

Diversity in Leadership: Women vs. Men

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Abstract

Traditional ideas regarding leadership are being considered and challenged as never done before. It has been evident that the old ideas regarding leadership majorly focused on the male as the decidedly stale. However, in the ambiguous, diverse, and volatile workplace of today, it has been evident that there is raising appreciation concerning the fact that leadership involves range of capabilities, as well as the fact that it has become highly contextual. With regard to that, an extensive literature search was conducted to select the studies that were published between 2009 and 2019 relating to diversity in leadership. From the results, 25 studies were included because they met the criteria used for inclusion. One of the fundamental issues that seem create barrier to women wanting to excel or advance in leadership roles is male-dominated corporate world. According to research, both women and men share similar success strategies and ambitions. However, despite the commonality, it has been revealed that they do not appear to have the same approach to leadership. Lack of ethical considerations also plays some role in accelerating the challenges and widening the gap that exists concerning men and women in leadership positions.

Keywords: managerial positions, leadership, healthy organisations, equal employment opportunities, gender discrimination, organisational justice, leadership effectiveness, leadership performance, women leadership, gender and leadership.

1. Introduction

Due to changes in social and economic conditions and globalisation, the self-perception and role of women in the industrialised countries is changing dramatically. Notably, over the past years, it has been evident that many management consultants, writers, social scientists, as well as writers have addressed some of the interconnected issues regarding gender and leadership. Traditional ideas regarding leadership are being considered and challenged as never done before (Brue, 2019). It has been evident that the old ideas regarding leadership majorly focused on the male as the decidedly stale. However, in the ambiguous, diverse, and volatile workplace of today, it has been evident that there is raising appreciation concerning the fact that leadership involves range of capabilities, as well as the fact that it has become highly contextual. Therefore, the paradigm shift has created the need to comprehend the interconnected factors regarding women, gender, and leadership (Brue, 2019). There is also a need to pay attention of the gender-driven differences that can be experienced between women and men in leadership. This will help in better leveraging and understanding the unique attributes and aspects that women can bring to leadership when given the opportunities.

Cheung & Halpern (2010) stated that the leadership standards that were evident in the traditional work environment are becoming irrelevant in the contemporary society. Non-traditional workplace programs and practices, as well as settings are becoming increasingly important as

there has been some expected shift in leadership styles that considers the changing environment (Cook, 2013). Unfortunately, it has been noted that women in various workplaces face barriers and challenges that also affects their involvement and mobility. Such restrictions and challenges have in some instances prevented them from developing the skills needed to access some opportunities. Based on that, some of the elements that contribute to challenges that women face in relation to leadership includes individual struggles, corporate barriers, and interpersonal dynamics (Cook, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to examine and identify the barriers and challenges that women face during and before engaging in leadership positions.

In order to gain a better comprehension of the picture regarding women and men in the contemporary society, it is important to consider the evolution of both the men and women's role in leadership over the past century. For the past centuries, the males dominated the leadership positions and jobs based on their masculine strength that was viewed as an important aspect in leadership (Carbajal, 2017). Traditionally, the work environments were not designed to accommodate women and this situation has created some gender biases and discrimination that in turn have also led to lack of opportunities for women to occupy some leadership positions (Carbajal, 2017). Notably, since the entry of women into workforce, they have been motivated to occupy the leadership positions. This makes it important to understand their unique capabilities, as well as their unique challenges. Lack of women in the executive level and leadership positions can be viewed to be as a function or a result of both the organization culture and strategy (Carbajal, 2017).

According to research, both women and men share similar success strategies and ambitions. However, despite the commonality, it has been revealed that they do not appear to have the same approach to leadership (Devnew&Storberg-Walker, 2018). The popular and general perception amongst the followers is that the women tend to be better at multi-tasking, as well as at nurturing and taking care that the male leaders who in most cases are perceived to be task-focused, action-oriented, and single-minded. It is also important to understand that women offer unique capabilities and attributes to organisational leadership while at the same time they also face some set of challenges (Devnew&Storberg-Walker, 2018).

2. Method

2.1 Literature Search

An extensive literature search was conducted to select the studies that were published between 2009 and 2019 using the keywords such as leadership effectiveness, leadership performance, women leadership, as well as gender and leadership. The studies found through the use of the stated keywords, were searched manually for the gender differences regarding the leadership outcomes. In relation to that, the keywords such as manager, leadership, supervisor, and leader were used, as well as paired with the terms such as women, sex, gender, and sex difference. Additionally, the search also involved books, numerous review articles, peer-reviewed journals, and the reference list that were provided by other related systematic and meta-analyses. Some of the journals that helped in finding the necessary information included *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Psychological Bulletin*, and

Journal of Management. Consequently, this search yielded 300 potential dissertations and articles, which were reviewed to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria as per the below description.

