

EXAMINING SOCIOEMOTIONAL SHIFTS IN WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES DUE TO THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF A WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

PART 1

A Professional Portfolio

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## ABSTRACT

The need for leadership development for community and agricultural leaders has long been recognized (Diem & Nikola, 2005), and one cannot combat poverty or promote sustainable agriculture and rural development without sustainable leadership in economic, educational, and civil realms (Grooms & Reid-Martinez 2011). The purpose of this study is to understand the dynamics and sustainable development growth through the perspective of the local women attending the empowerment program.

A qualitative research design will be implemented with a structured interview guide. Due to the ongoing expansion of the informal economy in the face of liberalization and globalization has fueled debates about whether women's increased participation in informal economic activity contributes to their empowerment or to their impoverishment (Meagher 2010), so the findings of this study will highlight the need for the creation and implementation of the women empowerment program and how it directly relates to the socioemotional shifts and perspectives towards growth of sustainable living within the area.

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## PART 1

### A. INTRODUCTION OF TOPIC

By examining the socioemotional shifts in women's perspectives due to the implementation of a women empowerment program this will allow the researcher to examine how the empowerment program is effective and assess the attitudes of the women in regards to the changes of their standards of living. Focusing on the emotional shifts in relation to a leadership theory reflects on the effectiveness of the program in its initial context. The goal is to create sustainable development in the living situations of disadvantaged women in a remote village of Mombasa, Kenya. The implementation of the women empowerment program, ImaniXchange, occurred in May 2013. The program was established to aid in sustainable development and provide employment opportunities through the teaching of the trade of sewing. The program also created an environment of learning by holding monthly health education classes, weekly English classes, weekly bible classes and again, daily sewing opportunities. Overall, "leadership sustainability is the ability to recognize intricate systems interwoven by human values that promote sustainability" (Grooms & Reid-Martinez 2011) and by implementing the women empowerment program, ImaniXchange, it has allowed growth within the community to develop and assisted with the formation of sustainable living situations.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Disadvantaged -

*An individual who has an unfavorable circumstances. Specifically in relation to women who have no resources for economic opportunities or social improvement in the context of where they are living. An individual who lacks financial support because of a loss of spouse, physical impairment, or is orphaned.*

ImaniXchange -

*A women empowerment program established May 2013 in Mtepeni Village, which is located on the outskirts of Mombasa. The program was established under the 501(c) 3 Non-Profit Organization, Imani Tumaini Upendo, Inc. This organization was founded in Bryan, TX on May 5, 2011.*

Socioemotional -

*A process that consists of variation in an individuals emotions. This can be displayed through personality, attitude, relationships, and emotions over a period of one's lifetime. The socioemotional shifts are directly related to the women of the program and over a six-month period during the initial implementation of the program.*

Sustainability (Sustainable Development) -

*The capacity to endure over duration of time as well as meet the human needs and various social challenges faced by humanity. Continuing to improve living scenarios and grow in overall economic and social stability.*

## B. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PRIMARY LEADERSHIP THEORY

In the implementation of the women empowerment program, ImaniXchange, and the observations of the women's socioemotional shifts in regards to the program; two major leadership theories played a major role in the development of success within the program.

1. Situational Leadership, Hersey - Blanchard
2. Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, Kouzes - Posner

The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory is based on several different leadership styles. Instead of just using one style, leaders should change their leadership styles based on the maturity of the people they are leading and the details of the task. By knowing the various leadership styles and maturity levels, this allows the leader to place more or less emphasis on the task or more or less emphasis on the relationship of the people they are leading. By knowing where the emphasis should be placed this will reflect on whether the task at hand is successful or not. The Leadership Styles and Maturity levels are listed below:

- Telling (S1)
- Selling (S2)
- Participating (S3)
- Delegating (S4)
- Low Maturity (M1)
- Medium Maturity, Limited Skills (M2)
- Medium Maturity, Higher Skills, but lack of confidence (M3)
- High Maturity (M4)

Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership are focused on behaviors of leaders. Although there may differences in culture, gender, age and

many other variables that come into play, behavior is a common ground that most leaders can relate to. There are five core behavioral practices that this leadership theory displays: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

1. *Model the Way* is when a leader creates standards of excellence for one self and then begins setting an example for others to follow.
2. *Inspire a Shared Vision* involves leaders who believe they can make a difference. The leader shares a dream with others and allows them to be a part of the excitement of the future and all the possibilities that dream holds.
3. *Challenge the Process* is about taking risk and leaders who search for opportunities to change the status quo of an organization or a situation. They know risk can involve failures, but take the time to view these risk as learning opportunities to grow from.
4. *Enable Other to Act* is actively involving others in a project. Leaders strive to create an atmosphere of trust and build teams with high spirits allowing individuals to feel capable of creating change or doing something great.
5. *Encourage the Heart* is when leaders recognize contributions that individuals make. The leader shares in accomplishments and understands it is a team effort always allowing individuals to receive the appropriate recognition for the project at hand.

Both of these leadership theories were essential to the project of implementing a women's empowerment program within a rural setting. This project had many

international boundaries, cultural boundaries and language boundaries in place, so understanding these theories as well as being able to directly apply the theories and put them into practice was much aid in the development of the program. Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership allowed understanding of the women's maturity with specific task and what leadership needed to be put into place. On the other hand, Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership helped in the understanding of how to encourage and empower the women on a day-to-day basis. This program was implemented to enhance their living situation through empowerment and opportunity and these five practices were directly applicable to the program at hand.



### C. TARGET POPULATION

The target population includes sixteen disadvantaged women from Mtepeni Village, which is located on the outskirts of Mombasa, Kenya. The women range from 20-38 years of age and have various stories that classify them as disadvantaged. In the classifications of disadvantaged, they are single, widowed, physically impaired or orphaned.

This population was selected in regards to their need of economic and social development.



### D. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project is identifying the shifts in emotional behaviors with the target population and reflecting if changes occurred in their living situations in regard to the implementation of the women's empowerment program, ImaniXchange.

The objectives of the project include:

- Strengthen economic development for the women and their families
- Create an environment of learning
  - Implementation of Monthly Health Education classes
  - Weekly English classes
  - Weekly Bible Classes
- Enhance knowledge of a new trade
  - Sewing (Handbags)
  - Tailoring



## E. CONCLUSIONS

Due to the situation of the women and the lack of opportunity in the village, ImaniXchange was greatly accepted and the response of the women was filled with excitement. The first two months of implementation was the required training that the women had to undergo. These two months included no pay, but discouragement was limited among the group due to Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. The women were inspired by the shared vision and although two months was a long time, it was not as long as the many years they had just endured without employment. They stayed encouraged through the process and gained a new perspective of working towards a common goal. Along with the sewing classes, the women were empowered through the weekly English and Bible classes. Six out of sixteen women had never received any education and what was found early on is the lack of knowledge of numbers. During training of learning the sewing machine and learning new patterns, many of these women had trouble with using their measurement tape because of the lack of knowledge in their primary years, but they stayed encouraged and were empowered that even in their late 20's or early 30's they could still develop new skills. Many women in Mtepeni village lose hope once they have reached the age of not being allowed public government schooling, but ImaniXchange gave these women an opportunity that they almost sought as impossible. Through the program, these women are learning new trade skills, improving communication skills, have accessibility to pay the fees for their children's schooling and can now begin to think of the future rather than living only in the 'now'. The women empowerment program, ImaniXchange, is developing the area and only improving the livelihood of the sixteen women who are involved.

Other factors that I was not expecting is the positive influence it had on the whole community. It empowered many of the men to look for jobs or learn new trades and created a long list of other women who want to be a part of the next training program when that implementation takes place. The program has successfully created an environment of learning as well has launched the beginning of sustainable economic development for the women and their families.



