The Influence of Gender on Leadership: Navigating Stereotypes and Transforming Leadership Styles

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Abstract- In this paper, gender and leadership will be discussed in terms of the interactional model, as a result of which gender stereotypes will be described in detail depending on their impact on the leadership styles, perceptions, and leadership effects. Traditionally, people have referred to leadership characteristics as being more masculine in that leaders are required to be assertive and decisive and devoid of emotion as opposed to the feminine characteristics of women in that they are compassionate-intuitive and value communication. Recent publications indicate that leadership depends on the context, pointing out that the combination of the transformational leadership model with recognition of women's achievements is credited with the creation of innovation, cooperation, and sustainable success. There is also a way gender biases have continued to present an imbalance in leadership possibilities. Many times, women are put in the 'double jeopardy' in that if they do not act like men, then they are not effective leaders, and if they do act like men, then their femininity is called into question. Likewise, the traditional view of leadership is a challenge, causing men to face some form of resistance in organizations. Research has shown that credibility enhances organizational performance, decision-making, and innovativeness with gender-diverse executive teams. To realize this potential, an organization needs to reduce biases and discrimination, increase the representation of minorities, and increase the adoption of diverse work arrangements and flexible leadership. For organizations to build better, healthier, and sustainable leadership cultures, they need to work towards reducing the strengths of the old-fashioned, stereotyped models.

Indexed Terms- Gender, Leadership Styles, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Gender Bias, Leadership Evaluation, Organizational Outcomes

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an essential factor in organizational management that has obviously shifted with social and organizational relations. With regard to leadership, gender plays an informative role in determining the elements of style, perception, and evaluation. Traditionally, leadership models embraced male stereotype qualities such as assertiveness and utilitarian focus, leaving the qualities perceived as feminine, like collaboration and empathy, esoteric.

Recently some empirical research demonstrated that leadership criteria are not gender-related and leadership practice depends on situational factors. This has resulted in increased understanding of emergent leadership behaviors, which involve change strategies across groups, encouragement of and focus on the development of motivation, and creativity. However, we continue to see gender stereotyping where women and particularly feminine-appearing male leaders are viewed differently than more traditionally masculine male leaders, and for women these options remain limited.

The research undertaken in this paper is aimed at exploring gender effects on leadership and how stereotyping affects leadership dynamics. This paper also focuses on the organizational opportunities that ensue from adopting gender-sensitive leaders and how one can address the challenges brought about by traditional culture. Thus, the main factors that are discussed in the paper and that should allow the reader to obtain the necessary information for more effective interaction in leadership cultures can be determined by analyzing the following dynamics.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER ON LEADERSHIP

Management, a key determinant of organizational performance, has been an area of study interest for several decades. Nevertheless, the idea of gender being a factor in moulding leadership styles and its impact is a topic in progress. This paper is focused on the gender roles in leadership because they determine not only the way people can lead but also how they are assessed in their line of duty. As organizations persist in offering opportunities to employees without regard to their gender, it is important to investigate the effects of gender on leadership.

- Historical Context and Gender Stereotypes in Leadership

Leadership in the past has been described by attributes that are considered to fit the bill of a stereotypical male, and these are aggressive, competitive, and decisive. These characteristics apply within a category referred to as "transactional leadership," whereby the leaders are more concerned with the forms, jobs, regular objectives, and punitive or positive reinforcement strategies (Bass & Avolio, 1994). On the other hand, what might be characterized as 'feminine' strengths, including feelings of compassion, cooperation, and caring, have been underappreciated as strengths in more 'masculine' leadership frameworks.

Yet, as already mentioned, changes in gender and work expectations challenge these rather limited conceptions of leadership. More recent evidence provides evidence that leadership is not absolutely related to gender but is optimal if it is context-bound, team- or goals-based (Eagly & Carli, 2003). This shift is demanding more attention to 'the process of transformation' that seeks to raise the maturity up to 'transformational leadership' that is more often than not associated with women's leadership qualities of collaboration, motivation, and development.

