

Gender and Language : **Discourse Analysis of Women in** **Leadership Roles in India.**

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Women Leaders in India



The preamble to the Constitution of India guarantees to **all its citizens** equality in the matter relating to employment.



Women in India at work

Workforce participation of women:

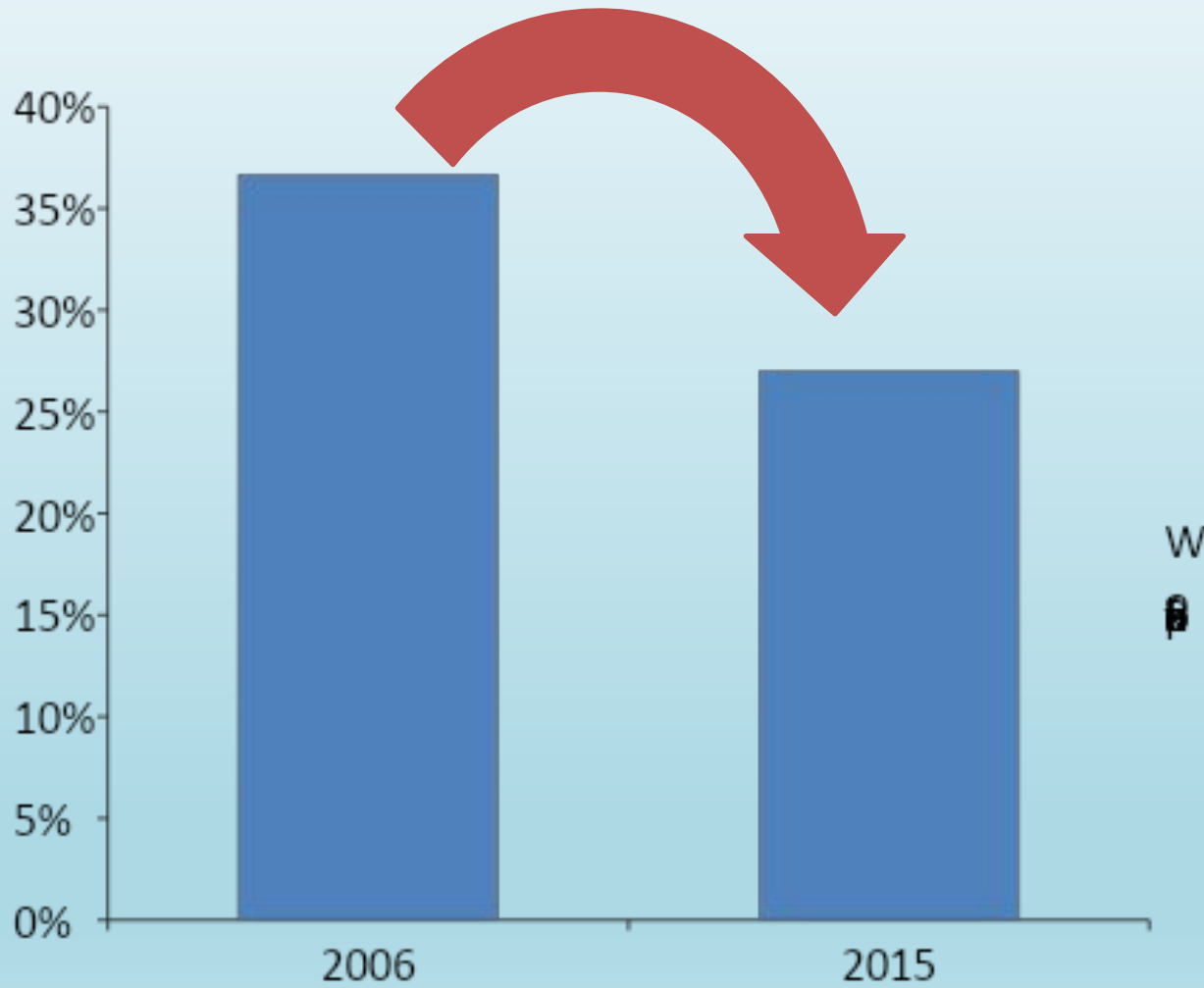


India, 24%



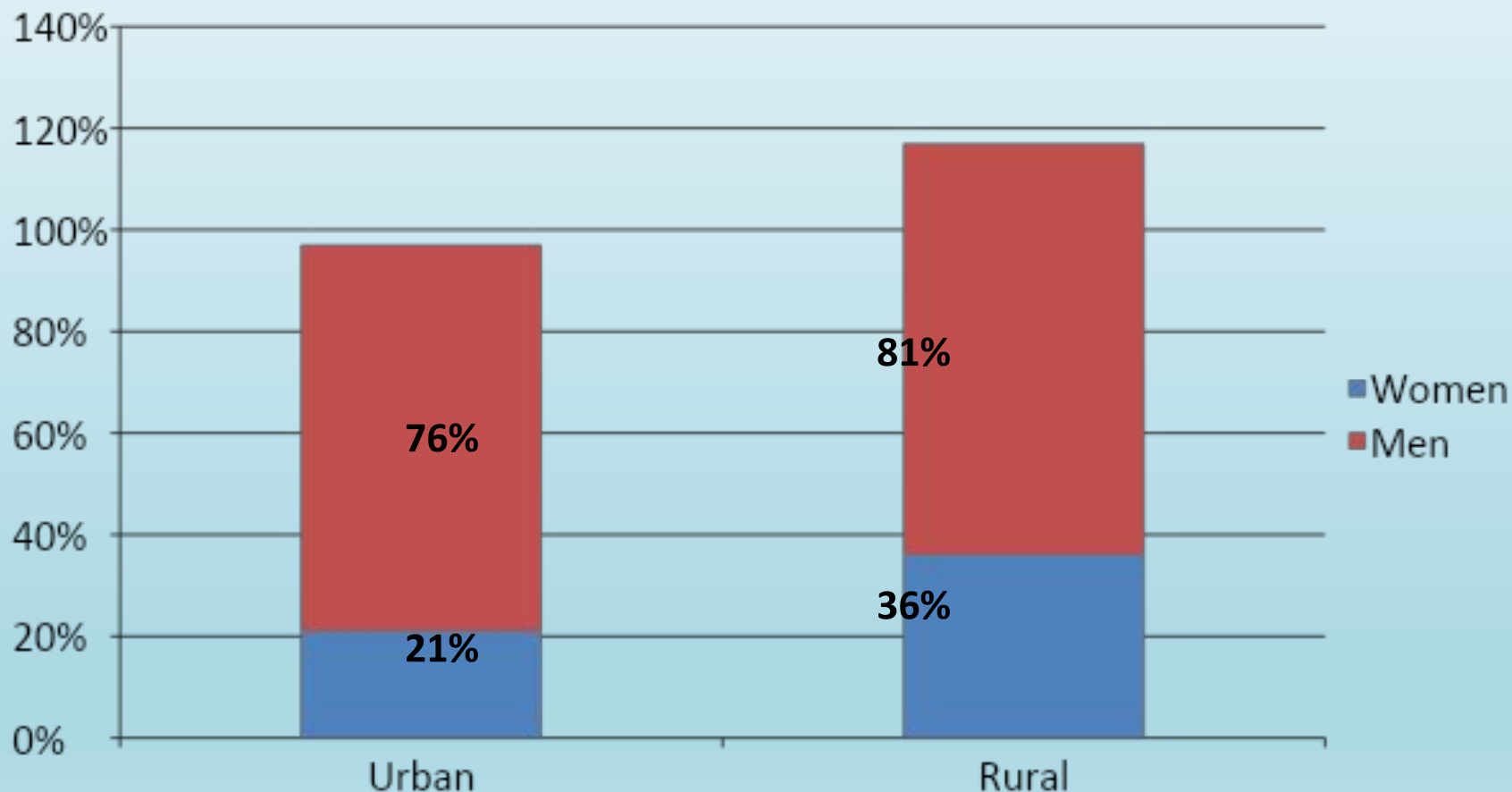
world average, 40%

Workforce Participation



Source: Deloitte report - Empowering Girls and Women in India for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Men Vs Women in the Workforce



Source: India's National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)

5.3% are women Director of companies listed in Bombay Stock Exchange



The socio-cultural settings of Women's status

“The stability of the Indian family is largely due to woman, but it has meant sacrifice and subordinating the needs of the self to those of others.”