#### F. IMPLICATIONS

The two leadership theories used were:

1. Situational Leadership, Hersey - Blanchard
2. Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, Kouzes - Posner

These were best used when examining the socioemotional shifts in the women due to the implementation of the women empowerment program, ImaniXchange.

In regards to Situational Leadership, this was important especially in the beginning stages of the implementation process. The women presented lack of maturity in knowledge of the trait sewing as well as in their English, so the leadership skills that had to be present came more from the telling perspective in the sense of telling the women what to do and how to do it. As the program developed over the months, the women gained more confidence in their skills, increasing in maturity. With this occurring, the leadership style was able to transition from telling (S1), selling (S2) to participating (S3). I was able to begin to focus more on the relationship than the actual task at hand because the women had increased in their skill set. Delegating (S4) became more noticeable in the sewing classes when I was able to pass responsibility to a few of the women to leading the class and learning new patterns. In relation to the English classes, we are still in the selling (S2) phase due to poor education in their childhood years. Although the English classes are difficult for the women, they still strive to increase in their maturity and knowledge of the subject. On the other hand, The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership played a major role in the overall “empowerment” of the women especially when sharing the vision of the future and how the program could enhance through life through knowledge and economic growth and stability. I was able to become a better leader for the women in the program because the five practices guided me in being an example for the

women, sharing the vision, seeking out opportunities to improve the program, enabling the women to strive to be the best and encouraging them every step of the way. Through both of these leadership theories, one can easily witness the socioemotional change in the women from having lost hope in their current situation to being encouraged and uplifted about the future that could be.



## G. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In order to enhance this program in the future, I would implement other traits to learn rather than just sewing and tailoring. The ImaniXchange women are satisfied with the sewing program in place, but desire to learn more. Obviously, there is a direct relationship with the 'desire to learn more' after the implementation of a women *empowerment* program. It displays that the program is serving its purpose with shifting the perspectives of the women about their livelihood and giving them hope for the future, so my only advice would be to have more classes in place for the future of the program in order to meet the needs of the empowered women you will run into after the implementation of the program.

I would also put a strategic plan together of transitioning a woman from a position of student into a position of leadership. Once, an individual makes it to the M4 stage of the Situational Leadership model then there will be more opportunities for that individual to partake in. Also, by allowing the women to move from student positions into leadership positions then this will allow the program sustainability for the future.



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PART 2

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## INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is more than just a movement to motivate the poor, but empowerment is initiating change that will forever impact an individual's livelihood. It is creating change beyond the original vision that was first put into action.

*“Empowerment is also related to the process of internal change and to the capacity and right to make decisions. It consists of change, choice and power. It is a process of change by which individuals or groups with little or no power gain the ability to make choices that affect their lives. The structures of power directly affect the choices that women are able to make in their lives. In the feminist paradigm, empowerment goes beyond economic betterment and well being to strategic gender interests. Empowerment can exist at an individual level, where it is about having an agency, increased autonomy, choice, self-confidence and self-esteem” (Kulkarni 2011, p. 13)*

By examining the socioemotional shifts in women's perspectives due to the implementation of a women empowerment program this allowed a better understanding of the effectiveness of the program and to witness if the women's livelihoods were enhancing to create sustainable development in their area. The overall goal of the project is to create sustainable development in the living situations of disadvantaged women in the remote village of Mombasa, Kenya. To be categorized as a disadvantaged woman meant that they were surrounded by unfavorable circumstances specifically those who had no resources for economic

opportunities or social improvement in the context of their living situation and location. Considering the project was focused in Mtepeni Village, on the outskirts of Mombasa, Kenya, all of the subjects within the 3-mile radius village would be considered disadvantaged, so the project had to become more specific in the sense that in order for the woman to be considered into the program they had to have a lack of financial support due to a loss of spouse, physical impairment, or because of being orphaned as a child.

