

Gender and Leadership : An Analysis

*Shikha Chhabra

**Yuvika

ABSTRACT

The topic of gender differences in leadership style has been of great interest to researchers, be it in the field of psychology, management, and sociology or in deciding leaders' behavior. This paper focuses on whether there is a relationship between gender and leadership. The objective of the study is to assess the characteristics determining male and female leadership and society's perception about difference of characteristics of leadership between male and female. For this a sample of 64 respondents was taken based on convenient sampling and structured questionnaire was used to collect the information from respondents. Statistical techniques i.e. average, percentage, standard deviation and paired t-test were used. The result of study shows that there is significant difference between characteristics of leadership between male and female.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Gender Difference, Society's Perception

1. Introduction

There are many historical events that have set the stage to analyze gender differences between men and women in the workplace. Whether these gender differences exist in the way in which they communicate, influence, or lead, men and women have always been viewed as different and unique sets of people. These differences have, to a certain extent, put women in the workplace at a disadvantage because of their perceived inferiority to men, mainly due to historical gender inequalities. Over the centuries, femininity has been stereotyped as dependent, submissive and conforming, and hence women have been seen as lacking in leadership qualities. The male bias is reflected in the false conception of leadership as mere command or control. As leadership comes properly to be seen as a process of leaders engaging and mobilizing the human needs of followers, women will be more readily recognized as leaders and men will change their own leadership styles (Burns, 1978, p. 50). For the past two decades, gender differences in leadership styles have been the most intensely studied topics in the field of leadership. Are there inherent differences in the way men and women function as leaders and, if so, are these differences gender linked? This question has commanded attention because researchers have been trying to provide an explanation about why there have been so few women leaders. Even though women have become an increasingly large proportion of the work force, they still do not hold a proportionate share of the top administrative positions. Most of the gender difference research has focused upon whether women's comparative lack of success in attaining high positions could somehow be related to differences in their leadership style. It has examined the personality characteristics and behavior patterns of women as possible explanations for their lower status. (Moran,1992). This paper examines male and female leadership on the basis of their behaviour. Also an assessment of leadership is made on the basis of their various

attributes such as arrogance, decisiveness, hardwork, honesty etc. This paper offers valuable insight into the role of gender in leadership and will help companies and institutions to decide strategically who should be given which position.

2. Literature Review

Beaman (2012) states that female leadership influences young girls career aspirations and educational attainment. Survey of 8453 young girls aged 11 to 15 years, their parents from 495 villages in India in which there had never been women reservation in the councils. The law of 1993 which made women reservation in women council, has been effective in raising the aspirations and educational attainment for girls.

Jha (2014) has explored the relationship between gender and conflict resolution styles among aspiring Indian Managers. The author has used descriptive statistics to explore the most preferred style of leadership by the genders in leadership. T-test is used as statistical tool to find out major difference amongst male and female managers in the usage of various conflict resolution styles. The data analysis has showed that irrespective of gender differences, aspiring Indian managers generally adopt accommodating style of conflict resolution, followed by avoiding style. Males have adopted more competing style to conflict resolution than females.

Chadha (2014) has done a case study in India on political participation of women. This paper deals with the women emancipation through its political participation. The objective of this paper is to support and encourage the enactment of women's political reservation bill.

Patel (2013) provides an overview of the gender differences in leadership and business using decision science principles, which has shown key gender distinctions between behaviours of women and men, which have influenced the

* Assistant Professor in Commerce, Hans Raj Mahila Maha Vidyalaya, Jalandhar. E.mail: shikhs_c@yahoo.com

** Assistant Professor in Commerce, Hans Raj Mahila Maha Vidyalaya, Jalandhar. E.mail: yuvikamidha@gmail.com

decisions as well as the outcomes of leadership styles employed. The paper firstly sets out the business background so that female leadership is viewed in the context of demographics and discusses the key challenges faced by women in a global and personal setting. The report then discusses key decision science theories, a thorough overview of gender differences in the personal and professional sphere, an overview of the causes of these gender differences, a discussion of existing solutions, and a list of recommendations for women, board members and policy makers.

Snaebjornsson and Edvardsson (2013) reviewed research available on gender and nationality as determinants of leadership style, with special focus on top leaders/managers. The systematic literature search resulted in 27 papers, that were grouped in five categories: 1) Leaders' characteristics, behavior and style, 2) Perception regarding leaders, their traits and leadership styles, 3) Women's barriers towards leader positions, 4) Leadership outcome/results, 5) Effect of research methods on leader evaluation. Almost half of the papers focus on the US, while the rest deal with African, Asian, and European countries. In this review, we found that women and men have a very similar perception of a successful manager. However, women and men display differences in their leader behavior and characteristics, and way of leading. "Results/outcomes" of such a leadership can differ. The review shows, furthermore, that a glass ceiling and other barriers for women do still exist. The paper ends by identifying the needs for further research in the study area.

