

DO MEN AND WOMEN LEAD DIFFERENTLY?

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ABSTRACT

Do men and women in leadership positions exhibit the same sorts of leadership behaviors? Do the demands of the leadership role require similar or different actions and behaviors to succeed, between men and women? How farfetched was the twentieth century assumption by most scientists that women were essentially small men neurologically and in every other sense except for their reproductive functions? Is it true that only those women who exhibit the same sorts of leadership styles and behaviors as male leaders succeed as leaders? What type of picture do we get if we asked followers and leaders about male and female leaders? Does perception differ from reality in leadership styles of men and women? Is it true that female leaders are nurturing, caring and more in touch than male leaders? Is it equally true that male leaders are more objective, action oriented and always going for the bottom line? Could it be that most people's thinking on this subject is generally colored by perceptions, expectations and stereotypes? This study attempts to shed some light on how men and women lead and then discusses the implications of the findings to organizational dynamics and growth.

Keywords: Leadership, Management, Transformational, Strategy, Stereotypes

INTRODUCTION

There is plenty of literature on the various components of effective leadership. We are choosing to concentrate our study on transformational leadership style. We attempt to gauge the perception of the public on whether men and women lead differently. We begin by borrowing heavily from our earlier work on this subject, under the title of "Searching for African American Transformational Leaders" (Chekwa, 2001). Then we evaluate the perceptual leadership style and effectiveness of men and women under the umbrella of transformational leadership. We assume, at the onset, that men and women could be transformational leaders but do they use the same approach in carrying out their roles? Here is our understanding of transformational leadership.

Transformational leaders use the leadership style that best suits the situation they face. They build on the strength of others, strengths that sometimes are dormant. They are visionaries who enable people to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of others. They are leaders who change reality by building on the human need for meaning. Yukl (1989) says that transformational leadership is the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of the organization's mission or objectives.

Transformational leaders are change agents. They influence the mission and objectives to make way for a brighter future for the organization. Bass (1990) states that transformational leadership commonly involves the actions of leader's influence on Followers. People in these organizations follow the leader because they so desire. They are motivated to do more than is originally expected because of their feelings of trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect for the leader. They want to go the extra mile because of the deep sense of satisfaction they derive doing so. The leader motivates the subordinates by making them more aware of the importance of values of task outcomes, and by helping subordinates think beyond their own self-interest to the work team and organization, and by activating higher order needs such as creative expression and self-actualization. Transformational leaders have charisma, but this is not the only factor needed to bring about change. They sometimes go down to the trenches with their followers as they also perform the roles of coach, trainer and mentor. (Shani & Lou, 2000).

Transformational leaders do not hesitate to challenge the process by searching for opportunities, experimenting and taking risks. They do not merely call for changes to be made. They take the lead initiating and proposing changes. They get their hands dirty and that is one reason they are much respected by their followers.

Transformational leaders inspire a shared vision by envisioning the future and enlisting others. They do not mind going it alone as they carve out the vision for the entire organization. Then they rally others to buy and support this vision as if it belonged to each of the organization's members personally. These leaders enable others to act by fostering collaboration and strengthening other team members. They model the way by setting example and planning small wins. They encourage the heart by recognizing contributions and celebrating accomplishments. (James Kouzes and Barry Posner, 1995). Transformational leaders employ the style that best suits the situation they face. They do not necessarily apply the effective method that worked yesterday to today's problems. They do not approach every situation in the same way. When something does not work the first time, they do not get a bigger hammer and hit it again. Transformational leaders restudy the situation and look for a better approach. They realize that style is not as important as results. (Lewis, 1996).

Transformational leaders are generally not selfish. They inspire others to excel and they give everybody individual consideration. These leaders stimulate people to think in new ways. Their impact in the organizations they work is almost revolutionary. They transform the people and organizations with which they work. (Lewis, 1996)

ASSESSING INDIVIDUALS FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

The following characteristics developed by Lewis (1996) can help identify transformational leaders.

