A Study of Women in Leadership: Gender Bias and Barriers

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ABSTRACT

It has not been long since women in leadership have been studied academically, mainly because the study of leadership has traditionally been concentrated on “great men” who defined power, authority, and knowledge (Klenke 1996).

Sandler states that leadership (1993), “has been generally associated with men and with male styles of behavior, and because women have not been in leadership positions in great numbers, the mental image of a leader held by most people is male”.

In spite of the fact that literature on women in leadership has grown in the recent past, not many studies have empirically investigated and studied the female experience of leadership and management in organizations. In this study my investigation of leadership shows that senior management positions are, for the majority, no longer dominated based on gender.

The absence of women in senior positions of leadership and management at organizations is well documented (Astin & Davis 1993, Bagilhole 2003, Blackmore 2002, Brooks 1997, Brown 1997, Forster 2001, Kettle 1996, Petersen & Gravett 2000, Soldewell 1979, Sutherland 1985), but due to the Feminist movement and the relatively new era of gender equality, these studies show that women and taking a significant part of these positions.

The reason behind the fact that initial studies of leadership had been concentrated on male leadership was because of the absence of females taking lead roles in organization. As time went by, the number of females in leadership positions increased and as such the disparity between traditional genders roles and the differences styles between male and female leadership began to feature in studies and investigation.

As time went by, the number of females in leadership positions increased and as such the disparity between traditional genders roles and the differences styles between male and female leadership began to feature in studies and investigation (Eagly and Johnson 1990). These investigations also paid attention to the barriers that prevent women from procuring and proceeding into senior leadership and management positions. Upon objective analysis, very few studies have been attempted to specifically document women “climbing the ladder” of leadership and “breaking through the glass ceiling” in the business world.

Key Words

Leadership, Women leadership and Management, Women Leadership Styles

1. Introduction

The world in the 21st century leadership is a spark topic for the researches and surveys, journals and documents have been developed to enhance the importance of a leader to an organization. The success of an organization the leadership is more frequently important than other alternatives (McKinsey, 2012). Leadership itself is a comprehensive concept, and several theories and styles of Leadership exist. Women leadership is one subdivision of this concept and it is more important topic for 21st century. Women leadership as the fact that women can be and are leaders, in the other way it defines from a radical point of view and as a matter of equality and the right to have the same opportunities. Nevertheless, certain feminine characteristics, which are treasured in present organizations (Palmu-Joronen 2009, 172). Leadership should not be segregated as female leadership at all most leadership studies was carried out by men and about male leaders and almost many senior management positions held by men. Because women have been neglecting the study of leadership. The concept of leadership is described as male dominant topic. Because men are contemplate fit for senior management and leadership positions as managers or leaders, as these roles are suppose to re-
quire masculine characteristics (Schein, 1973, 1975; Powell, 2002).
In reality, men are filled most leadership positions and, consequently, managers or leaders are commonly assumed to be men. Namely, “think manager – think male” is a prevalent attitude worldwide (Schein, 1996).

Earlier, women were not noticed as the suitable role for leadership positions, but in present transformation has occurred engaging women into many top leadership and management positions. The changes like women in leadership positions that have occurred contributing to a rapidly diverse business world. In order to understand the gender equality between men and women in these leadership positions. The leadership studies have focused almost entirely on the behavior of male managers. (Bennett, 1997) is concerned about the extent to which standard leadership theory is applicable to the needs of women managers to these positions in organization.

Leadership is people driven and the ability to inspire people helps to achieve the set goals of an organization. (Daft & Kendrick & Vershinina 2010, pp) And it’s a motivation tool to the people engagement to their work. The varies styles of leadership develop from different ways of motivating people, different kind of goals and the nature of the organizations. (Hannagan 2008, pp) Mental imagination of a role of leader is a male character due to lack of women leaders in numbers. Generally leadership is the men and with male styles of behavior.

In this study investigates the women and leadership skills and the barriers to become the leader or higher management positions. Not many studies explore the women in to senior leadership and management positions in organizations and the entry barriers to the senior positions. Many research studies have focused on male leaders and ignore the women leaders.