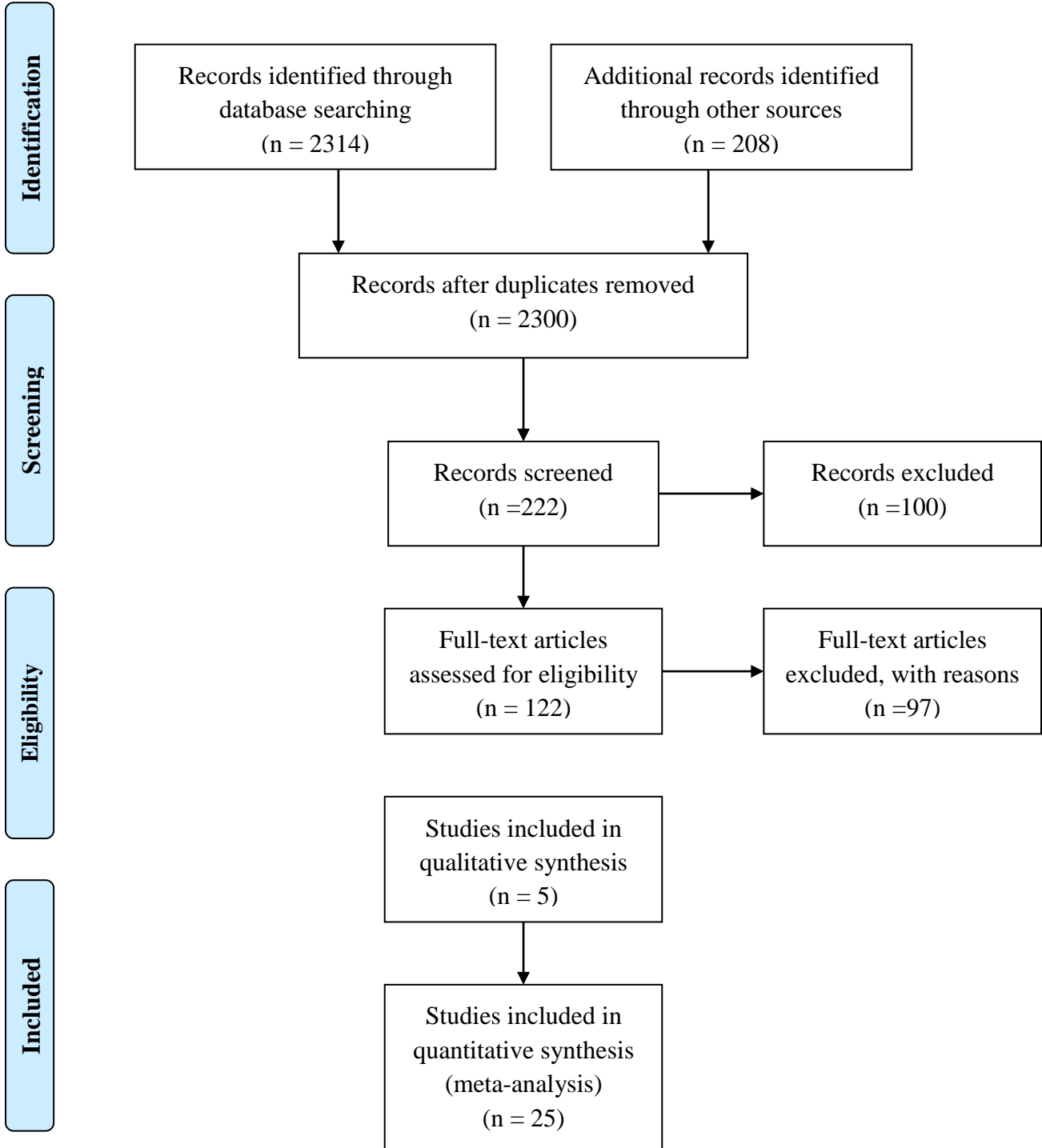
2.2 Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria in this systematic analysis were based on a few elements. For instance, one element concerning the inclusion was the fact that the study compared the female and male leaders, supervisors, managers, executives, administrators, or the directors. Another element in the inclusion criteria was the age of the participants, as they needed to be at least 18 years of age. The third inclusion criteria were whether the study considered the measures of leadership effectiveness with regard to satisfaction ratings, as well as leadership abilities or satisfaction.