- Tara Ali Baig

Women Managers in India

Challenges and Opportunities

India has jumped 14 places to the 63rd position on the World Bank's ease of doing business ranking.

40% of senior women managers have to prove their capabilities just because they are women.

- report by Center for Social Research, 2009

Theoretical background

- Language and Society
- Language and Gender
- Language and Power
- Discourse Analysis

My study

“does one correct a social inequality by changing linguistic disparity?”

-RobinLakoff

‘Language and Women’s Place’ (1973)

Research Questions

- *Co-relation between the low percentage of women in top positions and the way they play their leadership roles?*
- *Career progression of working women constrained by the **social conditioning** of how a woman should speak, write and use body language?*
- *Women perceive **not being heard** in a male dominated workplace?*
- *Any stereotypes perpetuated about 'man's speak' which is better than 'woman's speak'?*

Respondents

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Position</i>
Government services	2	<i>Additional Chief Secretary, Joint Secretary; Government of Maharashtra</i>
Medical Doctor	1	<i>MD, own practice with Doctor Husband</i>
Academics	4	<i>PhDs, Heading Institutes or Departments</i>
Entrepreneur	1	<i>Own garment manufacturing unit</i>
Non Government Organisation(NGO)	2	<i>Heading Charitable trusts.</i>
Corporate	3	<i>Business Heads of Leading Corporates</i>
Media	1	<i>Chief Editor, Marathi Newspaper.</i>

