality parameter of United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Due to increasing literacy levels greater representation of women leaders has been achieved but the number is insignificant. Though women are developing leadership skills, yet they are being disqualified from senior leadership position due to the stereotyped mindset. The objective of this study was to examine current scenario of women leadership and identify different factors and barriers of creating an effective training environment for women leaders across Bangladesh. This research was conducted on fifty women leaders from five districts trained by Bangladesh Alliance for Women Leadership (BDAWL) a Non-Profit Organization. The empirical findings revealed that issues such as awareness, motivation, incentives, expert trainer, support of family and society, as the major success factors for leadership trainings to be effective for women leadership development. Women empowerment in true sense requires providing the right tools and trainings to involve them in the mainstream of decision making.

Introduction

Equal rights for men and women have been ensured in the constitution of Bangladesh. Bengali women have struggled alongside their male compatriot for self determination and independence throughout the history of Bangladesh. After the country's independence, women contributed immensely to shape its economy. Bangladesh is notable for its cheap forms of labour at the heart of which women provide the means to actualize the economic infrastructure i.e. RMG, and micro-credit activities. Bangladesh has received much international recognition as women of Bangladesh made courageous choices from climbing the Mount Everest to being

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the first female speaker of the National Parliament. Despite such positive gains by a few individual women in our country, the majority of women continue to face significant social and economic barriers to assuming leadership roles. In today's context, ensuring equality for men and women, and building a progressive society appears to be a major challenge. [1] Barriers for women to participate fully include: inequalities in education, health and employment; discrimination, poverty, the urban-rural divide, and lack of initiatives in capacity building. Levelling the playing field – where women and men have equal chances to become socially and politically active, make decision and shape policies – is likely to lead over time to more representative, and more inclusive, institutions and policy choices and thus to be a better development path. Cost of women's exclusion from the social, political and economical decision making is a heavy one, impacting not just women but their communities and countries. [2] Studies show an investment in leadership development can improve governance, transparency, political and socio-economic indicators. Increase participation of women in political, economic and social life reflect a growing awareness of women as leaders, and a desire to see social and economic change in their personal and family circumstances. Bangladesh Alliance for Women Leadership (BDAWL) is an NGO in Bangladesh working toward gender equality and women empowerment since 2008. BDAWL has trained more than 1000 women in last five years from Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet and Dhaka. It has achieved significant success in enhancing women visibility at decision making levels by providing leadership trainings. This study examines the effectiveness of these leadership programs initiated for women, across Bangladesh.

Significance of the Study

Male dominated mind set and stereotyped attitude of the society about what women can or cannot do have been a major cause for women to leg behind men. Developing the leadership qualities in women, who are half of the population, is a significant tool to help women gain sustainable social, economic and political empowerment. For many decades now lack of attention to deal with the challenges of capacity building for leadership roles has discouraged women to come forward and they remain seriously underrepresented in the local and national decision making process. The experience of senior women leaders to date have expressed that often qualities of women at decision making level are labelled as feminine qualities, and are being discriminated from deserving leadership positions only because they are women. [3] Thus, researching women leadership development imperatives can assist in creating a more progressive society where men and women play equal role and have equal opportunities at the decision making levels.

Objectives of the Study

The overall development of a nation cannot be possible without making women self-reliance. So there is an urgent need to empower the women for the

development of the society as well as the country. With such view analyzing present and future women leadership empowering tools this study devised those following objectives:

- To understand the rationale for the leadership training programs to be effective in context of Bangladesh.

- To analyze how capacity building programs facilitate women gain more confidence to take up leadership roles at decision making level.

- To identify the major challenges of empowering future women leaders through leadership trainings.

Conceptual Framework of the study

As the study is based on analyzing the effectiveness of leadership training programs for women in Bangladesh, a particular organization Bangladesh Alliance for Women Leadership (BDAWL) which is successfully working for capacity building trainings for women in Bangladesh has been selected as case study organization. A brief profile of the organization is given below.