The challenges and barriers to enter to these positions as leaders women may be unique to women and are therefore worth investigating.

In this study contents the women as a role of leader in higher positions and the barriers that they have to enter in to these positions.

When referring to women in leadership, the concept glass ceiling frequently pops out. In this framework, glass ceiling signifies to a barrier which women face, or have faced, in the organization. A glass ceiling affects to women from achieving the same leadership positions as men in organization (The Glass Ceiling Effect 2001.) few claims that the glass ceiling has been now devastated and others argue vise versa. But with the time Women now have the opportunity to elevate to higher positions but they face many complications, instead of climbing the ladder straightforward as men regularly do. (Tanhu 2012, pp.)

When it comes to women hold a leadership in organization more Barriers exist. This study discuss the Barriers and it may content with Personal/psychological barriers, Traditional roles, Selection hiring and promotion procedures, Structural/systemic of organization, The glass ceiling barriers, Lack of access to networks, Socio-economic and cultural barriers.

3. Methodology
The research method adopted in this paper is content analysis through empirical evidences and associated theoretical contents. Accordingly, literature review was employed as the main research tool. An inductive approach has been used to analyze and present the arguments and concepts. However, this paper discusses the topic in a variety of perspectives such as gender equality and gender roles to establish a foundation upon which future studies can be conducted.

2. Background of the Study
Research on women in management and leadership, mainly by women researchers, has only received attention in the last three decades. Most leadership research prior to the 1980s was carried out by men and dealt almost exclusively with male leaders.

4. Literature Review
This illustrates the literature of leadership, women in leadership and women leadership styles.

4.1 Leadership
According to the Fleishman and Harris, the Leadership and subordinate relationship is not a new phenomenon where the positive leadership reinforces a both win-win situation within leader and subordinate too. Some of the studies suggest that the level of leader-subordinate relationship defines the behavior of the employee and his/her engagement. But in other way this approach can be different from person to person and level of the relationship.

Mehra, highlights suggested that organization seeks efficient and effective approaches to make it possible to be achieve best outcomes more than the by focusing the strategies of leadership. Turnover is based on the leadership, Synergy is based on the leadership and finally team achievement is based on the leadership. In most of the companies’ leadership is the inspiration tool, which binds and keeps the employees within organization as a key strength. Status of leadership defines by the regularity manner between the leadership and subordinates. It’s not easy to manage the balance between both parties too as we need to create harmonization culture between both parties where both get benefits from this relationship (Jaatinen and Lavikka, 2008). Finally, success of the management strategies depend on success of the above leader subordinates relationship management (Ledingham, 2003). Wilson, 2000; Yang and Mallabo, 2003 have done studies the relationship between managers and employees and the, employee commitment, employee retention and customer retention.

4.2 Women and Leadership

Leadership and management positions have been concerned with study of political leadership of “great men” who defined power, authority, and knowledge (Klenke 1996). Its always-male style and behavior because fewer amounts of women held leadership positions and the mental image of a head is a male.

After issue of gender and leadership was given attention the women and leadership topic appears to the world. As women expanded discernibility, so did the gratitude of their potential as front-runners. But their leadership evolution is quiet low in organizations (Johnson 1993:10)

4.3 Women Leadership Styles

Many findings in different countries have tried to determine whether there are differences in leadership style between men and women. These studies specify that men and women have altered ways of leadership and way of managing organizations (Embry et al., 2008). Women are follows interpersonally methods and democratic leadership styles. And also transactional and transformational leadership styles could be correlated with gender (Embry et al., 2008). Male leaders are termed as more transactional than women and female leaders are observed as being more transformational than men, and also women are combination with both masculine and feminine styles, (Eagly et al., 2003).