3. Results

A total of retrieved records were 2522 from the search of literature. From the total, 105 were from other sources such as referrals and hand searches. 2300 studies were therefore excluded because some were duplicates while others were not relevant to the study. Hence, the remaining 222 were screened and 100 were further excluded. The remaining 122 were subjected to quality assessment and full abstraction. Based on that, 25 studies were included because they met the criteria used for inclusion.

PRISMA Flow Diagram



Through the search of the relevant literature according to the inclusion criteria several factors were identified relating to career paths of women, executive-level positions, gender, and leadership. One of the fundamental issues that seem create barrier to women wanting to excel or advance in leadership roles is male-dominated corporate world (Devnew&Storberg-Walker, 2018). Notably, women experience unique challenges and have unique capabilities when compared to men and this affects their interaction in male-dominated work environments. To some extent, a well defined innovative policies and corporate culture strategies can lead to success of women in leadership and leadership positions (Devnew&Storberg-Walker, 2018). Therefore, some of the themes that have been considered in the study include mentoring, unique challenges that women leaders face, unique capabilities that women leaders have, work-life balance, assignments and opportunities, networking, corporate culture, exceeding performance expectations, and salary gaps.

3.1 Unique Challenges that Women Leaders Face

Various studies have revealed that women face barriers and challenges that men rarely experience because of gender bias, low representation at the workplace's senior level, as well as because of stereotyping in the workplace. Consequently, the external barriers and challenges that women faces in their quest for leadership often lead to some internal barriers such as lack of support, low self-esteem, and many more(Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017). Women also face other pressure due to work-life balance as they are also needed to attend to other domestic chores (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017). For instance, they are sometimes faced with the dilemma of either being a good employee or being a good mother as it is not easy to achieve both at the same time. Despite the fact that women face unique challenges as compared to men, it is not surprising that more women still want and appreciate the fact that they can play leadership roles in any environment and workplace (Gipson et al., 2017).

3.2 Unique Capabilities that Women Leaders Face

According to some researchers, it has been noted that women are more flexible and nurturing than their male counterparts (Gipson et al., 2017). This shows that women leaders have been found to be better at handling complexities in workplaces with regard to making decisions that involve multiple stakeholders and interests. Even when the women leaders are under a lot of pressure, it has been noted that they are capable of incorporating other people's views and multiple viewpoints than the male leaders in order to create the needed work environment (Gipson et al., 2017).

Scientifically, women can deal with complexities more than men can because of the brain structure (Gipson et al., 2017). The hippocampus in women is larger than that of men and is capable of receiving more blood flow when they are under pressure. Hippocampus is an important area of the brain that is essential for decision making and memory (Gipson et al., 2017). The ability to receive more blood flow in the brain when under pressure is essential because it allows women to be efficient and effective at coding and processing emotional experiences (Dillard, 2018). Another scientific reason why women are more capable of handling issues when under pressure as compared to men is that the structure that connects the brain and the hemisphere is 10 times more white that that of men(Cook, 2013). On the other hand, when

men are under pressure, they tend to focus on limited or single viewpoint while ignoring some of the important aspects of the situation. Based on that, it is evident that women leaders have the ability to adapt to various situations in order to meet the clients', stakeholders', and organizational needs (Cook, 2013).

3.3 Mentoring

It has been noted that before attaining leadership positions, women sometimes lack the needed programs that support the diversity policies, mentoring, as well as management support systems because of some structural inequalities. When compared to men, it has been noted that women may lack the assertiveness and self-confidence that is often displayed by men. Without the right mentoring and coaching, women in most cases do not believe that they can be leaders or that they can occupy leadership positions (Cook, 2013). Therefore, according to research, in order to mitigate the challenges caused by the inequalities between the genders, mentoring can play some significant roles in helping women develop as leaders. It is also essential to have corporate cultures that encourage mentoring of different individuals irrespective of their gender, race, backgrounds, and socio-economic status.

