

## **When it comes to leadership, does gender matter?**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – Whether men and women behave differently in leadership roles is a much-debated issue. Although there is consensus that women face more barriers to becoming leaders than men specifically in conservative societies and some developing countries. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the differences between male and female leadership styles.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Theory and literature were important to understanding the data in this study. The study utilizes the previous literature review with an overview of male and female leadership styles to analyze the similarities and differences among gender leadership.

**Findings** – These pressures toward similarity of male and female leaders make it likely that any differences in the leadership styles of women and men are relatively small. As an answer to the question of this paper whether there is a difference between men and women's leadership style is yes. The findings of this study therefore, revealed that women leadership styles can be more effective and productive in today's less hierarchical organizations, as well as women leaders are participatory and collaborative in nature.

**Research limitations/ Implementation-** The outcome of this study only rely on the theoretical analysis based on the previous study from Western and Eastern school. Thus, the study may get different result with the empirical study that comprises quantitative and qualitative analysis in our community. The implication of the study will practically help the organization in making their decision to select their leader since this study provides information and prior knowledge about the leadership concept.

**Originality/value** – The paper is an initial attempt to congregate knowledge about the difference of gender leadership style. Therefore, this study will add to the body of knowledge as it can be a useful reference to other researchers who are keen to carry out studies on women leadership style and work in different cultural settings.

**Keywords-** Gender, Leadership style, male, female

**Paper type-** Conceptual paper

### **Introduction**

Before we get started, let us define leadership and discuss some issues that are related with leadership concept. Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. A lot of scholars have been given the definition of the leadership for example, House et al, (2004) acclaimed that, leadership refers to the abilities of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of organizations of which they are members. Bennis (1959) defined leadership as “process by which an agent induces a subordinate to behave in a desired manner”. Campbell, (1991) defined the leadership as actions that focus resources to create desirable opportunities. Lastly, most of those definitions found in the literature agreed that leadership is mainly concerned with a person who tries to influence groups or followers to achieve certain objectives.

Jago, (1982) believed that a good leader develops through a process of self-study, education, training, and experience. Hence, good leader is made not born. Accordingly, there are basic principles of leadership that must be displayed by the leader whether male or female such as: First know yourself and seek self-improvement, this can be skilled through self-study, formal classes, reflection, and interacting with others. Second, be technically proficient, as a leader you must know your job and have a solid familiarity with your employees’ tasks. Third, search for responsibility and take responsibility for your actions. Fourth, make sound and timely decisions, for example use good problem solving, decision making, and planning tools. Fifth, set the example, that mean you have to be a good role model for your staffs and workers. Sixth, know your people and look out for their well-being. Seventh, keep your workers informed, this means know how to communicate with not only them, but also seniors and other important people. Eighth, improve a sense of responsibility in your staffs, this can be done by supporting to develop good character traits that will help them carry out their professional responsibilities. Ninth, ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished (U.S. Army, 1983).

In terms of the qualities of effective leaders, Christine (1990) found that, there are certain basic qualities or characteristics that most people associate with leadership. Some of these include self-reliant, independent, assertive, risk taker, dominant, ambitious, and self-sufficient. . According to the study that has been done by Lamb and McKee (2004), whose found that there are two important keys for effective leadership, effective communication by leadership trust and confidence in top leadership. More so, the effectiveness of leadership among other things is characterized by the abilities to motivate people, build relationships and influence outcomes.

Although your position as a lead, manager, supervisor, for surely it will gives you the authority to accomplish certain tasks and objectives in the organization, this power does not make you a leader, it simply makes you the boss (Rowe, 2007). However, leadership is differs in that it makes the followers want to achieve high goals, rather than simply bossing people around. Thus, the term of leader and manager become ambiguous for many people and some persons cannot distinguish between leader and manager in their organization. For this reason, the study highlighted some point that can help to show the difference between the two close terms. The difference between managers and leaders is essential where, manager administers and maintains, but leader innovates and develops. The manager relies on systems and counts on control but the leader relies on people and counts on trust. The manager does things right, but the leader does the right thing (Ather and Sobhani, 2008).

## **Leadership Styles**

Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. Thus, when developing your leadership skills, you must ask yourself an important practical question, what leadership styles work best for my organization and me? To answer this question, you have to understand the effectiveness of using of each style as well as when you should not use this type of style. This study therefore, will discuss several styles that have been identifying an important for leading the organization in the right direction in order to achieve its main objective. This include autocratic, bureaucratic, democratic and Laissez Faire Leadership style.

**Autocratic Leadership Style:** this style follows the classical approach, and it has its own characteristics, where the leader retains as much power and decision-making authority as possible. In addition, Leader does not consult staff, or allowed them to give any input as well as staff expected to obey orders without receiving any explanations and the structured set only for rewards and punishments. This is indicating the leasers rely on threats and punishment to influence staff and does not trust staff. However, it is sometimes effective to use this style specifically, when new or untrained staff does not know which tasks to perform or which procedures to follow, staffs do not respond to any other leadership style, limited time in which to make a decision. Furthermore, this style is favorable when a manager's power challenged by staff and work needs to be coordinated with another department or organization.