Many researchers found that women have a unique leadership styles compared to men. Although it is a general belief that women have a different leadership style to men, (Blackmore 1999, Blackmore 2002, Rhode 2003)

Initially the leadership studies have concentrated on male leadership styles because of the absence of women leaders to the organizations and only males were leaders and the factor of gender in leadership did not occur. With the time the number of female leaders were happen to appear, gender began to feature in leadership positions. (Eagly and Johnson 1990), found that men are when it comes to leadership more task-oriented and Women are in leadership more interpersonal. Women and men caring different leadership styles, which regularly accomplishes that the findings are ambiguous (Ferrario, 1994).

According to Helgesen (2003) Women’s leadership qualities and their tendency to be good communicators, to have good relationship skills, to be energetic and logical auditors and negotiators express the new order. They create an environment that encounters the needs of the people in the organization.

Women are more in to democratic leadership style. They inspire contribution, power and information, and also try to enhance admirers. Men are more probable to attempt directive command-and-control style. They trust on the prim authority of their managerial position for their influence base.

Women follows the teamwork, trust, flexibility and information sharing are swapping inelastic structures, controllable and also The best leaders listen, encourage, motivate, and provide support to their employers And many women attempt to do these things better than men.
Women and men are naturally different from each other, and mostly culture and society may form and strengthen gender roles. The traditional character of men is to bring up and support their family and the responsibility of women is to look after their children and home. (Piha 2006, pp) Nevertheless, everyone has their individual characteristics and strengths and that is why categorizing should be avoided.

Female leadership is description of leadership is used often and it refers to women being leaders or occasionally to a specific style of leading by women. (Piha 2006, pp) If leadership were separated into women leadership and men's leadership, then it would mean that leadership is not gender neutral.

Daniel, Boyatzis and Mckee (2002) indicate that leaders have surrounded with particular qualities, which are inbuilt personality qualities of a person. Leaders are perceived as exciting followers who behave based on the leader purposes such as talent, role model, entrepreneurial and initiative, encouraging, far-sighted, and committed. Contemporary leadership theories highlight the element of accuracy in leaders. Zaccaro (2007) examined the 100 women who were in leadership positions. And feminist leadership style was more comprehensive and cooperative in nature. Feminists look for leadership positions with the objective of realizing goals on social justice. This makes them to adapt transformational leadership style. Furthermore, women in most cases feel that they are constrained to adhere to institutional norms, which are mostly defined by men.

When referring to women in leadership, the concept glass ceiling frequently pops out. In this framework, glass ceiling signifies to a barrier which women face, or have faced, in the organization. A glass ceiling affects to women from achieving the same leadership positions as men in organization (The Glass Ceiling Effect 2001.) few claims that the glass ceiling has been now devastated and others argue vise versa. But with the time Women now have the opportunity to elevate to higher positions but they face many complications, instead of climbing the ladder straightforward as men regularly do. (Tanhua 2012, pp)

Swanepoel et al (2003) define gender as a “demographic factor that may influence Human Resources Management in organizations and which can lead to similar problems of discrimination in the workplace”. DuBrin (1995) describe the difference of men and women fact that men are higher than women due to the terms sex and gender stimulate disagreement both scientifically and politically. Men are considered as self-assertive and motivated to control their environment and more aggressive, independent, strong, and governing. In the other way, women are more selfless and anxious and kind, helpful, understanding, sensitive, understand others feelings (Ashmore, Del Boca, & Wohlers, 1986; Eagly & Steffen, 1984) democratic versus autocratic style is a different feature of leader behavior than task-oriented and interpersonally oriented styles the democratic-autocratic dimension also relates to gender stereotypes, because one component of these stereotypes is that men are relatively dominant and controlling more autocratic and directive than women. Holding a higher position meant being masculine in terms of stereotypical behaviors.

Women leadership style displays more natural than men since they feel more comfortable interacting with people and that’s their natural way of life. (Dubrin, 1995). Yet as women highlight in the corporate ladder, their role with the male leader of corporate success becomes important and may even reject the women characters

4.4 Common Barriers Exits to Women Leadership

When it comes to women hold a leadership in organization more Barriers exist. The Barriers may arise at the personal/psychological, socio-economic/cultural and structural/systemic levels. Forster (2001) and Petersen and Gravett (2000) identified structural that is, enrollment and selection policies, career development and promotion policies, recognized male power and the roles of women academics. A cultural barrier exists to women’s growth to senior positions in the business world.