A longitudinal survey that was conducted by Singh et al. (2009) has shown that mentoring platforms have helped in providing employees with the planning, strategy, as well as the internal dynamics that helps in building the needed relationships with the key influencers. Consequently, this helps in ensuring career developments and successful relationships. It has also been noted men with mentors concerning their leadership qualities and career developments often move up the ladder faster and quicker than women. According to (Cook, 2013), with or without the promotions and mentorship, there are still inequalities regarding women's advancements compared to that of men. This conclusion was reached after the study revealed that the percentage of men that gained promotions after mentorship was 21% compared to 2% of women that gained promotions after mentorship (Cook, 2013).

On the other hand, during leadership, it has been noted that women who occupy senior level positions may find it hard to get mentors (Keck, 2019). It has also been noted that men may not be willing to mentor the female executives since they believe that women do not have the ability to perform as men in the same executive level. Therefore, during leadership as well as before leadership, it has been pointed out that mentoring helps in determining the involvement of women in various positions despite the fact that in some cases it is not easy for them to get the needed mentors due to gender biases (Keck, 2019).

3.4 Networking

Notably, accessing leadership opportunities may be dependent of some personal networks. These opportunities can help in shaping a person's career trajectory. People of all genders can achieve and develop a lot when provided with necessary relationships and wide networks (Buchanan, Warning & Tett, 2012). Ely et al., (2011), have also stated that competencies and qualifications that are essential and effective in socializing and persuading other people can be obtained through new opportunities that can be realized through networking.

3.5 Exceeding Performance Expectations

As a matter of fact, it has also been noted that women have continued to experience fewer advancement opportunities and unequal pay as compared to their men counterparts. According to research, most women who are in leadership positions have educational training and solid academic qualifications, but they still find that all those are not enough to gain them the needed respect as leaders at the top of the organizations (Larsson&Alvinus, 2019). Various studies have also indicated that women who are at the top corporate ladder or in leadership roles are always monitored to ensure that they provide the needed services that go sometimes beyond the expected results or outcomes (Larsson &Alvinus, 2019). This shows the level of biases that are still experienced in corporate world in relation to gender and leadership. Ethics is needed to ensure that women are given the opportunities and inclusive environment that can enable them to perform as required or even exceed the provided expectations (Larsson&Alvinus, 2019).

3.6 Assignments and Opportunities

Notably, women are sometimes overlooked or ignored due to beliefs and biases that are unethical when it comes to undertaking assignments that are necessary for their career developments. According to Dowdy & Hamilton (2011), it is impressive and inspiring that the women can be allowed to take part in career development that can enable them to be effective and efficient leaders. Therefore, organisations should consider employing ethical practices that ensures provision of equal opportunities, as well as assignments for leadership development among women and men (Madsen & Andrade, 2018).

3.7 Salary Gaps

Salary gaps are still one of the contentious issues at the executive level. Both women and men have sometimes felt the negative impacts of the salary gaps and earnings during their careers as leaders (Leitch & Stead, 2016). According to the research, it has been noted that women who occupy the executive posts sometimes are compensated less than their male counterparts occupying similar or comparable positions. According to Sandberg (2013), in a situation where women air their complains concerning the salary gaps and biases, they are sometimes viewed to be violating the protocols and this situation has also led to lack of necessary mitigation measures for addressing the situation. Therefore, according to Slaughter (2012), it is evident that women still cannot have all they need in terms of opportunities and motivations in order to become effective and efficient, as well as productive leaders in some instances.

3.8 Work-life Balance

Notably, for the past decades women have struggled to have equal access to fair wages, equal rights, and unbiased employment opportunities (Zvereva, 2019). Some studies have illustrated that women still face challenges relating to work-life balance due to lack of flexibility to manages home, personal life, as well as work. According to Groyberg & Abrahams (2014), the continuous demands and pressure on career women have become multidirectional and strenuous and this has placed more burdens on women who have tried to pursue leadership opportunities in various organisations. Some of the studies have also identified that women are still facing the challenges relating to work and life balance based on the fact that the society is dominated by

males who in some instances do not recognise the ability of women to take leadership positions (Brue, 2019). In an attempt to ensure that the issues relating to women and work-life balance are mitigated and managed efficiently, most of the organisations are trying to ensure that the environment provided for the employees is inclusive and friendly (Brue, 2019). This has also been recognised as part of ethical considerations that ensure fair participation and involvement in the organisations (Bush, 2011).

