

Either Women or Men Make Superior Managers and Leaders: A Critique

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Abstract : Women were regarded as inferior and sometimes are still regarded as inferior to men and looked down upon. They are sometimes underestimated in issues regarding leadership and management as they are stereotyped and regarded as not being capable of being at the top. This belief came as a result of how men and women are socialized. In actual sense there is little reason to believe that either women or men make superior managers or different types of managers. However, there are some little differences but this is socially constructed.

Key words: managers, leaders, leadership women, social construction, men, superior managers, glass ceiling.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is little reason to believe that either women or men make superior managers as shown by the social construction theory which shows gender aspects as socially constructed. If something is socially constructed, it can be socially reconstructed. Thus the negative view of women can be changed. Giddens (2009:602) connotes that gender differences are not biologically determined, they are culturally produced. Gender inequalities result because men and women are socialized into different roles. This shows that men and women can both be effective managers and leaders given the same environment, style, situation and approach.

1.1 What is a manager?

The classic definition of a manager is one who gets things done through other people (Carosell, 2004:1). Robbins and Coulter (2005:27) aver that a manager is “someone who works with and through other people by coordinating their work activities in order to accomplish organisational goals”. Thus a manager directs the work rather performs it and exercise authority over the quality of work and the conditions under which it is performed.

II. WHAT IS A LEADER?

Robbins and Coulter (2005:450) define a leader as someone who can influence others. Maxwell (2008:17) posits that leadership is influence nothing more nothing less.

2.1 Gender Theoretical Framework

The functionalist perspectives socializing agencies contribute to the maintenance of social order by overseeing the smooth gender socialisation of new generations. Giddens (2009:602) alludes that theories of gender socialization have been favoured by functionalists who see boys and girls as learning

sex roles and the male and female identities-masculinity and femininity which accompany them. They are guided in this process by positive and negative sanctions, socially applied forces which reward or restrain behavior. For example, a small boy may be positively sanctioned in his behaviour though such comments like what a brave boy you are or negative sanction boys to not play with dolls. Giddens (2009) asserts that these positive and negative reinforcements aid boys and girls in learning and conforming to expected sex roles.

The theories of gender inequality also suggest why women are stereotyped as not able to be effective in management and leadership positions. Haralambos and Holborn (2000: 581) opine that radical feminists tend to believe that women have always been exploited and revolutionary change can offer the possibility of their liberation”. This then made women went for a Beijing conference to air out their grievances and pointed out that they can as well be good managers and leaders just like their male counterparts. Much research has proven the existence of gender inequality and ‘glass ceilings’ in most Western countries, such as the US, UK and Spain. (Liff and Ward, 2001).

Marxists and Socialists feminists see capitalism rather that patriarchy as being the main source of women exploitation. To the liberal feminists nobody benefits from the existing gender inequalities both men and women are harmed. For example, a male manager or a leader may fail to show his emotion simply because he is a man. In so doing fail to openly state out facts. The constructivist believes people construct their meanings through the interaction with the world. The liberal feminists argue, that both men and women are harmed by the gender inequalities for example because of the social construction perspectives men might refuse to wash his baby’s nappies in fear of the society. Women also might fail to get opportunities to develop their talents.

2.2 Neither Men nor Women Make Superior Manager

There is little reason to believe that neither women nor men make superior manager or that woman and men are different types of managers. Giddens (2009:602) avers that it is important to remember human beings are not passive objects of unquestioning recipients of gender programming. People are active agents who create and modify roles for themselves. Thus showing their social construction theory which shows that gender aspects are socially constructed. If something is

socially constructed it can be socially reconstructed. Thus the negative view of women can be changed. This then shows that men and women can both be good managers and leaders given the same styles, situation and approach. Women and men can perform well depending on the situation, how they were socialized, level of education, maturity and experience. It is just an assumption or that a mental model as connoted by Peter Senge (2004). It is a mental model which emanated from the prejudices and stereotypes given to men and women of which women are said to be subordinate to men. This is due to the biblical citing of the origin of sin in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis the Lord says “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, on sorrow that shall bring forth children and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee”, after the testing of the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden (The Bible, 1992). Sociologists see the above quotation as anthropological justification for the position of woman in society. Thus making prejudices and stereotypes that:

- Women produce children,
- Women are mothers and wives,
- women do the cooking, mending and washing,
- they take care of men and women and are subordinate to male authority,
- they are largely excluded from high class-status occupations and from position of power”, (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004:920). Thus, making woman being at the receiving end and taken as unable to manage and lead others especially their male counterparts.