Research Findings

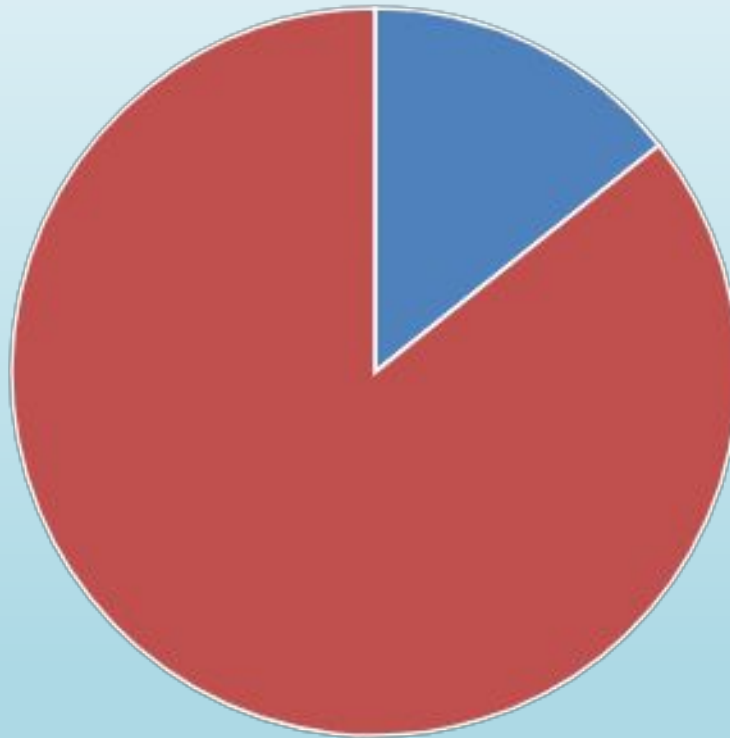
1. Status and Connection

Asking for Help



2.Expert v/s Non-expert

Delegate Tasks



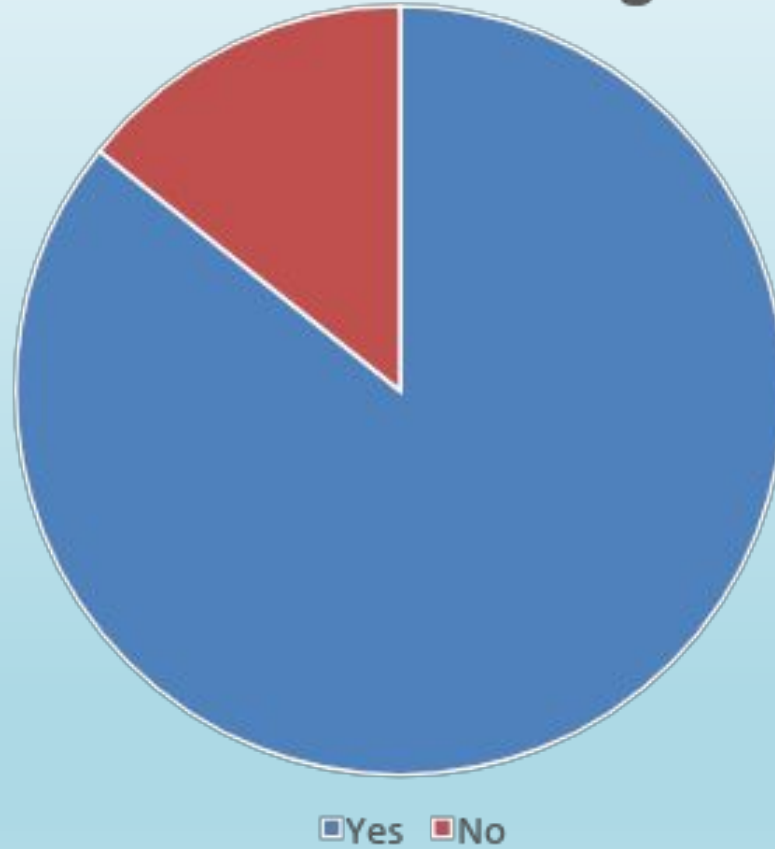
■ Assigning without consultaion ■ Assigning with consultaion

What they said...

- *'Women are better talking in an empathetic way to the parents.'*
- *'Men don't like to take instructions from a woman boss.'*
- Don't give them choice, people are chosen when I recognise their potential.

Expert vs non-expert

Disagreement and Decision Making



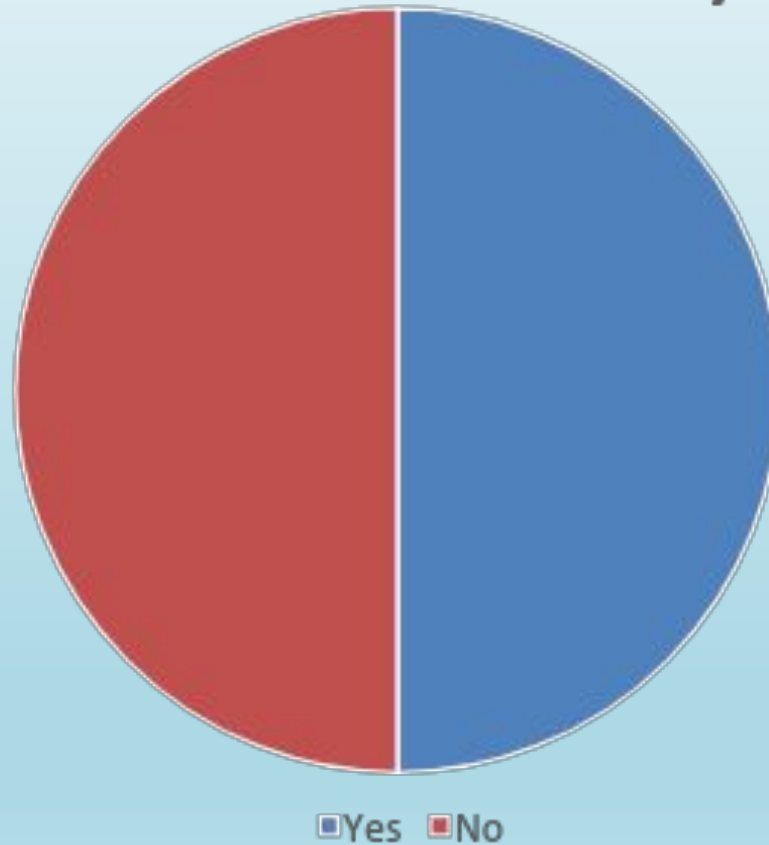
What they said...

‘Yes if I believe its for the greater good. However will listen to all and if I still feel it’s important to go by my decision, I will go ahead.’

‘Yes, the right decision has to be made. It’s better to thrash it out at the beginning, than take a wrong turn and then regret’

3. Politeness and the Public face.

Apologize, even when not directly responsible



What they said...