Profile of the case study organization

BDAWL was launched in 2008 to meet the challenge of inequality in governance and democracy and to realize its vision, mission and goal of having a greater gender balance in leadership positions. BDAWL has partnered with several well known international and national organizations such as USAID, TAF, UKaid, British Council, US State Department Office of Global Women's Issues, NED, Melvin & Bren Simon Foundation, WBI – CIDA, NDI, IRI, UN Women, WDN and many more in hosting its programs of leadership training and capacity building. [4]

The Programs and Initiatives for Women Leadership Development by BDAWL include: Women Parliamentarians for orientation program, Speaker Series with national and international speakers of prominence delivering motivational speeches to urge women to rise to the cause of women's empowerment; Advocacy by nationally recognized women leaders at decision making levels; Leadership trainings, BDAWL Leaders Club, National Policy Forum, establishment of BDAWL Leadership Academy for women etc. BDAWL has trained nearly 1000 women in the last five years across Bangladesh. The main objectives of leadership trainings were to empower women through enhancement of their leadership skills which would enable them to participate on an equal footing in the decision-making processes at every level. To achieve this goal BDAWL opened its Leadership Academies in 2011 which continues to train hundreds of women throughout the country each year. To inspire women seeking leadership roles in the future, BDAWL regularly publishes Who's Who series. Who's Who: Women Leaders at a Glance, this directory highlights over 400 women leaders in various spheres of the

society and government and it is the first of such reference book ever released in Bangladesh. The first Convocation of the BDAWL Leadership Academy was held in March 2014 were 50 Women Leaders were given certificate of graduation on leadership studies. Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid attended the event as the Chief Guest and Convocation Speaker.

Literature Review

Empowerment and its contexts

Different literature reflects that women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change that is being desired or measured. The empowerment of women has been widely acknowledged as an important goal in international development. Empowerment means expansion of freedom of choice and action. [5] It is important to acknowledge that women's empowerment encompasses some unique additional elements. It can be argued that while empowerment in general requires institutional transformation, women's empowerment requires systematic transformation not just of any institutions, but specifically of those supporting patriarchal structures. Thus, hypothetically there could be an improvement in gender equality by various measures, but unless the intervening process involve women as agent of that change rather than merely as its beneficiaries, we wouldn't consider it empowerment. [6] Empowerment as the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where these were previously denied to them.[7] In Bangladesh social, economic and political structures generate norms and practices of women's subordination to men, the consequences of which are women's relative lack of choice and agency in decisions and processes that shape their welfare both in an absolute and in a relative sense and reduce subordination through the expansion of choice and by achieving the capacity to exercise agency in choosing. [8] Empowerment of rural women in a third world country like Bangladesh can reduce gender inequality and improve their social status. Despite its significance, the issue cannot be solved easily as there are many factors that tend to debar its progress. In Bangladesh, impressive achievements have been made over the last decades in gender equality and rural women's empowered, particularly in areas such as access to primary education, ICT, employment and availability of micro-credit. This has led to significant advances in the status of women and in poverty reduction overall. At the same time, greater efforts to decrease inequalities and invest in rural women will translate into even higher achievements for the government and people of Bangladesh. It is not only a major challenge but also a major opportunity for progressive and sustained change. The pursuit of women empowerment is not possible on the part of the government alone. All must play their respective roles from their respective positions to generate momentum. [9]

Gender Equality and its Impact

The twin challenges of building pathways to sustainable development and achieving gender equality have never been more pressing. As the world moves towards the post-2015 development agenda, the present World Survey not only shows why each challenge is so important, but also why both challenges must be addressed together, in ways that fully realize the human rights of women and girls and help countries to make the transition to sustainable development. It is important to build up women's agency and capabilities to create better synergies between gender equality and sustainable development outcomes. When women have greater voice and participation in public administration, public resources are more likely to be allocated towards investments in human development priorities, including child health, nutrition and access to employment. [10]