The first Chimurenga in Zimbabwe saw Mbuya Nehanda playing a significant role in the liberation of Zimbabwe. Women also played a significant role in the second Chimurenga in Zimbabwe contributing to the attainments of Zimbabwe's Independence. In the case of Zimbabwe, the past two decades have seen significant increases in the number of women in business and other professional carriers such as law and firms. There has been increase in the number of women carrying managerial and leadership positions. This is also resulted in women becoming leaders of their nations for example in the case of Liberia. In Zimbabwe there was once a female Vice President Dr Mujuru. There are also females in Education for example Professor Hope Sadza. This shows that women can also be good managers and leaders. In some cases, due to lack of experience, lack of emotional intelligence and education and as a result of lack of conducive environment, both, men and women fail in leadership due to the prevailing situation as evidenced by the situation leadership approaches.

Mullins (2010:101) alludes that one of the most significant and important aspect of managing diversity is that of gender equality and the participation of men and women at the workplace. Harrison (2002:35) opines that making generalizations about women, particularly if you happen to be a man is dangerous. As for my right to speak, I take it as true that all humans are both masculine and feminine. As I have come to explore my own feminine aspects, I find just

disenfranchised woman is not simply a phenomena of the external world. She exists in me as well. Pierce and Newstrom (1907:40) connote that in principle, the concepts of masculinity and feminist are not necessarily precise correlates of biological sex. Thus, men or women may possess either masculine or feminist characteristics or both. For example, many a woman went for a military training and carried weapons. Many fought and some in the case of Zimbabwe commanded guerrilla units in the second Chimurenga. As alluded earlier in the first Chimurenga Mbuya Nehanda was also a great inspiration. Margaret Thatcher “the iron lady” showed great strength and firmness and leadership. Mother Theresa and Princess Diana showed the effectiveness of women in leadership showing that neither women nor men are superior managers or leaders.

The figure below shows the management and leadership plate:

The Management and leadership plate

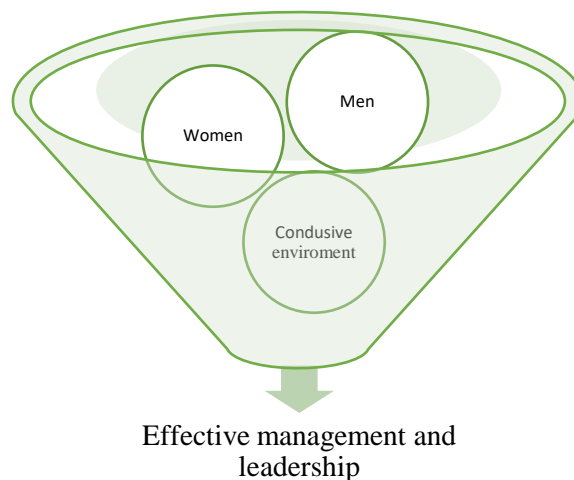


Figure 1: The Management and leadership plate

The management and leadership plate illustrates that given a conducive environment both men and women make better leaders. Good leaders and managers are not measured by someone's sex but by someone's performance and coupled by the practice of good corporate governance. The path goal theory of leadership shows that “leaders are by definition leaders because they have followers and that followers can stop them from being good leaders simply by not following them (Nyamuda, 2002:19). This then follows that both men and women can be good leaders that is if they follow proper path to good leadership. This is not because of a person's sex that makes a person a good leader but is choosing the right principles and approaches to follow depending on the situation.

2.3 The other side of the coin

Women in some instances can be seen as different managers to men. Most of the available research points in the direction

of social reason which incorporate central and religious aspects. The research in Marange proved women to be on the receiving end due to their religious beliefs (Chamisa et al, 2019). McKenna (2003) opines that even with the success of the women in the work force, girls and boys are still educated by society to speak and act differently. When young boys swear and use tough language, their behavior is tolerated as normal for their age. Men can be presented as autocratic, task oriented and make use of command and control and punishment oriented. On the other hand, women can be presented as soft spoken, team players and rewards oriented. However, that is not always the case as women can also be hard and harsh managers. It can also be argued that the enemy of a woman is not only a man but the women as well as shown in some African marriages set up relationships of mother in law and daughter in law as well as sisters in law.

Hyde (2007) in his research observed that across the dozens of studies consist with the gender similarities, hypothesis, gender differences had either nor a very sank effect in most of the psychological variables examined. He finds that only main differences appeared compared with women, men could throw further more physical aggressive, masturbated more and held more positive attitude. However, gender differences defend in the content in which that were debated. For example, after participants in one experiment women and men were not identified as male or female, the results showed that women were more aggressive and men more passive (Hyde:2007). This then shows that there is little reason that either women or men make superior managers and that woman or men are different managers.