3.9 Corporate Culture

Corporate culture is essential in the sense that they form the basic foundation for any organisation both in terms of ethics and objectives, as well as the wellbeing of the employees (Radu et al., 2017). It can also be a mechanism used by the organisations to influence or hold power. Based on that, it involves the philosophies, language, rituals, norms, and traditions that propagate traditional power structure (Player et al., 2019). With regard to the aspects of biases, values, and beliefs, it has been noted that gender ratios have been distorted to establish some of the internal aspects that are not inclusive or that does not provide the needed equality for leadership (Place & Vardeman-Winter, 2018). Men still hold most of the leadership positions as compared to women because of the distorted gender ratios. Therefore, according to Ely et al., (2011), values, biases, and beliefs can still intensify or create informal and formal barriers for women.

3.10. Ethics and Leadership

It has been noted that ethics is necessary when it comes to leadership because of the fact that when leadership is directed by respect for values and ethical beliefs for rights and dignity of others, then both women and men can be treated fairly in terms of the identified challenges such as salary gaps, biases, and inequalities (Reynolds, 2011). Based on that, ethical leadership considers the concepts such as fairness, charisma, trust, consideration, and honesty (Stead, 2012). Corporate culture should also ensure that ethics is considered and the relevant elements such as honesty, justice, service for others, respect, and community building are incorporated (Shea & Renn, 2017).



Figure 1: Ethical Leadership Concept

4. Discussions

It is necessary to comprehend that the purpose of this review is to examine and identify the barriers and challenges that women face during and before engaging in leadership positions, as well as the interconnected aspects such as their unique capabilities and challenges. Some of the themes that have been identified from the studies include ethics and leadership, mentoring, assignments and opportunities, unique capabilities and challenges that women face, salary gaps, work-life balance, corporate culture, and networking. From the findings, it has been noted that women face challenges that are similar across various organizations and the barriers that they encounter manifests in various and different ways (Place & Vardeman-Winter, 2018). Lack of ethical considerations also plays some role in accelerating the challenges and widening the gap that exists concerning men and women in leadership positions. Additionally, despite the fact that women have unique capabilities when compared to men in leadership positions, it is essential to also note that lack of mitigating the challenges posed by the barriers can affect their initiatives and success when carrying out their responsibilities (Shea & Renn, 2017).

The studies have also indicated that women are often well prepared experimentally, educationally, and psychologically (Sandberg, 2013). However, they still lack the opportunities that they deserve to carry out their leadership roles efficiently based on the ethical considerations and corporate culture. Based on that, some studies have also suggested that women need to get involved in ensuring that the challenges they are facing with regard to leadership are mitigated and managed instead of waiting to their male counterparts to provide them with the solutions. Ethically, bridging the gap that is evident among the gender and in relation to leadership is essential. Organizations need to have retention and recruitment plans that support the leadership provided by different genders. However, in the contemporary society, it is still notable that companies have refused to employ the cultures that considers female or women leadership as essential.

Lack of mentorship has also been identified as a barrier that accelerates or impedes the development and growth of women in leadership (Zvereva, 2019). One of the ways in which the challenge or the barrier can be mitigated and managed is through formalizing mentorship programs that can provide the necessary avenues for women to develop their skills, build crucial relationships, career advice, as well as receive the needed support. According to Sandberg (2013, p. 81), searching for appropriate mentor may sometimes be a challenge because of the interconnected elements such as the corporate cultures, and work-life balance.

5. Conclusion

It has been noted that the traditional ideas regarding leadership are being considered and challenged as never done before. It has been evident that the old ideas regarding leadership majorly focused on the male as the decidedly stale. Notably, over the past years, it has been evident that many management consultants, writers, social scientists, as well as writers have addressed some of the interconnected issues regarding gender and leadership. Therefore, it is important to comprehend the unique capabilities and challenges faced by women. Lack of women in the executive level and leadership positions can be viewed to be as a function or a result of both the organization culture and strategy. Some of the themes that have been identified from the studies include ethics and leadership, mentoring, assignments and opportunities, unique

capabilities and challenges that women face, salary gaps, work-life balance, corporate culture, and networking. According to research, both women and men share similar success strategies and ambitions. However, despite the commonality, it has been revealed that they do not appear to have the same approach to leadership. It has also been noted that the continuous demands and pressure on career women have become multidirectional and strenuous and this has placed more burdens on women who have tried to pursue leadership opportunities in various organisations. Lack of ethical considerations also plays some role in accelerating the challenges and widening the gap that exists concerning men and women in leadership positions.

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Appendix

The identified themes from the studies
Networking
Mentoring
Salary gaps
Work-life balance
Unique challenges faced by women
Unique capabilities
Opportunities and assignments
Corporate culture
Ethics and Leadership
Exceeding Performance Expectations