The vision of the implementation of the women empowerment program, ImaniXchange, was to view the socioemotional shifts in the perspective of the women who were in the program in order to reflect the success of the implementation of the program. By examining these shifts of women's attitudes and observing self-esteem changes this allowed a direct reflection to occur on not only the implementation success, but also on the development of sustainability within the community. This allowed an overall understanding to begin to form on if the women were being empowered not just for 'today', but in the future as well.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF PRIMARY LEADERSHIP THEORY

"Lifting women from poverty is about equalizing their opportunities in the economic, social, and political spheres" (Chowdhury, 2006, p. 7). In order to help uplift women, you have to be able to not only create change in a desperate situation, but also have the capabilities to lead a group to enable the change you originally wanted to see come alive. That is where the two leadership theories came into great play when implementing this program. The project focused on Hersey-Blanchard

Situational Leadership as well as Kouzes and Pousner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership.

#### SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP, HERSEY-BLANCHARD

This theory specifically aligns with situational changes and a "successful leader should be able to change their leadership styles based on the maturity of the people they're leading and the details of the task" (Mindtools, n.d.). There are four main leadership styles that directly relate to four maturity levels. The leadership styles consist of Telling/Directing (*S1*), Selling/Coaching (*S2*), Participating/Supporting (*S3*), and Delegating (*S4*) and the maturity levels consist of Low maturity (*M1*), Medium maturity with limited skills (*M2*), Medium maturity with higher skill set but lacking of confidence (*M3*), and then High maturity (*M4*). What I found is that in the beginning of implementation, the sixteen women who are a part of the program, ImaniXchange lacked much maturity because of their lack of knowledge on the program and all of its details. Every woman began at a low maturity level (*M1*), so my leadership mainly consisted in the *S1* category. I began with the telling stage and within the first two months of implementation found myself directing in various ways whether it was new pattern to learn on the singer sewing machine or the way the English classes were being taught, I was directing a majority of the time. Then as I saw an increase in confidence in the women and their self-esteem increase, the leadership style began to transfer from directing to more of a coaching mentality. Throughout the two month training that occurred, the sixteen women increased in maturity at various times, but they all increased in their knowledge and understanding of the task at hand, so my leadership skills were

transferred in relation to the socioemotional shifts that were occurring in the women. As the program continues to develop and other leaders step into assist in the growth of ImaniXchange, it looks as if the level of maturity will continue to grow and allow opportunities to open up for the local women to step into leadership roles as well as create a well rounded sustainable program to develop. By allowing the community to economically prosper this continues to generate opportunities for more women to join the movement of empowerment within Mtepeni Village.

*“In developing countries, a better access to the labor market and a better wage treatment produce inevitably a greater self-esteem, a strengthening of decision making within the family, greater potential participation in the community’s choices and in the social sphere. The essential actions leading to strengthening of the role of women in rural and non-rural areas respond to some basic priorities: access to resources, support of self-determination, awareness-raising, participation in the production and right to welfare policies”*  
(Quagliariello 2009, p. 84).

As situational leadership came into great effect when implementing the women empowerment program, ImaniXchange, so did Kouzes and Pousner’s Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. Understanding the five principles created an understanding of how to lead well through commitment and engagement of a particular group. In essence of modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision,

challenging the process, enabling other to act, and encouraging the heart, also came the compatibility of these practices within another culture.

*“Compatibility is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters. An idea that is more compatible is less uncertain to the potential adopter and fits more closely with the individual’s situations. Such compatibility helps the individual give meaning to the new idea so that it is regarded as more familiar. An innovation can be compatible or incompatible with (1) sociocultural values and beliefs, (2) previously introduced ideas, and/or (3) client needs for the innovation” (Rogers 1983, p. 240).*



Since the context of the project is within a remote village on the East coast of Kenya, compatibility plays a major role in how the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership can be seen as effective.