The Leadership Question

On the eve of Barrack Obama's first inauguration the great columnist MJ Akbar wrote "the genius of any minority is wasted without the chemistry of circumstances…" Bangladesh has had the chemistry of circumstances many times over yet the minorities of honest and dedicated leaders have not come to the fore yet that can make a difference. Amongst them are the dedicated women of Bangladesh who have a great deal of fortitude but little environmental circumstances to emerge as leaders. MJ Akber also wrote "individual genius combined with social engineering…", caused leaders to emerge. Men and women have definite difference in leadership styles. For one, they do not look alike so they are genetically different. More importantly, as a minority in power but not in numbers, generally women do not have the circumstances that can make them great leaders. Women of Bangladesh have and continue to contribute a great deal in all aspects — socially, economically and indeed politically. Yet, they continue to have limited opportunities. Providing educational opportunities to girls and women is a part of that social engineering. So is the opportunity to receive training. Determination of who should get the benefit of social engineering for leadership will of course be influenced by certain factors such as the ability to command with an acceptable presence, an intellect that is above average, or the physique that is acceptable. [11]

International Perspective

In the United States, women are increasingly praised for having excellent skills for leadership and, in fact, women, more than men, manifest leadership styles associated with effective performance as leaders. Nevertheless, more people prefer male than female bosses, and it is more difficult for women than men to become leaders and to succeed in male-dominated leadership roles. [12]

Some leadership behaviours, which are more frequently applied by women than by men in management teams, prove to enhance corporate performance and will be a

key factor in meeting tomorrow's business challenges. Hence, promoting gender diversity and leadership variety is of strategic importance for companies. Organizational performance is reinforced by nine leadership behaviours they are "Participative decision making", "Role model", "Inspiration", "Expectations and rewards", "People development", "Intellectual stimulation", "Efficient communication", "Individualistic decision making" and "Control and corrective action". Women apply five of these nine leadership behaviors more frequently than men and thus contribute to stronger Organizational performance. Developing women leaders thus is a major trend in corporations worldwide to ensure equal and effective participation for men and women. Finally, to prepare the leaders of the future, companies must make sure that they have a sufficiently large pool of potential leaders who are all fully aware of leadership behaviour issues. [13]

In the global arena there has been a lot happening as USA is at the verge of electing their first ever female president for the presidential election of 2016. It also shows the international urgency and priority of women leadership advancements. Hillary Clinton states in her book Hard Choices, creating opportunity for women and girls throughout the world "directly support everyone's security and prosperity, and should be part of our diplomacy and development work." Empowering women means a stronger, more stable world economy. Although the past half-century has seen tremendous progress, there's still much to be done to ensure women have the opportunity, information, resources and legal rights they need for economic success. The United States is committed to advancing opportunities for women as entrepreneurs and business leaders. They view it as both a moral and strategic imperative for the 21st century. [14]

Sheryl Sandberg a well known American technology executive, activist, and author said women are not making it to the top of any profession anywhere in the world. The numbers tell the story quite clearly. 190 heads of state -- nine are women. Of all the people in parliament in the world, 13 percent are women. In the corporate sector, women at the top, C-level jobs, board seats - tops out at 15, 16 percent. The numbers have not moved since 2002 and are going in the wrong direction. And even in the non-profit world, a world we sometimes think of as being led by more women, women at the top: 20 percent. Another problem is that women face harder choices between professional success and personal fulfilment. Women do not negotiate for themselves in the workforce. So these says that there is lacking in self confidence in Women everywhere. Attention needs to be placed on these pressing issues if we truly want see women empowerment. [15]

Methodology of the Study

For this exploratory research a number of qualitative and quantitative methods were applied to collect and analyze data. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with trainees of Leadership training, Survey with structured Questionnaire, observations, and key informant interviews were conducted. Primary data was collected via mobile phone

and face to face interviews. Secondary data were collected from sources like organizational reports, journals, policy paper, and articles.

Sample Size

The sample size for this research was fifty women leaders trained by BDAWL Leadership Academy from Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet and Dhaka.

Sample Selection

For selecting the samples stratified sampling methods were applied. Stratification was done on the basis of divisions. Each stratum's respondent's amount was taken on the basis of percentage of trainees in that division out of 1000 women who received leadership trainings.

Survey, Interview and Focus Group Discussion Method

A questionnaire was prepared for the study with some open and close ended questions. Two focus group discussions were done in Chittagong and Dhaka division. Face to face interviews were done with BDAWL Graduates, prominent women leaders at decision making levels in Bangladesh who e Leadership Academy trainings and signification individuals associated with those trainings.