4.4.1 Personal Psychological Barriers

Personal psychological barriers contain attitudes like redundant male
attitudes towards women caring a leadership role. They think that ability to lead and lack of confidence in their role of higher position and the Lack of commitment and lack of readiness to take risks. That proposed that women’s ‘fear of success’ and that might pull down them from forward for promotion. (Sutherland’s 1985) explore that women taking higher positions in the organization seem to be less strongly motivated than men to apply for higher leadership positions. Even after they apply frequently lack self-confidence even though they may be better than their male peers. This is due to biggest disadvantageous attitudes towards women who seem determined and also to their lack of expectation to succeed. (Soldewell’s 1979) opinion is that women are their own enemies as they denigrate that the opportunities that available around them.

When it comes to Traditional roles Women are sometimes confused with her career and her family it known as role conflict. Women tensions between their traditional roles of wife and mother and when it comes to their career. That’s where a woman is raggedy between her career and her family (Tinsley 1984, Greyvenstein 2000, Petersen Gravett 2000, Heward 1996). Women most of the time pay more attention to her career relatively to her family because societal norms directive that her main responsibility is pay more attention to her family (Sutherland 1985).

4.4.2 Organization Structure and Culture

Organization structure sometimes not faire to the women and men equally. it makes difficult for women to climbing the ladder to top level due to structural and the systematic way of the organizational culture.

Organizational cultures makes difficulties to women's progression (Kettle 1996, Astin & Davis 1993). Definitions of organizational culture abound in the literature on organizational theory. (Hoy and Miskel’s 1978pp) definition clarifies organizational culture as "symbols, ceremonies and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of that organization to its employees."

It is these understated shared beliefs of how things should be in the organization that make it difficult for women to succeed despite the reality of formal policies to redress inequalities (Kettle 1996). Therefore, if an organizational culture is based on a traditionally male-controlled view of what is desirable, then it is unavoidable that women will be getting disadvantaged.

4.4.3 Selection and Hiring Practices of an Organization

The selection and hiring practices of an organization could be a barrier for women craving to advance to senior leadership positions. (Bernstein (1984) and Kaplan et al (1984) point out that conventionally drawn from the professorial level and that search committees are usually composed of senior men. These management are often more concerned about the woman’s skill to fit in with the existing organization than they are about her skills, accomplishments, and vision (Kaplan et al 1984pp). The scarcity of women leaders at these senior levels also means that the interviewing committee will most likely consist of men only, thus putting women in the possible situation of being unhelpfully judged by those of the opposite sex (Sutherland 1985).

The tendency to stick to traditional way and to identify only traditional ways of obtaining those qualifications may limit leaders progression within an organization (Fine 2003). In hiring women leaders for senior positions of organization, it might help to consider a redefinition of recommendations to include those favorable to women.

The common hiring practice is in organizations, which is disadvantage to women than men. Which effects career advancement. This has clear suggestions for the career advancement and promotion of these women to senior leadership positions. It means that a good percentage of women are already disadvantaged by their employment status.

4.4.5 The Glass Ceiling Barriers

The 'glass ceiling' concept means it’s difficult to climb the ladder beyond middle management level. Although this concept is commonly associated with the industrial and business world, The 'glass ceiling' is an American concept explained in the 1980's to describe a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minority groups from moving up in the management hierarchy (McRae 1996:pp).
4.4.6 Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers

The family before career concept is the cultural way of society established and it carries cultural values. Basic idea is man's success in his career as an achievement of a duty towards his family (Malik & Lie 1994, Mares 1990). Women has to look after their work and keep the bond with children and husband relationship and have to sacrifice their career due to a traditional way of culture. For supposed economic reasons, therefore, man's career is given priority.