1. Strategic thinker
2. Ability to empower others
3. Initiative
4. Strategy formulation and implementation
5. Positive mental attitude
6. Visionary
7. Encouraging human potential
8. Willingness to change
9. Ability to handle conflict
10. Effective communicator
11. Skilled Motivator
12. Ability to inspire trust
13. Ability to gain commitment

SHATTER THE GLASS CEILING: WOMEN MAKE BETTER MANAGERS

The trend in U.S. corporations toward high-involvement work teams, consensus decision making and empowerment may actually benefit the leadership styles that women already have. Female managers are seen as more transformational than their male counterparts—a leadership style that has been shown to have a strong positive impact on individual, group, and organizational performance. This particular study does not address leadership effectiveness. (Bass and Avolio, 1994)

FEMALE LEADERSHIP STYLES PRODUCE BETTER WORKPLACE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Data from the British 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS98) was used to analyze empirically the relationship between the percentage of female workplace managers and people management practices. The results show that workplace management teams with a higher proportion of women monitor employee feedback and development more intensely. Such factor also tends to promote more interpersonal channels of communication and more employee participation in decision-making. Overall, the findings suggest that the concept of good workplace

management practices is congruent to female leadership styles when the percentage of female manager's increases. (Edward Melero, 2011)

LEADERSHIP DIFFERENCES OBSERVED IN MALE AND FEMALE PHYSICIANS

A meta-analytic review was undertaken of seven observational studies which investigated the relation between physician gender and patient communication in medical visits. In five of the studies the physicians were in general practice, internal medicine, or family practice and were seeing general medical patients, and in two of the studies the physicians were in obstetrics-gynecology and were seeing women for obstetrical and gynecological care. Significant findings revealed that, overall, patients made more positive statements to female physicians. Patients also were rated as more assertive toward female physicians in obstetrics-gynecology studies. Partnership statements were made significantly more often to female than male physicians in general medical visits but not in obstetrical-gynecological visits. It appears that the differences gradually disappear among specialist physicians. (Judith A. Hall, 1994)

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN MEN AND WOMEN SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Women superintendents have less coaching experience than men, head wealthier districts, work longer hours, are more often single and childless, and obtain the position later in life. They also smoke and drink less. Males and females were equally satisfied with their school board relationships, community stature, and paychecks. There was no indication of any differences in overall performance effectiveness of men and women superintendents. (Schuster, Daphne J; Foote, Tom H., 1990).

WOMEN ARE NO LESS TRANSFORMATIONAL THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS

Data were gathered in three diverse sample conditions to examine whether male and female managers differed in styles of leadership observed by their direct leadership. Differences in both transformational and transactional leadership styles were examined, using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. In three samples, women leaders were rated by both their female and male direct reports as displaying certain key aspects of transformational leadership (i. e. charisma, individualized consideration) more frequently than men. The result of these studies suggest that women are no less transformational than their male counterparts, and may, in fact, be more so. The sex of the rater did not appear to make any difference in the results obtained. The leadership styles of men and women appear to be complements. (Bernard M. Bass, Bruce J. Avolio, Leanne Atwater, 1996))

ARE WOMEN LESS COMPETITIVE THAN MEN, ESPECIALLY IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS?

Even though the provision of equal opportunities for men and women has been a priority in many countries, large gender differences prevail in competitive high-ranking positions. Suggested explanations include discrimination and differences in preferences and human capital. Here is experimental evidence in support of an additional factor: women may be less effective than men in competitive environments, even if they are able to perform similarly in non-competitive environments. In a laboratory experiment it was observed that as the competitiveness of the environment was increased, a significant increase in performance for men occurred, but not for women. This result is a significant gender gap in performance in tournaments, while there is no gap when participants are paid according to piece rate. This effect is stronger when women have to compete against men than in single-sex competitive environments: This suggests that women may be able to perform in competitive environment per se. on a very broad scope women are no less competitive than men. (Uri Gneezy, Muriel Niederle, Rustichini, 2003)

DO MEN TAKE MORE RISK THAN WOMEN?

Across many real-world domains, men engage in riskier behaviors than do women. To examine some of the beliefs and preferences that underlie this difference, 657 participants assessed their likelihood of engaging in various risky activities relating to four different domains (gambling, health, recreation, and social) and reported their perceptions of (1) probability of negative outcomes, (2) severity of potential negative outcomes, and (3) enjoyment expected from partially mediated their lower propensity toward risky choices in gambling, recreation, and health domains. Perceptions of severity of potential outcomes was a partial mediator in the gambling and health domains. The genders did not differ behaviors in this domain. Men on the surface appear to take more risk than women but the gender difference was partially mediated by women's more optimistic judgements of the probability of good outcomes and of outcomes being more intensely positive. (Gneezy et. al. 2009)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires were distributed over the internet and on Facebook over a period of four days in August 2019 and two weeks in September and October 2019. One hundred and twenty four (124) responses were returned. Various questions were asked in order to gauge current prevailing opinion on whether men and women lead differently. The questionnaire was a survey instrument designed to measure participants' perception on the leadership congruence or differences between men and women, especially as it pertains to transformational leadership style. The questionnaire elicited both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire was divided into a number of clusters containing questions and/or statements with similar answer blocks. The first cluster of the survey sought to find out the overall impression of the survey participants on this subject, giving them the opportunity to circle the response that closely identify their experiences.