The program was implemented in May of 2013 and immediately began with the first practice of Kouzes and Pousner's model. Through informational meetings and clarification of the values of the program, I set an example of what I expected in the two-month training and then after. I set expectations at the very beginning of the program and outlined a schedule for the women to follow. I started with setting an example of coming on time everyday ready to instruct and even in the midst of cultural barriers of what it means to be on time, eventually they began to come early and actually show up "on time". Throughout the first two-months of training I inspired a shared vision among the IXC women. I began to talk about the future of the program and began to challenge them with envisioning for themselves where they would not only be in the program, but how the program would help better their future. Confidence began to be instilled in the women and through the inspiration of a shared vision, they began to become empowered through their self-esteem and view of they had of themselves.

As the women's socioemotional view of themselves and their life began to become more positive, I then instilled the next practice of challenging the process. Learning a new skill is not easy and many mistakes have been and will continue to be made in the process as the program continues to develop, but taking those mistakes and making them learning experiences has been an amazing opportunity to not only build deeper relationships with the women, but allow them grow personally as well. For example, six out of the sixteen women have not received a primary education level; they actually have never step foot into a school setting. In

the early stages of the training process, I noticed that these six women were slower at learning problems. I began to observe them more and what I found is that the women were slower due to the lack of knowledge of their numbers. Immediately the next day, in English class, we worked on our numbers. We were able to take the situation at hand, challenge the process and allow those six women to grow in knowledge overall, increasing their confidence in sewing and in day to day life. The fourth practice that is displayed is enabling others to act, which directly relates to the fifth practice of encouraging the heart.

The women empowerment program, ImaniXchange, actively involves the collaboration of the whole group and the program continues to run due to the women's hard work and perseverance.

In completion of their two-month training, the women received completion certificates to encourage the heart and allow them to understand that their work was not completed unnoticed. The certificate ceremony was put into place, so they were not only encouraged, but also that "the enhancement of the image of women as guardians of the traditional know-how so as to favor and promote their involvement in economic activities, not only as labor force, but also in decision-making and management processes" (Quagliariello 2009, p. 85) and in the end, empowering them to continue to strive for a better way of life.

## TARGET POPULATION

The target population includes sixteen disadvantaged women from Mtepeni Village, which is located on the outskirts of Mombasa, Kenya. The women range from 20-38 years of age and have various stories that classify them as disadvantaged. In the classifications of disadvantaged, they are single, widowed, physically impaired or orphaned.

“In least developed countries women and female children may have differential access to educational opportunities than their male counterparts. This can have long-term consequences and affect the economic and productive lives of different genders (Chowdhury 2006, p. 12). In relation to least developed countries, this population was selected in regards to their need of economic and social development.

## PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project is identifying the shifts in emotional behaviors with the target population and reflecting if changes occurred in their living situations in regard to the implementation of the women's empowerment program, ImaniXchange. The objectives of the project include: strengthening economic development for the women and their families, creating an environment of learning through implementation of monthly health education classes, weekly English classes and weekly bible classes, as well as enhancing the knowledge of a new trade through sewing and tailoring.

In order to accomplish the purpose and objectives at hand and “to be most sustainable, a leader’s checklist needs to be dynamic and adaptable, not static or fixed – constantly updated to reflect new situations and accumulated experience” (Useem 2011, p.42).

## CONCLUSIONS

Due to the situation of the women and the lack of opportunity in the village, ImaniXchange was greatly accepted and the response of the women was filled with excitement. The first two months of implementation was the required training that the women had to undergo. These two months included no pay, but discouragement was limited among the group due to Kouzes and Posner’s Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. The women were inspired by the shared vision and although two months was a long time, it was not as long as the many years they had just endured without employment. They stayed encouraged through the process and gained a new perspective of working towards a common goal. Along with the sewing classes, the women were empowered through the weekly English and Bible classes. Six out of sixteen women had never received any education and what was found early on is the lack of knowledge of numbers. During training of learning the sewing machine and learning new patterns, many of these women had trouble with using their measurement tape because of the lack of knowledge in their primary years, but they stayed encouraged and were empowered that even in their late 20’s or early 30’s they could still develop new skills. Many women in Mtepeni village lose hope once they have reached the age of not being allowed public government schooling, but ImaniXchange gave these women an opportunity that they almost sought as

impossible. Through the program, these women are learning new trade skills, improving communication skills, have accessibility to pay the fees for their children's schooling and can now begin to think of the future rather than living only in the 'now'.