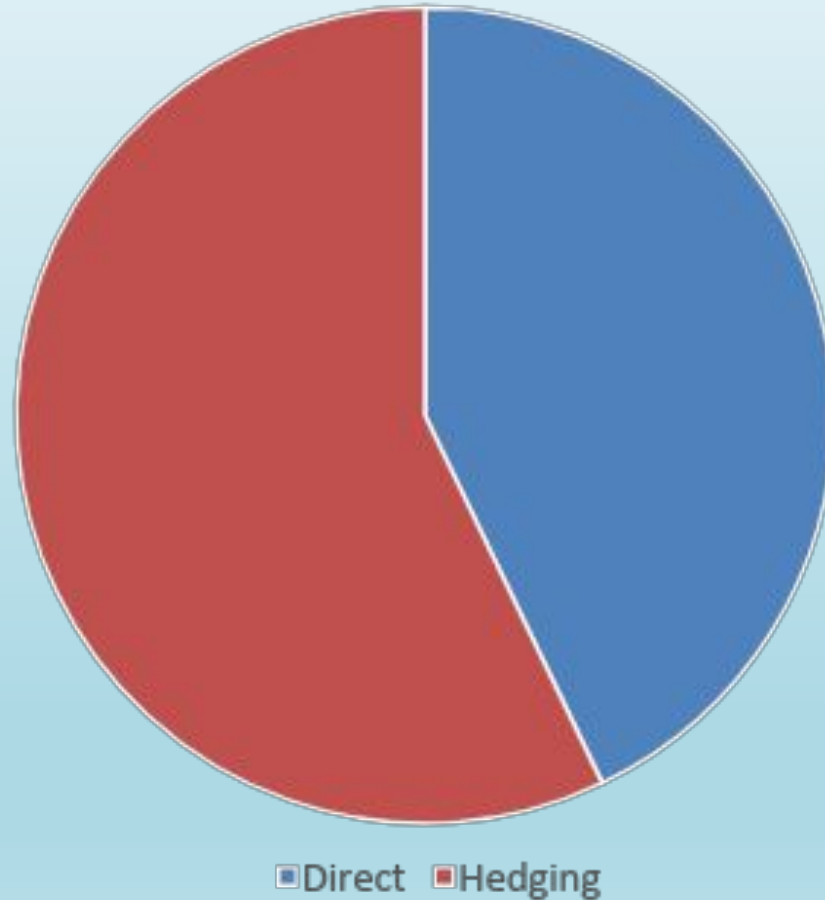
‘Occasionally, if the issue is getting out of hand’

‘Yes I take the responsibility of anything going wrong and accordingly talk’

‘Not apologize, will look at the situation in an empathizing way, looking at things critically is far more effective than merely saying sorry.’

3. Politeness and the Public face.

Giving Criticism



What they said...

Directly-

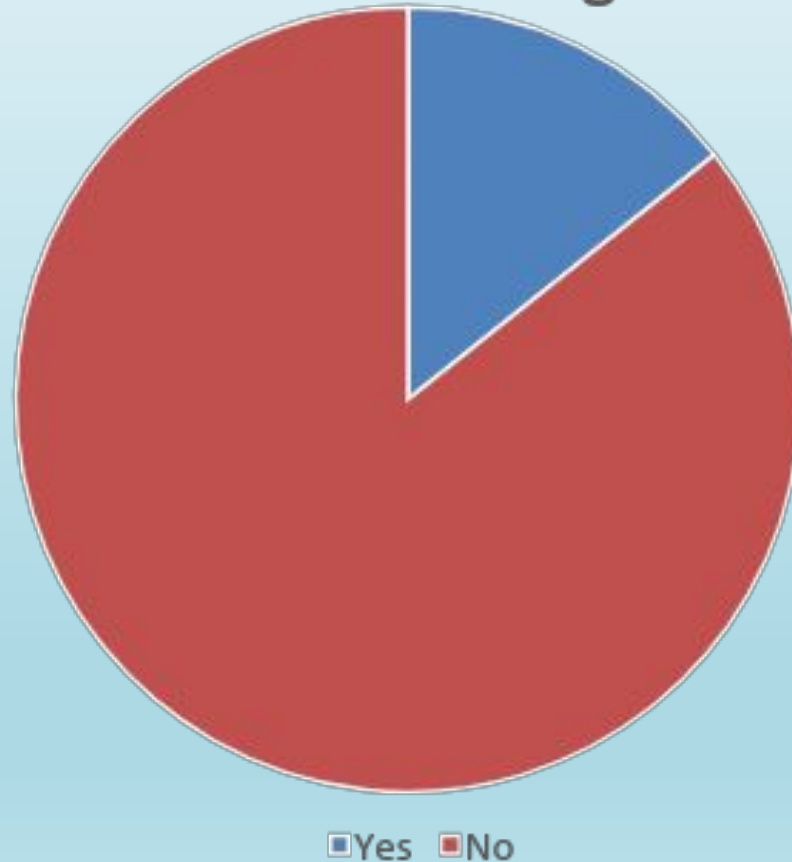
'it works better, hedging or making the criticism sound like an advice or sugar coated is not going to be effective, reprimand wherever necessary.'