**Bureaucratic Leadership Style:** we can say that this style manages by book, which mean everything done according to procedure or policy. This style is more effective when staff performing routine tasks repeatedly, staff need to understand certain standards or procedures. On the other hand, this style is ineffective when work habits forms that are hard to break, especially if they are no longer useful, as well as when staffs lose their interest in their jobs and in their co-workers. In addition, it is ineffective when the staffs do only what is expected of them and no more.

**Democratic Leadership Style:** also known as participative style, in which encourages staff to be a part of the decision-making, as well as keeps staff informed about everything that affects their work and shares decision making and problem solving responsibilities. Therefore, this style is most effective when wants to keep staff informed about matters that affect them, wants staff to share in decision-making and problem-solving duties. In addition, it is effective when wants to provide opportunities for staff to develop a high sense of personal growth and job satisfaction, a large or complex problem that requires lots of input to solve, as well as wants to encourage team building and participation. Conversely, democratic leadership should not be used when there is no enough time to get everyone is input, easier and more cost-effective for the manager to make the decision, and once manager feels threatened by this type of leadership.

**Laissez-Faire Leadership Style:** Also known as the hands off style, where the leader provides little or no direction and gives staff as much freedom as possible, as well as all authority and power given to the staff and they determine goals, make decisions, and resolve problems on their own opinions. This style can use with the staff that have highly skilled,

experienced, and educated. In addition, it useful to apply this style when the staff have pride in their work and the drive to do it successfully on their own. This style can also be applicable with outside experts, such as staff specialists or consultants used. However, this style should not be used when the staffs feel insecure at the unavailability of a leader as well as the leader cannot provide regular feedback to staff on how well they are doing. More so, this style not effective to use when leaders unable to show appreciation to the staff for their good work as well as when the leader does not understand his or her responsibilities and hoping the staff cover for him or her.

There are also some other leadership styles which leaders must to know such as transformational leadership, transactional leadership, creative leadership, corrective leadership, change leadership, intelligence leadership, multicultural leadership, pedagogical leadership, servant leadership and bridging leadership.

After we have discussed all the leadership styles, leaders have to understand the factors that influence which leadership style have to follow. These factors include the leader's personal background such as personality, knowledge, values, ethics, and experiences. Staff being supervised, which mean staff individuals with different personalities and backgrounds. Third, the organization, which comprises the traditions, values, philosophy, and concerns of the organization influence how the leader acts. Lastly, culture and climate, where the culture is the deeply rooted nature of the organization that is a result of long-held formal and informal systems, rules, traditions, and customs, while climate is a short-term phenomenon created by the current leadership (Ivancevich *et al*, 2007).

In summary, to determine the best leadership style, leaders should be more task or relationship (people) oriented, one they use in a wide variety of situations, no one is the best style therefore, leaders must adjust their leadership style to the situation as well as to the people being led. Finally, the many different aspects to being a great leader and the role requiring one to play many different leadership styles to be successful.

### **Gender Differences and Similarities from the Previous Literature**

After briefing and explaining the concepts and rules that relate to leadership, this paper attempts to answer the very interesting question. Is there a difference between women leaders and men who lead? If so, what are the unique qualities of female leadership that give her a priority to be effective leaders?

Many previous studies have been debate and deliberate the issue of differences between male and female leadership such as Melero, E. (2004), in which the study deals with sex differences in managerial behavior, by testing the extent to which such differences match those expected from gender stereotypes. This investigation uses firm-level evidence from the British 1998 Workplace Employment Relationship Survey. The results of the study display that workplaces where the attendance of women at management is higher are driven in a more democratic fashion, with more relational and interactive relationships between managers and subordinates, and with more employee-mentoring responsibilities undertaken by managers. In addition, the study reveals that there is no sex differences were found for more structural policies, such as the degree of delegation on supervisors or the extension of payment by results.

While the evidence on leadership style differences between men and women is conflicting, the evidence on the results they attain is not. Perhaps, therefore, looking at leadership from a style perspective is not helpful. Accordingly, Kent et al, (2010) attempts to look at leadership in terms of the behaviors employed by men and by women. This study examines the differences between men and women leaders with respect to their transformational leadership behaviors. Subordinates of the leaders rated the frequency of use of transformational leadership behaviors from five different categories. The five behavior categories are visualizing performance, empowering, communicating for meaning, managing one's self, and care and recognition. Generally, the results of the study show that men and women leaders behave as leaders in the same way. It was also found that men and women do not differ in their general perceptions of others as leaders. Possible explanations for these findings are discussed. This result is supported by Manning (2002), who examined male and female transformational leaders and did not find significant differences between genders in leadership style.