- Gender Differences in Leadership Styles

Some researchers also show that male and female leaders display differing behaviors in the workplace. Female gender is known to adopt more of the transformational leadership style, where the leader focuses on people's needs, encouraging others to pursue the same and create a feel of togetherness. This style is positively associated with higher levels of employee satisfaction, improved performance at the team level, and more innovation (Eagly et al., 2003). An increase in the well-being of co-workers is another positive aspect of the transformational style because such leaders devote time to the overall achievement of organizational objectives and their development of their subordinates, making it the best style in organizations whose processes need several interactions and versatility.

On their part, males prefer a transactional leadership model due to their usual inclination towards rigid roles. Transactional leaders focus on tasks and provide a system of formal reward-penalty in the team by controlling all organizational processes. This type of culture can be useful in specific settings, but in terms of flexible problem solving, it is less beneficial and tends to stifle employee growth, especially in organizations operating in volatile and competitive markets (Bass, 1997). The differentiation made here is not black and white; leaders of both sexes can be of any of these types, and there will be some crossover between types too. The nature of the work and personal disposition of the leader are primary determinants of leadership success, more so than the gender of the leader. However, gender standards inherent in societies can define the conduct of leaders based on their gender and either positively or negatively influence their leadership capacity.

- Gender Bias and Leadership Perception

Even today, there remains a definite gender bias when it comes to the recognition of leaders, and since there is increasing acceptance of diversity as a valuable asset for firms, this makes it even more important to tackle the problem of bias when it comes to different genders. This paper review found that women leaders are often trapped in what may be called the 'double ghetto,' where if they are forceful and assertive in the manner stereotypically associated with male leaders, they may be voted as competent but disliked. On the other hand, if women exhibit higher levels of stereotypically feminine characteristics, they are liked but might be viewed as less competent or assertive (Catalyst 2007).

This double-buffering makes it even harder for women faced with the challenge of attempting to rise through the ranks and get to the top. Women politicians are always expected to perform in certain ways that are different from those expected of men politicians. However, when women do this, they are likely to be resisted on the basis of bias that perceives leadership to have a certain traditional form, especially in male-dominated organizations (Koenig et al., 2011). For this reason, women may not be considered for promotions or are rated lower in leadership assessments, though qualified.

Actually, men also have some issues of leadership because of gender. The role expectations of men who employ transformational leadership behavior may be challenged or socialized into transactional and assertive types of leadership in competitive environments. The masculinity of traditional leadership can produce limitations to the definition of leadership styles that are still more open to everyone.

- The Impact of Gender-Inclusive Leadership on Organizational Success

It has been established that diversity in leadership across gender produces beneficial organizational consequences. The teams that are diverse have a broader set of different sees, different ways of perceiving the problems and possible solutions to them. McKinsey research asserts that the organizations in the first four categories for gender diversity perform 21 percent better than the others in terms of profitability more often than not (Hunt, Layton, & Prince, 2015). However, gender-diverse workgroups are likely to make superior decisions, innovate more, and increase their workforce commitment levels. Further, companies that have higher value and a more robust company culture will be beneficial for organizations that have poor gender diversity and inclusion for executive management positions. Female and male are equally capable of leading; therefore, promoting women's leadership creates a synergy of respecting one another and achieving collective goals (Groysberg & Bell, 2013).

- Moving Toward Inclusive Leadership

For organizations to get the full value of the gender-diverse leadership, efforts have to be made to remove barriers in the workplace that hinder males as well as females in the leadership positions. This means paying deliberate attention to changing the stereotypical beliefs, providing for work and family leadership models, and ensuring the leadership development initiatives are equitable.

Positive changes in policy, women's and men's roles and responsibilities, positive action initiatives such as mentorship programs, unfair bias training, and fair promotion practices can also bridge the leadership gaps and participation space for women and men. Moreover, the dissemination of the information about the availability of the significant transformational and transactional leadership styles to the leaders of male and female gender contributes to the creation of the homogenic and more supple organization.

CONCLUSION

However, as will be elucidated further down, gender is a factor that affects leadership in a number of ways. Indeed, this article has shown that men and women display different patterns of leadership behavior, and however, organizational contingency and versatility are the keys to success. Most companies that hire women and other such oppressed groups will probably find positive changes in the performance, imagination, as well as satisfaction levels among their workforce. This is especially important in the context of the modernization of workplaces and constant changes experienced all over the world; therefore, promoting inclusive leadership and, consequently, questioning stereotypical gender roles will be critical for the future.

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