Hedging-

'I give criticism as a kind of developmental feedback; so instead of saying "why was x done in a particular manner, I talk about how the person can achieve a better outcome and what changes can be made.'

3. Politeness and the Public face

Giving compliments and Receiving Criticism



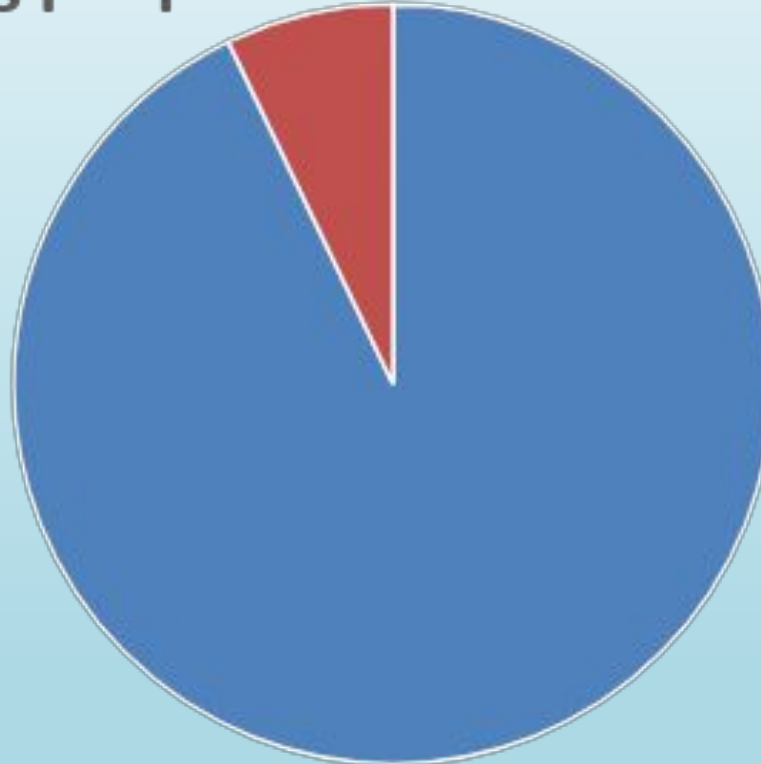
What they said...

‘Very comfortable giving compliments. About criticism, as a leader I risk being criticized, I am not in a popularity contest. Criticism is more a feedback so nothing personal.’

‘Not comfortable with criticism where I am compared with someone else, makes me insecure.’

3. Politeness and the Public face

Getting people to follow orders



■ Not Aggressive ■ Aggressive

What they said...

Assertive-

'No difficulty, motivational, convincing, majority of the times taking people along, spends lot of time in pep talk.'