The second cluster of the questionnaire sought to find out whether men are better leaders than women and vice versa. The third cluster of questions evaluated the leadership skills of men and women based on identified characteristics of transformation leadership as defined by Lewis (1996). The fourth cluster of the survey allowed participants the chance to say anything else they wished to contribute on the subject of whether men and women lead differently. The last cluster of the survey contained questions to help identify the demographic information of participants of the study. Using similar questions from the survey, a subset of ten professionals who participated in the survey was invited to take part in a focus group to express their thoughts on the subject.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

One hundred and twenty four (124) participants responded to our survey. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the participants believe that men and women lead differently. Seventy-four percent (74%) do not think that men are, in general, better leaders than women. On the other hand, eighty-three percent (83%) do not believe that women are better leaders. A greater percentage of the participants do not think women are better leaders. But only forty-five percent (45%) of the participants think that there is no difference between the leadership effectiveness of men and women. All the participants indicate they have worked under the supervision of both women and men. Answering the questions derived from the qualities of transformational leadership as identified by Lewis (96), forty-six percent (46%) are neutral on whether women are better strategic thinkers than men. But forty-three percent (43%) are neutral on whether men are better strategic thinkers than women. Men have a slight edge here as being better strategic thinkers than women. Thirty-one percent voted for men and twenty-three percent (23%) voted for women. Only 26% say that men have better ability to empower others than women. Men are better than women in taking strategic initiatives (by 5%). Men are better than women in strategy formulation and implementation (by 14 %). By a margin of fifteen percent (15%), participants indicate that women exhibit better positive mental attitude than men. By a margin of eight percent, the survey participants say that men are better visionaries than women. Women were

voted to be better than men in encouraging human potential. Men exhibit better willingness to change attitude than women (by 6%). Men have better ability to handle conflict than women (by 18% margin), Women communicate more effectively than men (by a margin of 13%). Men exhibit better ability to inspire people than women (by a margin of 5%). Women have better ability to gain commitment than men (by a margin of 15%). Men delegate better than women (by a margin of 36 %). Women are more caring than men (by a margin of 42%).

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Our basic research question was answered upfront by participants when ninety-four percent (94%) say that men and women lead differently. The participants overwhelmingly say that leadership effectiveness is not defined or judged by gender. All participants have, at various periods in their work life, worked under the supervision of both men and women. Asking questions on the specific dimensions of transformational leadership as identified by Lewis (1996) revealed that men and women may achieve similar effectiveness levels by leading differently. Men are better strategic thinkers. They also have better ability to empower others; better in taking strategic initiatives; better in strategy formulation and implementation; better visionaries; better willingness to handle conflict; better ability to inspire trust; and better ability to delegate. Women, on the other hand, communicate better than men. Women have better ability to gain commitment and they are also more caring than men. Men and women can achieve similar results by implementing various elements of transformational leadership in varying dimensions. This is another vital reason why organizations should seek diversity in leadership where men and women work to complete the full cycle of leadership, especially transformational leadership.

Our findings suggest that men and women in leadership positions exhibit the same sorts of leadership effectiveness using various approaches of transformational leadership. It appears that the demands of the leadership role require different actions and behaviors to succeed, between men and women. It is not true that only those women who exhibit the same sorts of leadership styles and behaviors as male leaders succeed as leaders. In some cases, perception differs from reality in leadership styles of men and women. It is true that female leaders are nurturing, caring and more in touch than male leaders. It is equally true that male leaders are more objective; actions oriented and have better ability to handle conflict. There is much evidence to suggest that most people's thinking on this subject is generally colored by perceptions, expectations and stereotypes. We conclude that men and women lead differently but they both bring to the table complementary dimensions of transformational leadership styles that lead to maximum organizational effectiveness and success.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are abundant opportunities for further research on this subject. A shorter survey instrument may encourage more people to participate in this research. The survey may be left open for a period longer than three weeks to allow people with hectic schedules to participate.

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