The women empowerment program, ImaniXchange, is developing the area and only improving the livelihood of the sixteen women who are involved. Other factors that I was not expecting is the positive influence it had on the whole community. It empowered many of the men to look for jobs or learn new trades and created a long list of other women who want to be a part of the next training program when that implementation takes place. The program has successfully created an environment of learning as well has launched the beginning of sustainable economic development for the women and their families.

## IMPLICATIONS

The two leadership theories used were:

3. Situational Leadership, Hersey - Blanchard
4. Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, Kouzes - Posner

These were best used when examining the socioemotional shifts in the women due to the implementation of the women empowerment program, ImaniXchange.

In regards to Situational Leadership, this was important especially in the beginning stages of the implementation process. The women presented lack of maturity in knowledge of the trait sewing as well as in their English, so the leadership skills that had to be present came more from the telling perspective in the sense of telling the

women what to do and how to do it. As the program developed over the months, the women gained more confidence in their skills, increasing in maturity. With this occurring, the leadership style was able to transition from telling (S1), selling (S2) to participating (S3). I was able to begin to focus more on the relationship than the actual task at hand because the women had increased in their skill set. Delegating (S4) became more noticeable in the sewing classes when I was able to pass responsibility to a few of the women to leading the class and learning new patterns. In relation to the English classes, we are still in the selling (S2) phase due to poor education in their childhood years. Although the English classes are difficult for the women, they still strive to increase in their maturity and knowledge of the subject.

On the other hand, The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership played a major role in the overall “empowerment” of the women especially when sharing the vision of the future and how the program could enhance through life through knowledge and economic growth and stability. I was able to become a better leader for the women in the program because the five practices guided me in being an example for the women, sharing the vision, seeking out opportunities to improve the program, enabling the women to strive to be the best and encouraging them every step of the way. Through both of these leadership theories, one can easily witness the socioemotional change in the women from having lost hope in their current situation to being encouraged and uplifted about the future that could be.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In order to enhance this program in the future, I would implement other traits to learn rather than just sewing and tailoring. The ImaniXchange women are satisfied with the sewing program in place, but desire to learn more. Obviously, there is a direct relationship with the 'desire to learn more' after the implementation of a women *empowerment* program. It displays that the program is serving its purpose with shifting the perspectives of the women about their livelihood and giving them hope for the future, so my only advice would be to have more classes in place for the future of the program in order to meet the needs of the empowered women you will run into after the implementation of the program.

I would also put a strategic plan together of transitioning a woman from a position of student into a position of leadership. Once, an individual makes it to the M4 stage of the Situational Leadership model then there will be more opportunities for that individual to partake in. Also, by allowing the women to move from student positions into leadership positions then this will allow the program sustainability for the future.

In the end, the socioemotional shifts of the sixteen disadvantaged women who are a part of the women empowerment program, ImaniXchange seemed to continue to develop into positive outcomes. Although, there were struggle in learning capabilities within some of the classes, the struggle viewed as positive because it only empowered the women and allowed growth in their confidence and

self-esteem because they were finally getting a chance to better themselves and be a part of a learning environment. Many women lost that opportunity at childhood, so to have a second chance to be empowered through learning is a major strength to the overall project. Empowerment is more than just a movement to motivate the poor, but empowerment is initiating change that will forever impact an individual's livelihood.

“A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.” - Diane Mariechild

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