Eagly and Johnson (1990) concluded that gender-stereotypic sex differences in leadership behavior were less common in organizational studies than in other types of studies because male and female managers were selected by similar criteria and subjected to similar organizational socialization-forces that tend to equalize the sexes. Among managers, a sex difference was detected only in a fairly narrow range of leadership behaviors assessed by measures of autocratic-democratic (or directive-participative) tendencies, which relate primarily to the exercise of power.

Another study done by Hassan and Silong, (2008), on the women leadership and community development, in which the study seeks to fill the gap that existed in the literature on gender and leadership behaviors in community development because women contribution is getting bigger but, this effort are not documented. The study utilizes the qualitative approach. The researcher used three techniques for data gathering namely in-depth interview which represent the major source of data, observations and document analysis. The findings of the study showed that leadership understanding and style employed by women leaders are participatory or collaborative in nature. In addition, the study found that women leadership relates more to a holistic and "bottom-ups" approach in developing the community. This approach has a greater success and impact on community development compared to the "top-down" approach commonly utilized by male community leaders. The results of this study supported b Bass, 1990, Carli, 2001, and Stanford et al., 1995, who's found there is difference between male and female leadership style.

In addition, Eagly, *et al*, (2003) done an important analysis for comparing women and men with respect to their leadership styles such as transformational, transactional and laissez-faire. The results showed significant sex differences in most aspects of the three leadership styles. One point that was especially interesting was the finding that women, more than men, have generally effective leadership styles, being somewhat more transformational than male leaders, especially concerning support-giving and motivating subordinates

Druskat, V. U (1994) investigated the gender differences in transformational and transactional style. The result of the study revealed that the notion that gender differences in leadership style is existing and it may arise in nontraditional contexts. The results show that female leaders in all female contexts were reported to display more leadership that is

transformational and less transactional leadership than male leaders in all male contexts, as well as the followers and the subordinates from both said male and female rated themselves as more satisfied with transformational leadership style. This result got support from the previous studies, which shows that the transformational leadership may require skills traditionally associated with female. In addition, un stable social and economic times and rapidly changing organization environments increase the need for able, transformational leadership which may the women can help to fill this gab.

One of the most recent studies that have been done by Taleb (2010), investigated the relationship between gender and female leadership styles in a single-sex academic institution in Saudi Arabia as a country that is characterized by being both conservative and a masculine society. The case of Manar Women's College was selected to research this overlooked perspective. The funding of the study revealed that the interviewed female leaders of Manar College are inclined to adopt stereotypical attributes of feminine qualities of leadership. In addition, women leadership in this college prefers to adopt a democratic, interpersonally-oriented and transformational style rather than autocratic, task-oriented or transactional style of leadership which is more tracks by male leadership.

### **Characteristics of Women Leadership**

In many research, it found that talented and confident women leaders have several characteristics in common can distinguishes her from men, such as: first, they place a high value on relationships and judge the success of their organizations based on the quality of relationships within them. Second, they prefer direct communication. Third, they are comfortable with diversity, having been outsiders themselves and knowing what kind of value fresh eyes could bring. Forth, they are unwilling (and unable) to compartmentalize their lives and so draw upon personal experience to bring private sphere information and insights to their jobs. Fifth, they are skeptical of hierarchies and surprisingly disdainful of the perks and privileges that distinguish hierarchical leaders and establish their place in the pecking order. Sixth, they preferred leading from the center rather than the top and structure their organizations to reflect this as well as they asks big-picture questions about the work they do and its value. Furthermore, Caliper (2005), study's findings exposed the four specific statements about women's leadership qualities: first, women leaders are more persuasive than their male counterparty. Second, when feeling the sting of rejection, women leaders learn from adversity. Third, women leaders demonstrate an inclusive, team-building leadership style of problem solving and decision-making. Fourth, women leaders are more likely to ignore rules and take risks

### **Conclusion**

In this debate on male and female leadership styles, there are difference beliefs and attitudes among scholars, some of them emphasize the sex differences in leadership roles especially in the feminist literature and some scholars emphasize the similarities for example( Melero, 2004, Kent et al, 2010, Manning,2002). Although for several decades a large body of studies has focused on different leadership styles, some scholars have recently shifted the focus to whether a difference

exists between the leadership styles of women and men such as (Druskat 1994, hasan and silong, 2008, Taleb, Bass, 1990, Eagly, 2003, Carli, 2001, and Stanford et al., 1995). Some scholars see this debate as useless, and state that what is important is the result: “it does not make any difference how you lead as long as your leadership style is an effective one” (Stanford et al., 1995). They argued that particular leader roles demand certain types of leadership, essentially confining men and women in the same role to behave in the same ways. This argument surely has some validity because women and men have to meet similar requirements to gain leadership roles in the first place. Once a leader occupies such a role, the expectations associated with it shape behavior in particular directions. These pressures toward similarity of male and female leaders make it likely that any differences in the leadership styles of women and men are relatively small. Finally, as an answer to the question of this paper whether there is a difference between men and women’s leadership style is yes. Women leadership styles can be more effective and productive in today’s less hierarchical organizations, as well as women leaders are participatory or collaborative in nature.

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