Instrumentations

For this research SPSS was used to do all the statistical analysis of data. Specifically frequency distribution was applied to identify the variable and parameters for this research. Cross tabulation and Chi-Square was done to show the correlation among variables. Tables and Figures were used to make the representation of data in a more structured manner.

Data Analysis

Demographic Composition of the Respondents

Sample size for this research was 50 respondents including 6 male and 44 female, mostly local government representatives and political activists at the grass roots level across Bangladesh. Following Chart in (Fig.1) shows the demographic composition of the respondents. The chart shows that 6% respondents were students, 4% social activists, 6% Service Holders, 74% Political Activists, 6% Entrepreneur and 6% other occupations. (Fig.1)

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Fig. 1 Occupation of the Respondents
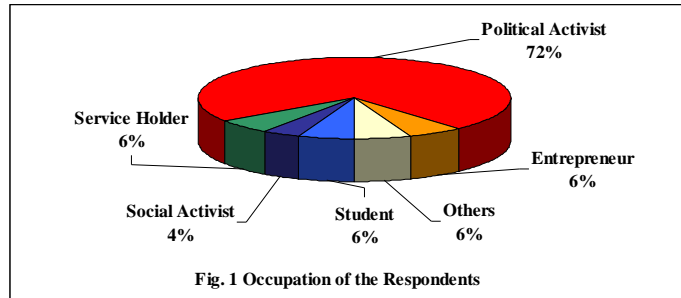
The divisions of the respondents were 42% from Chittagong, 16% from Dhaka, 12% from Khulna, 16% from Rajshahi, 14% from Sylhet division. (Fig. 2)

**Fig.2 Demographic Representation of Respondents**
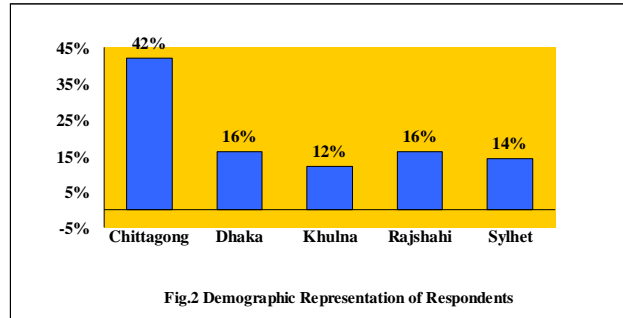
Needs assessment for women leadership development

The respondents were asked if they think there are enough women leaders at the decision making levels in Bangladesh. In the response 78% of the respondent said no. (Table 1) Thus, it indicates there is insufficient representation of women at the decision making levels.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of present condition of women representation at different levels in Bangladesh

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	39	78.0	78.0	78.0
	1	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The following chart (Fig.3) depicts existing lack of capable women leaders at different leadership position. Respondents were asked if they agree with the statement that "There is lack of skilled and capable women leaders in Bangladesh". 10 out of 50 respondents said they strongly agreed with the statement, 17 respondents agreed, and 20 out of 50 respondents said they moderately agree, and only 3 said that they disagree with the statement. (Fig.3)

Fig. 3 Lack of Women Leaders at the Decision Making Level
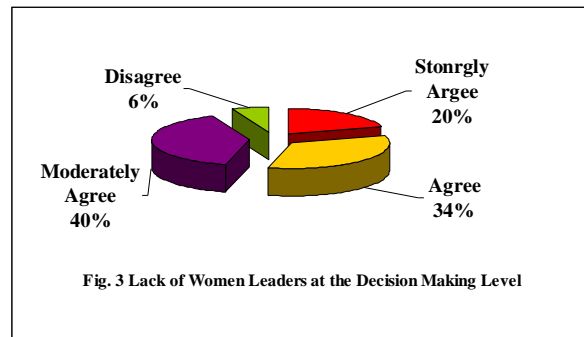
Advance Leadership Training for women

When asked if the respondents who have already done the leadership trainings want to be part of future trainings of BDAWL Leadership Academy, 100% of the respondent said yes. This shows that BDAWL Academy Trainings were able to bring qualitative change in the mindset of women and in their attitude towards leadership. (Table 2)

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Advanced Leadership Training Requirements

