

# GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP STYLE

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## ABSTRACT

In today's dynamic world, the traditional perceptions of who can become a leader and what it takes to be an effective leader are changing dramatically. The question is "are the attributes of leadership gender related or gender specific?" This paper studies the correlation between gender and two styles of leadership: transformational style and transactional style. The results of the data were analyzed using regression analysis and correlation analysis. The findings support the hypotheses that there is no relationship between gender and leadership styles. Evidence of a high correlation between leadership traits and management skills was found.

## INTRODUCTION

The ability to lead is the one crucial skill that an organization must have, if it is to get the best out of a team [8]. Leaders have the ability to establish direction for a group, gain their commitment, and motivate them to achieve goals to move in that direction. There is numerous literature written on leadership traits, styles, and kinds of leaders. Historical studies on leadership focused on the question of why some people become leaders and others did not. Some believed that leaders are born while others believed that leaders are made; resulting in mixed conclusions on "what is the best way to lead [7].

Four major critical skills are required to be an effective leader: cognitive skills, expert skills, action skills and relationship skills. These skills allow a leader to analyze problems systematically with clarity by using his/her ability to delegate, motivate and communicate; and by building trust and effective working relationships in the workplace. Statistics reveal that only 3-6% of top managerial positions are held by women today. Despite these statistics, employers realize that half the managerial talent in workforce is neglected when women are not appointed in such positions [5].

The last three decades has shown a three-fold increase in women at executive positions. Given the contemporary gender stereotypes along with an increase in the number of women leaders, it is of paramount importance to determine biases for/against women leaders and consequently to identify bias in leadership styles of men and women.

### *Hypotheses*

- H<sub>1</sub>: A relationship exists between transformational style of leadership and gender.
- H<sub>2</sub>: A relationship exists between transactional style of leadership and gender.
- H<sub>3</sub>: A difference exists in management skills of men and women.
- H<sub>4</sub>: A difference exists in leadership traits of men and women.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The challenges that an organization faces today are extremely complex. If an organization is to prosper, it needs to derive maximum benefits from its resources, especially human resources; and that requires good leadership

From a cross-cultural perspective, traditionally, the appropriate managerial skills were the dominant and assertive “masculine” behaviors (male) and downplayed the team supportive behaviors (as identified with women). But the traditional view is giving way to a new approach where the different management styles of communication, leadership, negotiation, organization and control are implied by the cultural differences [5].

Good leadership is what drives organizational success; they focus on quality, vision, service, innovation and improving productivity. Leaders employ various managerial styles to achieve this end. The more recent research has been on the transformational style and transactional style of leadership. The recent trend of the last decade requires one to analyze differences (if any) in leadership styles of men and women. Research has indicated that women have a higher tendency to use the transformational style than men. Myers and McCaulley noted that women leaders see themselves as more “feeling” type than men on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator [2].

Appelbaum et. al [1] found many factors that could undermine the effectiveness of women leaders. Some of these factors include women’s attitude, self-confidence, prior work experience, corporate environment and old boys’ network. They also found that women had higher communication skills, especially the ability to be a good listener and be more empathetic than men [1]. But the results are inconclusive for gender differences in managerial skills.

## METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was collected from managers and leaders within 100 mile radius of Cal Poly Pomona. To minimize errors and bias, data was collected from across various industries. The questionnaire was designed based on literature review and sample questionnaire of Bass & Avolio’s Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) report. To evaluate the preferred style of leadership, the respondents were to respond to 30 descriptive statements of leadership behavior.

Gender differences in leadership styles, management skills, and leadership traits were assessed using *t-tests*. Regression analysis was used in evaluating the four hypotheses. The functional form of the hypothesized equations was taken to be a linear regression, that is, linear in both, the variables and the coefficients. A dummy variable was used to distinguish between male and female managers. The test for independent variable was taken to be two-sided with 10% significance level. The association between leadership styles and management skills were assessed using *correlation analysis*.

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to determine differences (if any) in the way women and men lead. The statistical analysis of this survey lends support to the following conclusions:

- No gender difference exists in the transformational style of leadership. This implies that men and women use this style of leadership equally.
- No gender difference exists in the transactional style of leadership. That is to say, both men and women use this style equally.

- No relationship exists between gender and management skills. Management skills were measured in terms of the ability of a manager to fulfill its six basic roles: communication, conflict resolution, motivation and team spirit, planning and time management, delegation, and problem analysis. Both men and women performed their managerial duties equally. Thus, the results of this research imply that there is no difference in men and women managers, on the whole.
- No relationship exists between gender and leadership traits. Eight Leadership traits were examined for this research: loyalty, inspiration, enthusiasm, honesty, judgment, innovation, initiative and tact. When taken together, the results revealed that there is no relationship in the way women and men exhibit these traits.
- A relationship does exist between leadership style and management skills
- Correlations between leadership styles and management skills strongly suggest the superiority of the transformational leadership style.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

To derive further benefits from research about gender differences in leadership styles, changes in the research methodology would yield better and stronger results.

These changes could include:

- *Increasing the size of the sampling pool,*
- *Using matched pairs* where respondents are selected from within one company and have about the same work experience and expertise.
- *Using 360° feedback* to analyze each respondent's superiors, peers, and subordinates view of the respondent as a manager.
- *Using a racially and ethnically inclusive sampling pool*

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