Brandt and Laiho (2013) discovered if similar personality types exhibit the same kind of leadership behavior irrespective of gender. This study indicated differences in leadership behavior by gender, in that women exhibited more enabling behavior and men more challenging behavior. Further, gender and personality had an impact on leadership behavior, as viewed by both leaders and subordinates.

Kulkarni (2011) has tried to highlight the paradox in public attitude towards women as a leader. It has tried to analyze social perception of women leadership in Indian companies. Primary data based on questionnaire has been taken up in which comparison between the men and women leaders with respect to leadership traits, performance, policy matter etc. was made. The results of the study show that there certainly has been a change in the outlook of Indian women as they have broken the traditional norms and taken up careers in academics as well, but certainly numerous challenges especially in the form of family commitments still remain for woman in leadership positions.

Andersen and Hansson (2011) conducted a study to determine if there were significant differences in leadership behaviors as claimed by previous studies and authors. Andersen and Hansen studied public managers on leadership styles, decision-making styles, and motivation profiles and found that the only differences were in decision-making

styles, but none were great enough to be considered significant.

Riggio (2010) observed that women in high level leadership positions, such as corporate CEOs, when studied, seem to exhibit the same sorts of leadership behaviors as their male counterparts. Noted leadership scholar, Bernard Bass, predicted that by the year 2034 the majority of high-level leaders will be women, based on their more transformational qualities. Of course, men in leadership positions are also realizing that the old way of leading - taking charge (command and control) - may not be as effective in today's world and in the future, so they learn to adapt and change how they lead.

Singh (2008) investigated the relationship as well as the impact of leadership styles on knowledge management practices in a software firm in India. Research has been done by using two psychometric instruments, namely organizational leadership questionnaire and knowledge management assessment tool. The survey consisted of 331 knowledge workers working for a software firm in India and data collected underwent statistical treatment. The findings of research indicate directive as well as supportive styles of leadership to be significantly and negatively associated with the art of knowledge management practices.

Sikdar (2008) examined the role of socially constructed gender stereotypes in leadership and their influence on leadership behaviour of people. Hypothesis are tested by creating measures of congruence- self male, self-female, male leader and female leader based on respondents rating of self, males or females and leaders. Correlation between four types of congruence and leadership, intention and behaviour would be used to test the hypothesis.

Cliff (2005) studied male and female business owners, who are free to manage as they see fit, as opposed to middle managers who are more constrained, and found that no significant differences exist in men and women's leadership behavior. According to the researchers, the findings "challenge the gender-stereotypic argument that a leader's sex plays an important role when it comes to organizational design and management.

Browne, et al. (2004) focused on the emerging construct of ethical leadership and compares this construct with related concepts that share a common concern for a moral dimension of leadership (e.g., spiritual, authentic, and transformational leadership). This paper indicates that ethical leadership remains largely unexplored, offering researcher's opportunities for new discoveries and leaders opportunities to improve their effectiveness.

Carli and Eagly (DEC, 2002) focused on woman's status which has improved remarkably in the 20th century. In many societies, women continue to lack access to power and leadership compared with men. This issue reviews research and theory concerning woman's leadership and provides a brief summary of changes in woman's status and power in

employment and education and the absence of change at the upper echelons of power in organizations.

The reader who turns to the vast body of literature on gender differences to find the answer to this question will likely be left in a state of confusion. The studies report a number of contradictory findings. There is basic disagreement focusing upon the primary question being examined i.e. is there really a difference between the leadership styles of males and females? Some authors argue strongly that there are differences, while others assert just as strongly that there are none. In India, various researches have been conducted which have taken individual characteristics of leaders such as ethical issues, policy makers, political participation, conflict resolution style etc. Our purpose of study is to compare male and female leaders on the basis of their behavioural characteristics i.e. arrogance, decisiveness, hardworking, honesty, intelligence, creativity and emotional stability. For this purpose, this study has been conducted using questionnaire which has been filled by 64 male and female professionals.

Sample Profile

Table 1
Profile of the Respondents in Survey

	N	%
Gender		
Males	34	53
Females	30	47
Age (in years)		
Below 25	6	10
25- 35	26	40
35-50	17	27
50 and above	15	23
Occupation		
Students	3	4
Professionals	23	36
Managers	23	36
Self-employed	9	14
Unemployed	6	10
Qualification		
Matric	8	12
Graduate	31	49
Post Graduate	25	39

Objectives of the Paper

The main objectives of this study are:

- To assess the various characteristics determining male and female leadership.
- To make a comparative analysis of society's perception about characteristics of male and female leaders.