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	50	100.0	100.0	100.0

Women Leaders' Readiness to Combat Challenges

According to the frequency distribution of the survey result shown in Table 3 it is evident that 38% of the respondents think 40% of women are equipped enough with skill and knowledge to combat the challenges of the 21st century. Whereas 6 percent thinks 20%, 28% thinks 30% and 26% thinks 50% and only 2% believes that there are 60% women leaders capable to take the challenges of 21st century. This reveals that even though we have half of the population who are women who has huge potential to contribute in the economy but lack of required skill development and training to utilizing their full potential. (Table 3)

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Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Skilled Women Leaders Readiness to Combat Challenges of 21st Century

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	3	3.3	6.0	6.0
	3.00	14	15.6	28.0	34.0
	4.00	19	21.1	38.0	72.0
	5.00	13	14.4	26.0	98.0
	6.00	1	1.1	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	55.6	100.0	
Missing	System	40	44.4		
Total		90	100.0		

Effectiveness of Leadership Trainings

The following Figure shows responses about how many changes out of 6 mentioned in the survey occurred in the life of those women leaders who attended the trainings at the BDAWL Leadership Academy. The changes mentioned were if they have gained economic independence, have become more self confident, have a better decision making authority in the family, have gained more respect in the neighbourhood community, if people come to them for advice regarding an issue, and their leadership is more acknowledged at your workplace. Thus, 10% responded with 1 change, 15% said 2 Changes occurred, 20% said 3 changes,25% said 4 changes, 30% said 5 out of these 6 changes have occurred in their lives after receiving the training. (Fig. 4)
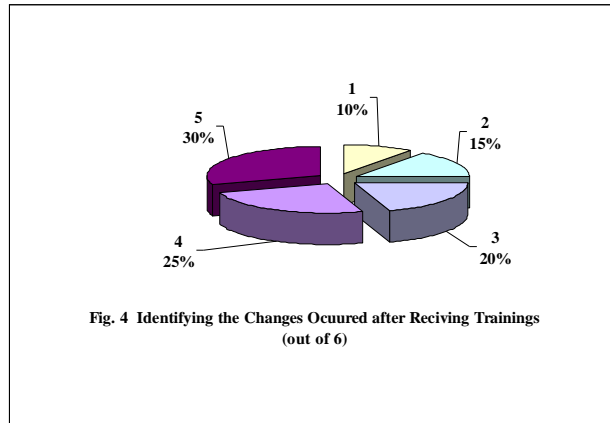
Fig. 4 Identifying the Changes Ocuured after Reciving Trainings (out of 6)

Post Training Impact

Following chart (Fig. 5) shows the percentage distribution of responses of effectiveness of BDAWL Trainings were 30% respondent said they got promotion after training. (Fig. 5)
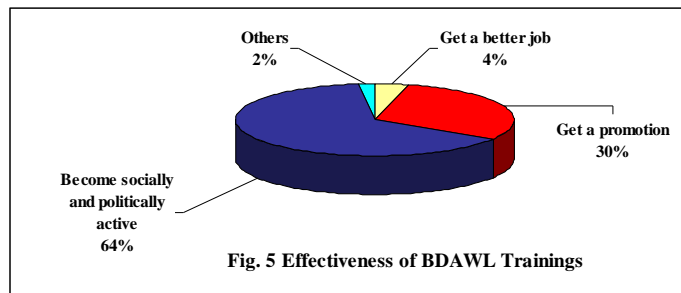

Fig. 5 Effectiveness of BDAWL Trainings

Major Challenges of Women Leadership

The following table represents frequency distribution of Challenges of Gender Discrimination were 28 respondents said women don't get promotion due to gender discrimination, 34% said women are under represented and neglected , 14% said Lack of recognition of work done by women and 24% said that women are deprived of resources and opportunities equal as men everywhere. Thus women are being disqualified from senior leadership position in-spite of having the skills of leadership. (Table 4.)