2.4 Women leadership style

In some instances, women have different leadership styles from men, Anita Roddick (2007) says that “I run my company according to family principles of caring making intuitive decisions, not having a sense of worry as being from it, putting your labour where your love is “. Thus shows the other side of women leadership style. However, this depends on the personalities of the individual not really on sex.

2.5 Socialization process

In different societies men and women might be socialized differently and this might lead to the nature of management and leadership. Parents can direct the babies in the way they should go. For example, buy dolls to girls in preparation for their roles as mothers and boys given car or gun toys which points to their socially expected roles. Though men and women could have been socialized differently whilst young, due to education and training as well as experience women and men came to realization that gender differences were just socially constructed. Women and men can behave in the same manner besides their sexual differences. They can both be successful and prosper in the leadership and managerial positions.

2.6 Followers' problems

A problem can emanate from the followers and the subordinates themselves and the subordinates as some of them believe that male leaders are the best. In so doing if a female leaders or manager come in, she would not receive the same respect as given to the male counterparts. The female managers and leaders would be regarded by followers as weak and emotional. However, if both men and women are educated experienced, knowledgeable and possess wisdom, they can both be good leaders.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researcher used interpretive philosophy which led to qualitative methodology. The sample was made up of 20 University students in the Business Management Department class. The management class was made up of men and women and some of them are in managerial and leadership positions. There was use of convenient sampling. A discussion was made through the use of Web 2.0 as it was not possible to carry physical interactions as it was a period of COVID 19 and we were on lock down.

IV. FINDINGS

The following are the responses on the view of either men or women make better leaders and managers

4.1 Both women and men can be good leaders

Participant 012 overs *that leadership qualities are an integration of several factors which impact on both man and woman, personality, education and training, age, family background, religion and level of management.* Neither men nor women make superior managers or leaders considering all this factors.

4.2 Women are strict and adhere to rules

Participant 01 alludes that *most leadership positions are male dominated. But those few women in leadership seem to be more superior to men. They are strict, adhere to rules, business success rate is high and they spend more time focusing on their business. When women want to achieve in business they put the business at heart for an example closer to home Mavis Mataranyika she is the one running the Services division of Nyaradzo and its excelling. On the other hand there is an issue of emotions with women; if they got challenged they think men are challenging them because they are women.* Participant 03 concurs women make superior leaders because they follow the rules and regulations (they go by the book).

4.3 Woman have Good Corporate Governance

Participant 02 avers that women in leadership and managerial positions leads to *good corporate governance since they will be no lapses in procedures. For instance, the Auditor general Mrs Chiri (OAG). In terms of corporate governance and ethics women make superior leaders because they have fear.* For instance, fearing to put a signature. Participant 015 adds

few women are involved in scandals as compared to men which shows quality leadership in women. Participant 018 opines that women make superior leaders because in terms of ethics women are ethical, they adhere to the principles, they have emotional attachment to the business hence they are highly committed for instance Chipu Mutasa (Telone)

4.4 Low Emotional Intelligence

Participant 013 is of the opinion that *women are accountable, honest as compared to men but sometimes women they lack emotional intelligence, they are risk averse by their very nature hence they cannot quickly adopt to changes.* Participant 04 is of the opinion that women lack emotional intelligence because they will be thinking that they are taken advantage of because they are women. Participant 08 asserts that men make superior managers than women. My reasoning behind this is that women in most cases are more preoccupied with personal issues which will affect productivity ultimately. If things are not well at home is easily seen through moods. Women get more emotional than men which has a negative impact on work performance. If a woman manager has an issue with the subordinate it is likely to stay with her longer which in turn will affect her relationship with that subordinate. *At my workplace the subordinate ended up seeking for a transfer because of this female boss. He was very good at his work but he was accused of every bad deed. Men generally don't keep grudges. Right now my manager is a woman and I am woman it's a difficult situation at work. At times you wonder if it's still issues of work or personal.*

4.5 Women have an inferior complex

Participant 014 proclaims that women have an inferior complex to such an extent that they lack confidence. For example, a scenario whereby we have 10 women and one man, we want to vote for a leader. The women will vote for the one man to lead them despite the fact that there are the majority. The government of Zimbabwe through the constitution introduced the Quota system to incorporate women in leadership circles because of their lack of confidence. However, women they are not flexible, hence cannot think outside the box. As a result there is no innovation. *Women are not aggressive hence they cannot outperform others.* Participant 018 articulates that *Yes, they do have low emotional intelligence.* In everything they do they attach it to emotions