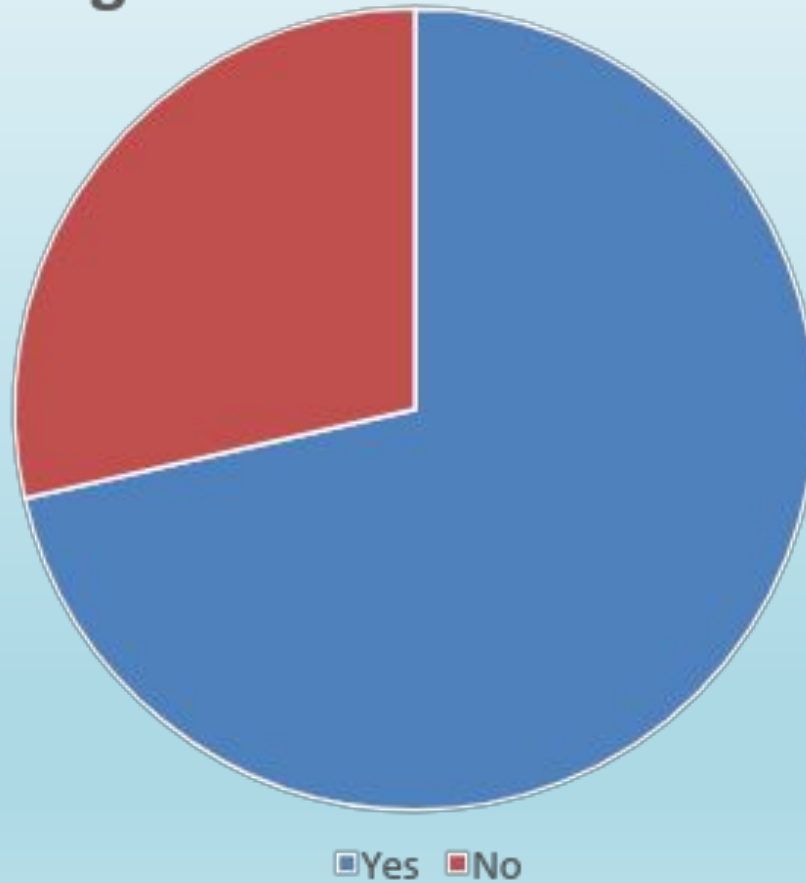
'Yes, I have difficulty. Men get work done by using "man's" language-don't come to work from tomorrow. I am not comfortable being like that.'

Aggressive-

No, I am so authoritative that nobody will dare.

4. Fear of success

Difficulty, talking about achievements



What they said...

Talks about achievement-

'I was mentored and made to realize the importance of talking about my achievement, and not to appear humble'.

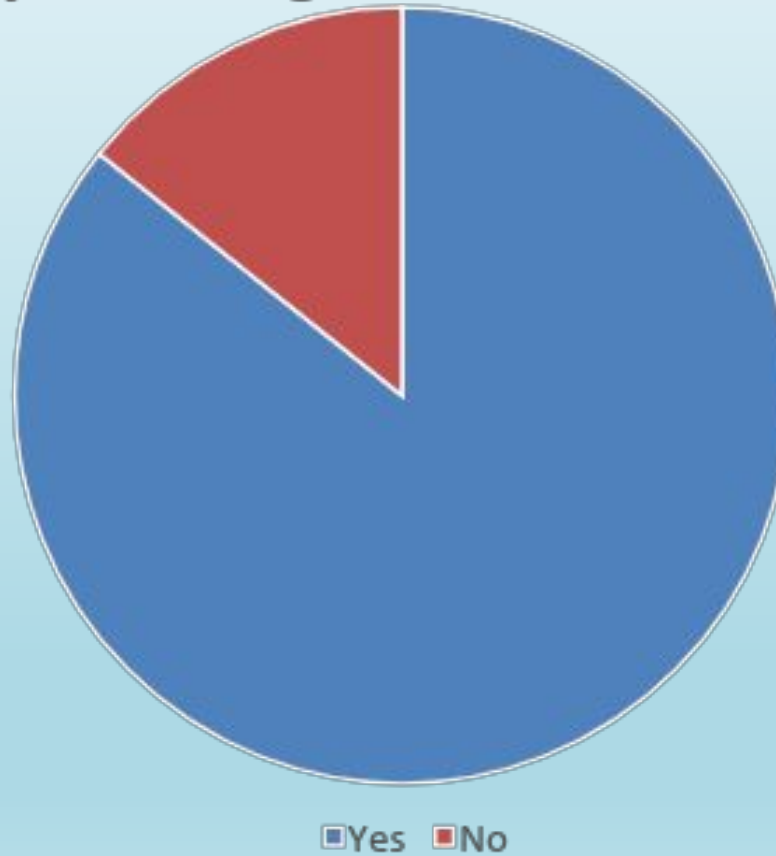
I have to keep talking, to be heard. Can't keep quiet

Have difficulty-

'Sometimes, yes. Always worked in teams, so talking is about team's achievement'.

4. Fear of success

Difficulty in asking for a raise in salary



What they said...