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Gender Discrimination Challenges

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Don't get the deserved promotion	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
Underrepresented and neglected	17	34.0	34.0	62.0
Lack of recognition of work done by women	7	14.0	14.0	76.0
deprived of resources and opportunities	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Frequency distribution of Major constraint of women empowerment in Bangladesh shows that 14% of the respondents said Social attitude towards Women is the major constraint, where as 12% thinks its Religious beliefs, 68% of the respondents said lack of effective leadership training for women, and 6% thinks its discriminatory attitude of family members towards women. (Table 5)

Table 5. Identified constraints of women empowerment

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Social attitude towards Women	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
Religious beliefs	6	12.0	12.0	26.0
Lack of strategic and leadership training for women	34	68.0	68.0	94.0
Discriminatory attitude of family members towards women	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Relationship between leadership trainings and women empowerment

Now the research comes down to the point whether or not there exists any the relationship between effectiveness and demand of leadership training for women in Bangladesh. For that, cross tabulation analysis was done in SPSS and the following table was attained. The table 6 shows in the present condition, demand for capacity building and leadership programs for women is quite high. For example, those who thought 20% of Bangladeshi women are ready for the role of leaders, 66.7% of them thought training is critical in Bangladesh rating 5 in demand table. Similarly those who thought 50% of women are ready for leadership roles; even then 61.5% of them thought training is very important. It boils down to a simple interpretation that, despite the condition of increased participation of women in leadership roles there is demand for more women at the decision making level.

Table 6. Cross tabulation between Leadership Condition vs. Demand of Leadership Trainings

| | | | **Demand of Trainings** | | | |
			3	4	5	Total
	2.00	Count	1	0	2	3
		% within LC	33.3%	.0%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within DT	50.0%	.0%	5.9%	6.0%
		% of Total	2.0%	.0%	4.0%	6.0%
	3.00	Count	0	4	10	14
		% within LC	.0%	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
		% within DT	.0%	28.6%	29.4%	28.0%
		% of Total	.0%	8.0%	20.0%	28.0%
Leadership Condition	4.00	Count	1	5	13	19
		% within LC	5.3%	26.3%	68.4%	100.0%
		% within DT	50.0%	35.7%	38.2%	38.0%
		% of Total	2.0%	10.0%	26.0%	38.0%
	5.00	Count	0	5	8	13

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		% within LC	.0%	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%
		% within DT	.0%	35.7%	23.5%	26.0%
		% of Total	.0%	10.0%	16.0%	26.0%
	6.00	Count	0	0	1	1
		% within LC	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% within DT	.0%	.0%	2.9%	2.0%
		% of Total	.0%	.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Total		Count	2	14	34	50
		% within LC	4.0%	28.0%	68.0%	100.0%
		% within DT	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	4.0%	28.0%	68.0%	100.0%

If we take a closer look in Chi-square test (Table 7.), it ensures the previous cross tabulation findings:

Table 7. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.554a	8	.298
Likelihood Ratio	7.744	8	.459
Linear-by-Linear Association	.107	1	.744
N of Valid Cases	50		

11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .04.

Findings of the Study

The study found that the effectiveness of leadership training program is reflected in increased awareness and confidence women gained after receiving those trainings.

It enhanced knowledge and capacity for women across Bangladesh to come together and created avenues where they can speak their minds with a belief that there voices will be heard. Most of the respondents had a positive attitude towards the trainings they received from in BDAWL Leadership Academy as illustrated by their various perceptions of learning, networking, advocating. Findings suggests that leadership trainings helped those women to furnish their overall understanding of women's economic and political rights as citizens of Bangladesh and the important role they can play in national life as individuals. The findings supplement the emerging issues of gender equality that by proper leadership trainings women can contribute more fully to different levels with men. The study established that even though the reach of this training program is small and limited to a number of women across Bangladesh yet its ability to impact and influence social change is considerably high.

The first part of analysis discusses about the necessity of leadership training for women in Bangladesh. If we look at table 1 to table 3, and Fig.3 we see that the respondents expressed that women working along with men at various levels have to prove their skills and capabilities more often than men. Despite many challenges of 21st century women leaders at policy making levels is an increasing demand, which signifies the necessity of women leaders in social and political scenario of Bangladesh. Hence the data interprets for sustainable development Bangladesh needs increased number of women leadership at the decision making level.