3. Research Methodology

The universe for this study comprised of Punjab. It was difficult to deal with whole subject matter. In order to save time, money and efforts sampling has to be resorted to. A sample of 64 respondents was selected based on convenient sampling for the present study. Secondary data has also been used in the study. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions in which society's view was measured by five point Likert Scale for all the characteristics i.e. arrogant, decisive, hardworking, honest, intelligent, creative and emotional and they were asked to indicate leadership qualities of male and female leaders. Statistical techniques include average, percentage, standard deviation and paired t-test were used.

Table 1 gives a viewpoint of the respondents chosen for the survey. There is an equal proportion of male and female in the sample. Majority of the respondents are young in the age group of 25-35. Young respondents are preferred as they are more enthusiastic in giving responses. Majority

of respondents are professional and managers since they better understand the gender issues. Educated people have been considered for the sample. Graduates and post graduates were asked for the responses.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

Table 2
Relative Importance of Various Attributes for Selection of Male Leader and Female Leader

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Arrogant_M	2.75	64	1.403	.175
	Arrogant_F	2.66	64	1.144	.143
Pair 2	Decisive_M	3.97	64	.992	.124
	Decisive_F	3.66	64	.930	.116
Pair 3	Hardworking_M	3.75	64	1.234	.154
	Hardworking_F	4.06	64	1.006	.126
Pair 4	Honest_M	3.41	64	1.065	.133
	Honest_F	4.34	64	.781	.098
Pair 5	Intelligent_M	3.75	64	1.069	.134
	Intelligent_F	4.00	64	.756	.094
Pair 6	Creative_M	3.53	64	1.038	.130
	Creative_F	4.03	64	.890	.111
Pair 7	Emotional_M	2.63	64	.864	.108
	Emotional_F	4.41	64	.610	.076

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 shows the relative importance of various attributes for selection of male leader and female leader by using mean which shows that the highest mean is 4.41 which proves that female leaders are more emotional whereas the highest mean for male leader is 3.97 i.e. male leaders are

more decisive. When it comes to honesty, creativity, intelligence mean value is high in case of women leaders and in case of decisiveness and arrogance mean value is high for male leaders.

Table 3
Male Leaders Versus Female Leaders

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Total-Male	23.75	64	5.102	.638
	Total-Female	26.94	64	3.116	.390

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 shows that mean for male is 23.75 and std. deviation is 5.102 whereas for female mean is 26.94 and std. deviation is 3.116 thus showing that society rates females superior to males. But there is a need to find out the statistical difference

between male and female leadership attributes so this is explained with the help of paired sample t-test in the next table.

Table 4
Comparative Analysis of Various Attributes of Male and Female Leaders.

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Arrogant_M - Arrogant_F	.094	1.892	.236	-.379	.566	.396	63	.693
Pair 2	Decisive_M - Decisive_F	.313	1.367	.171	-.029	.654	1.829	63	.072
Pair 3	Hardworking_M - Hardworking_F	-.313	1.680	.210	-.732	.107	-1.488	63	.142
Pair 4	Honest_M - Honest_F	-.938	1.446	.181	-1.299	-.576	-5.186	63	.000
Pair 5	Intelligent_M - Intelligent_F	-.250	1.380	.173	-.595	.095	-1.449	63	.152
Pair 6	Creative_M - Creative_F	-.500	1.671	.209	-.918	-.082	-2.393	63	.020
Pair 7	Emotional_M - Emotional_F	-1.781	.967	.121	-2.023	-1.540	-14.733	63	.000

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 depicts the comparative analysis of various attributes of male and female leaders. (For this the null hypothesis is that the society perceives no significant differences between characteristics of male and female leaders.) The result supports and confirms the findings of the existing literature which postulates that there is difference between male and female as far as their leadership qualities are concerned. However when all the characteristics are

studied separately it is found that society's perception differs significantly i.e. respondents have felt that women are more honest ($t = -5.186, p=.000$), creative ($t = -2.393, p=.020$) and emotional ($t = -14.733, p=.000$). For other characteristics i.e. arrogant ($t = .396, p=.693$), decisive ($t = 1.829, p=.072$), hardworking ($t = -1.488, p=.142$) and intelligent ($t = -1.449, p=.152$), society's perception is insignificant.