5. Theoretical Perspective

Leadership, according to Middlehurst (1993), managerial leadership would involve planning and budgeting; organizing and staffing, controlling and problem solving. According to Bryman (1992), cited in Middlehurst (1993:68), leadership “is a process of social influence whereby a leader steers members of a group towards a goal”. It means the capability to influence and persuade others to act on the basis of greater knowledge or proficiency, logical argument and fairness. Leadership will also involve taking hard decisions about those values and practices which should be retained and those, which will need adaptation (Middlehurst 1993 pp). Leadership is necessary for guiding and developing corrective and teaching objectives as well as being relevant for the development and implementation of organization success. Leadership is involved in the interpretation of values as well as the representation of collective purposes and interests. As much as in other organizations it is also required to facilitate, stimulate and focus individual and group effort in universities (Middlehurst 1993 pp).

Leadership is the important criteria identified as an essential factor to inform women leadership. Leadership reports display that the mediating role of motivation positively links the behavior of leadership and followers (Xu and Thomas, 2011). (Tims 2011) recognized a positive correlation between transformational leaders and employee engagement on a daily basis. Leadership style constituents that stimulate and promote employee opportunities to exercise their skills and thus improve job-related resources have positive effects on employee engagement (Breevaart et al., 2014). Robbins and Judge (2012) measured the core objective of a leader to be to assist subordinates in achieving their objectives successfully, providing the necessary guidance and assistance to attain these aims in addition to those of the organization.

Seijts and Crim (2006) found that leadership roles and behaviors could have positive results as employees become more engaged in the organization. According to Yukl et al. (2009), participative leader behavior increases the positive valence of work for subordinates who require more independence, while directive leader behavior is thought to be especially effective with achievement-focused employees, because the leader will clarify objectives and guide their subordinates. Lockwood (2007) also inferred that effective communication between leader and employee could influence organization success a leader who positively conveys strategies to subordinates can inspire employee engagement among those workers.

Leadership types – transformational and transactional leadership

Transforming leadership results in mutual inspiration and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents. Opinion leaders are the Transactional political leaders, bargainers or bureaucrats, party leaders, legislative leaders, and executive leaders. Transformational leaders can be categorized as intellectual leaders, leaders of reform or revolution and heroes or ideologues (Bass 1981:20).

Transactional leadership may be more desirable in the context of a changing environment; transactional leadership may be more suitable for a constant situation (Middlehurst 1993).

Bass (1998) takes Burns (1978) distinction further when he explains the difference between transactional cultures and leaders and transformational cultures and leaders.

A transactional culture concentrates on explicit and implicit contractual relationships. If transformational leadership is an appropriate leadership strategy in the context of a changing organizational environment, this might be a useful application in the current context of the transforming organization.
Conclusion

This study concerns with the role of women as leaders in higher positions and the barriers that they have to face with relating to these positions through literature that have been collected and it may described as the glass ceiling barriers which women face, or have faced, in the organization. The Barriers and how it may contend with personal/psychological barriers, traditional roles, selection hiring and promotion procedures, structural/systemic of organization, glass ceiling barriers, socio-economic and cultural barriers. Gender equalization is the main path to climb the ladder to a higher position for women to become successful in their career. It leads women to hold equal leadership roles as men in a male dominant era. It encourages their full participation and contribution to the higher levels in organizations.

Leadership and leadership styles differ between men and women but gender should not be applicable when it comes to leadership. Different leaders have different styles of leading which is derived from their personality, values and beliefs. Sometimes a woman indicates the masculine way and a man in a feminine way. People tend have their own perceptions of what is good leadership and appreciate different characteristics over others.

The goal of this literature review of women’s leadership was to initiate future research. The very small stream of studies concerned with women and leadership, including those conducted in service industry such as airline industry, hotel industry etc. In service industry especially in airline industry leadership positions held by male leaders but most of front line staff are female workers. If a woman can handle most difficult part of the service, as a front line staff managing people so why can’t they handle people as managers. This Area is a lac ing part and it shows path to future studies.

There are great variations between countries and cultures when it comes to women in leadership. By future studies on this stream the effects of different cultures on female leadership and comparing countries between each other, more knowledge would be gained on how the culture and organizations' and governments' structures affect women's positions as leaders.

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