4.6 Men are risk takers

Respondent 07 opines that man make superior leaders because they are risk takers hence they will be innovation. Man are very flexible they can read between the lines. They stand for what they want (firmness) they are aggressive which enables them to outperform others or competitors. Man have courage with is one of the characteristics of a good leader. Respondent 017 concurs, *yes thus very true which stifles innovation.*

4.7 Women preserve their reputation

Respondent 011 states that woman try by all means to preserve their reputation this make them superior in leadership positions because whatever they do, they so it wholeheartedly at the end of the day quality is produced as well as commitment. In so doing they are able to deliver good results.

4.8 Women not able to adopt to change

Participant 09 alludes that women are not able to adopt (inertia) to changes because they are satisfied with the status quo (complacency).

4.9 Women and Decision Making

Participant 08 connotes that *as much as men are risk takers man think with their minds and women think with their hearts. When a women make a decision it took her months if not years thinking of that thing until she passes a judgement.* The researcher asks so you are saying a woman can postpone making a decision? Participant 07 answers, *I think so like what my colleague is saying because at my work place things are at a standstill female Finance director fearing to put a signature and work becomes piled up.* Participant 020 in agreement says *yes woman they are loyal.* Participant 014 asserts that *they don't rush into decision making when it comes to work related issues, though in social life they are quick in decision making unlike the husbands they have to sleep over it for a decision to be made.* Participant 016 views that because of the patriarchal society women have a stereotype those men always try to undermine them or their authority which makes them emotional sometimes and make emotional decisions. Participant 06 indicates that that women tend to over consult before making a decision which delays decision making. Participant 03 alludes that *so at times they cannot solve problems on their own because they have fear they need to consult other.* Participant 019 avows that other things being equal, women have the same capacity and capability, their major handicap being when it comes to thinking, they engage their hearts, instead of their brains. They are also bookish and risk averse, so at times find it difficult to make the hard decisions or even to just communicate them.

4.10 Men think Women cannot lead them

Participant 015 avers that usually men think women cannot lead them. They always have something to say if they are being led by a woman. This will also affect how they deliver their jobs at work because of bullying coming from men

4.11 Women able to use their sixth sense

Participant 010 avows that *women now uses their sixth sense the reason being that way back...women were looked down upon.... they were regarded as children to their husbands...now days women are able to use their 6th sense to an extend that they can read in between the lines in every statement...they quick to pick if one belittles them also if subordinates misbehave or even jump the protocol.* So women

can do wonders if they are recognised and given space to show what they have wisdom.

4.12 Women think that women cannot lead them but men should

Women are also their own enemies. Participant 018 (laughing) *that's very correct cause at times I find myself in that position of failing in trusting that a lady can take a higher post. Women's own enemies.* Senge (2004) brought about the learning disability of the enemy is out there in organizations. The enemy is not actually there we are our enemies to progress. Women are their own enemies both at the individual and interpersonal level. A woman can lack confidence and might look down upon herself. The follow women might not also not faith with other women and prefer man.

4.13 Women mature quickly and are more focused

Participant 09 affirms that but coming back home. *Women make superior leader and managers. Strong homes are managed or lead by women. Women mature quickly and are more focused than men. When a woman has travelled in a home that's when you will see disaster in a man's leadership and management.* In a movie series *Forever Yours*, Pakhi as a character always emphasizes that children are greatly nurtured by women.

4.14 Nature of positions

Participant 010 assets that *there are certain positions that require ones sex because of nature and scope of work. For example the military commander is a male figures because men are risk takers in as much as military decisions are concerned whereas women are reluctant to push harder as expected because of their softness.*

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends that:

- Suitability of a management and leadership positions is not sex specific as neither women nor men make better leaders
- If given equal treatment and socialisation, both men and women can make better leaders regardless of sex.
- A man or a women can show both feminine and masculinity qualities
- Organizations, societies and nations should give management and leadership positions according to ability not according to one's sex.

VI. CONCLUSION

There is little reason to believe that men and women differ on managerial and leadership positions and that woman and men are better leaders. They both excel and fail and might fail on the leadership and managerial positions depending on the situation and the leadership approaches. However, there might be some little differences between men and women's

leadership styles due to how men and women were socialized. However, through education, experience and training both men and women might come to realize that there is no significant differences in the leadership approaches of men and women and neither men nor women make a superior leader or manager.

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BIOGRAPHY



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