Table 5
Male Leaders Versus Female Leaders

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Total-Male - Total-Female	-3.188	6.461	.808	-4.801	-1.574	-3.947	63	.000

Source: Primary Data

According to table 5, value of paired sample t-test is -3.947, and significant value is .000, which is less than 0.05 as well as 0.01. So it is highly significant, null hypothesis may be rejected at 1 per cent level of significance. According to the study conducted society rates female leaders superior to male leaders.

5. Conclusion

Considerations on gender differences and leadership styles imply that we are in the period of transition. Area of gender differences in leadership styles is a subject which includes ambiguities and paradoxes. There are numerous studies on this subject but still some question remained

without appropriate response. The study shows that there is difference between attributes of male and female leaders. Many respondents believe women have the right stuff to be leaders on basis of emotions, creativity, intelligence, hard work and honesty. But when we talk about decisiveness and arrogance male leaders have upper hand. So it should be noted that both males and females play important roles on different aspects. The challenge to various organizations of the future is to accept a variety of leadership styles as there is no “best” style of leadership. All depends on the organization and the task to be done. If organizations continue to become flatter and less hierarchical, some of the leadership traits traditionally associated with women leaders will be most appropriate in those organizations. The recognition of a diversity of leadership styles will allow potential leaders to lead in ways that will draw upon their individual strengths. The restructured workplace will provide a setting for a variety of leadership styles to flourish, and, as a result, it will gain in strength and flexibility.

Clearly, we are in a period of transition in regard to our thinking about gender differences in leadership styles. The cultural factors supporting differences in leader behavior are in a period of flux. It seems likely that as more women assume leadership roles and as sex role stereotypes fade away, the very notion of gender differences in leadership style will also disappear. We will recognize that different leaders have different styles, but we will not automatically associate one style with women and another with men. Males and females alike will be challenged to develop the type of leadership skills that will be needed to lead the organizations of tomorrow.

References:

- Andersen, J. A., & Hansson, P. H. (2011). At the end of the road? On differences between women and men in leadership behavior. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 32 (5), 428-441.
- Alice, H. Eagly., & Linda, L. Carli (2007). *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth About How Women Become Leaders*, Harvard Business School Press.
- Brandt, T. & Laiho, M.. (2013). Gender And Personality In Transformational Leadership Context: An Examination of Leader and Subordinate Perspectives. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 34 (1), 44 - 66 doi:10.1108/01437731311289965.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Cliff, J. E. (2005). Walking the Talk? Gendered Rhetoric vs. Action in Small Firms. *Organization Studies* 26: 63-9.1. doi

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_object_identifier:10.1177/0170840605046490

- Eagly, A. H. & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female Leadership Advantage: An evaluation of the Evidence. *The Leadership Quarterly* 14 (2003) 807-834 available on line at www.sciencedirect.com.
- Kinicki, A. & Williams, B. (2009), *Management: A practical introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Karin, K. (2004). *Women and Leadership: A Contextual Perspective*. Springer Publishing.
- Levy, P. (2010), *Industrial organizational psychology: Understanding the workplace* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Worth Publishers
- Moran, B.B. (1992). Gender Differences in Leadership. *Library Trends*, 40(3), Winter 1992, pp.475-91 @ 1992 The Board of Trustees, University of Illinois 3360 476 LIBRARY TRENDS WINTER 1992)
- Patel, G., & Buiting, S. (2013). Gender Differences in Leadership Styles and the Impact within Corporate Boards. available at <http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpadocs/Genderdiff.pdf> (accessed 1 Jan 2014).
- Riggio, R. E. (2010). Are Men Better Leaders, or Do We Just Think So? Available at <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201003/do-men-and-women-lead-differently-whos-better> (accessed 3 Jan 2014)
- Sharpe, R. (2000). As leaders, Women Rule: New studies Find that female managers outshine their male counterparts in almost every measure. *Business Week*, 74. Retrieved December 15, 2000 from http://www.businessweek.com/common_frames/ca.htm?/2000/00_47/b3708145.htm.
- Snaebjornsson, Inga. Minelgaite., & Edvardsson, Ingi. Runar. (2013). Gender, Nationality and Leadership Style: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8(1).

About the Authors:

Shikha Chhabra is an Assistant Professor at Commerce at Hans Raj Mahila Maha Vidyalaya, Jalandhar. She has 10 years teaching experience and has number of national and international publications to her credit. She is a member of Indian Commerce Association.

Yuvika is an Assistant Professor in Commerce in Hans Raj Mahila Maha Vidyalaya, Jalandhar. She has 8 years teaching Experience and has number of national publications to her credit. She is a member of Indian Commerce Association. She is pursuing Ph.D. from Department of Management, PTU, Kapurthala.

Reference # Envision - C -13