The second part of the analysis, which consisted with Figure 4 and Figure 5, showed the impact of leadership trainings. Here the changes women felt after receiving the training in their lives and also the behavioural change of society towards them were significant. Transformation was observed in participants' level of confidence and knowledge, increased participation in social, economic and political processes after receiving trainings. Even to a certain extent the society changes its attitude towards them and accepts women as leaders more generously after trainings. Hence, we can conclude the data interprets noteworthy impact of leadership trainings for women in Bangladesh.

Finally it comes down to identifying the challenges women face in Bangladesh, especially in working environment let the context be social, economical or political. Family, society and religion all are having an adverse attitude towards women in leadership roles though there is lot of chauvinism towards women empowerment is evident. It was showed in Table 4 & 5 whether such trainings can alleviate and address the existing problems. Major challenge identified through this research emphasised on gender discrimination and male dominated mindset.

Gaps

The study revealed leadership training for women has a positive result in alleviating the challenges women faces in Bangladesh. But it wasn't conclusive enough to state how much training is needed on individual level to have a permanent impact on the behaviours of those women leaders. Another issue was it was not possible to

give an overview of how many women needed to be trained to have a sustainable impact on leadership all over Bangladesh. The study lacks in terms of data of other NGO's who is providing trainings to various sectors. The gaps identified were as following:

i)   Even though BDAWL has successfully been organizing leadership trainings in different parts of the country. However, the portion is very limited to the vice chairman, women councillors and political and social activists.

ii)   Effectiveness of those trainings diminishes as women after receiving training implementing them becomes a challenge due to male dominated mind set and society attitude and acceptance.

iii) Men at different levels often lack in participation to create the required awareness to address the difficulties women faces in society.

iv)   Facilitating Leadership trainings and Social Networking for women leaders at grassroots at every level requires Government and Civil Society collaboration on a greater level.

v)   Women reaching down to give those behind them a hand up, sharing what they've learnt and offering advice from their experience will expand the reach of these trainings, but very few are able to make it happen due to lack of financial support.

vi)   There is room for more in-depth research on what and how much men are doing to support women at their own individual levels and also at social and national level.

Recommendations:

Relationship between leadership trainings and women empowerment seems apparent from this study. Leadership trainings contribute tremendously to building women capacity to become effective leaders, giving them confidence to speak at pubic gatherings. Leadership trainings should be made available in every Zilla, Upazila and Union Levels to involve more women. To create successful leaders men & women both need to be trained together for exchange of ideas and creating mutual coexistence as equals. Given the above gaps found in the existing support of women's leadership development in context of Bangladesh, following recommendations are suggested for women empowerment through effective leadership trainings:

•   Greater emphasis on youth must be placed in all the capacity building and leadership programs concerning women. National level advocacy involving people from decision making level can create greater drive to women leadership issues.

- Developing effective expert trainers with specific knowledge and understanding of the women in Bangladesh to extend those leadership trainings to remote areas. Structured curriculum and well thought materials in convenient training environments will increase the effectiveness of such endeavours.

- Convening the more women from various levels and fields in regular facilitated forums for mutual support, leadership development, and engaging them in the advocacy programs of gender equality.

- Establishing new avenues among Government, International Donor Agencies, National NGO's and Civil Society to bridge the gap in program initiatives.

- Initiating more in-depth research on leadership development of women and effective ways to unveil the constraints in transfer of training.

Conclusion

The Millennium Development Goals, beyond 2015 include, as a core component, women's empowerment and gender equality. Efforts to achieve a just and sustainable future cannot ignore the rights, dignity and capabilities of half the world's population. Women should not be viewed as victims, but as central actors in moving towards sustainability. The visible changes in women's political and economic participation throughout the country are proof of government commitment and people's aspiration to a more equitable society. In Bangladesh, impressive achievements have been made over the last decades in gender equality and women empowerment, particularly in areas such as access to primary education, ICT, employment and availability of micro-credit. Women's participation in local level elections was perhaps one of the greatest milestones for Bangladesh. But pursuit of women empowerment is not possible on the part of the government alone. All must play their respective roles from their positions to generate momentum especially to enhance women leadership at decision making level is an integrated move to achieve collective benefit of all concerned.

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