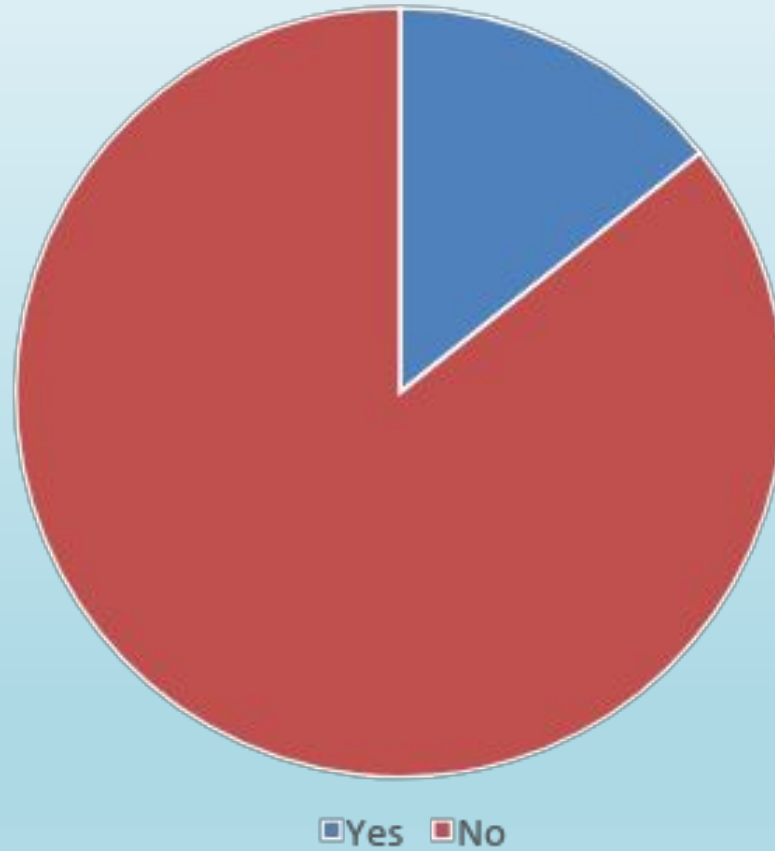
‘Demand with difficulty, am on the lower side of negotiating.’

‘Never ever asked for a raise, never negotiated, I am getting what is due sometimes wonder if I deserve so much.’

‘Yes, they(men) are better paid for doing lesser’.

4. Fear of Success

Networking



5. Report talk v/s Rapport talk.

Achievements are 'mine' or 'ours'?

OURS !

5.Report talk v/s Rapport talk.

- *Impressions of the women boss.*
 - *Supportive*
 - *Inclusive*
 - *Accommodating*
 - *Hand holding*
 - *Fair*
 - *Not aggressive*
 - *Responsible*
 - *Mentoring*

Conclusions

Question: *Is there any co-relation between the low percentage of women in top positions and the way they play their leadership roles?*

Answer: *Yes, there is. The journey to the top was not easy.*

Conclusions

Question: *Is the career progression of working women in India constrained by the social conditioning of how a woman should speak, write and use body language?*

Answer: *Yes, conforming to role expectations, constrains in asking what is due, not talking about achievements..*

Conclusions

Question: *Do women perceive **not being heard** in a male dominated work place*

Answer: *Yes. Too soft, lack of women mentors, failure to network, being someone she is not.*

Conclusions

Question: *Are there any stereotypes perpetuated about 'man's speak' which is better than 'woman's speak'.*

Answer: *No, women's leadership is alternative modes of communication and participation at all levels.
'That's the beauty of women leaders, accommodative and collective leadership'*

Ideal Discourse for a Woman Leader

A women leader is-

Confident in negotiating and getting her due.

Unconcerned about hierarchy.

Be at ease talking about achievements.

Be direct in giving feedback.

Be inclusive and nurturing

Comfortable networking.

Rather than speak like a man, aim for gender neutral discourse.

She marches along.....

Through paths in the jungle

With many a pebble,

clasping a sickle,

She marches along.

Worried for her parents

Anxious for her children

The blazing down sun dries out her throat

She marches along.

Through paths in the jungle

With many a pebble,

clasping a sickle

She marches along.

With a quickened pace, clasping a scythe,

She marches along...

Thank You !!!