WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: GENDER PERSONALITY TRAITS AND SKILLS

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Abstract
The relevance of the present paper is the set of assessments and analysis of the existing situation regarding the positioning of women in the structures of power and responsibility. Our current approach is based on the analysis of the women's manager profile and the leadership styles adopted by women. Based on an extensive literature review of the articles, books and the research undertaken to date, the article presents a series of differences that appear between a business woman and a business man. It also includes a characterization of the main obstacles a woman has to overcome in an organization and provides solutions for promoting more women in management positions. By investigating personality traits, we wanted to show that leadership skills are not the focus of a single gender. There is more and more evidence that achieving a gender balance and varied and diverse management teams proportionate to all levels in a hierarchy will automatically produce positive results, which will only bring performances to organizations.
Keywords: women leadership, diversity, gender differences, leadership styles, stereotypes.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current period, gender diversity in the business environment, especially within the management teams has become an increasingly approached topic in research and, at the same time, a social phenomenon. It has been analysed so far that leadership attributes are related to gender and not gender specific.

Thus, within the current paper we analysed the role of women in leadership positions, gender diversity, obstacles that women still have to overcome nowadays, especially in the business environment, as well as theories regarding the differences between women and men in management. In most cases, the general view is that, men can be promoted in higher hierarchical positions more easily than women and men are associated with qualities attributed to the concepts of leadership and management.

Our approach is based on the analysis of the women's manager profile and the leadership styles adopted by women. It insisted on the rational aspects, resulting from the efficiency of using the human potential in its entirety, both at the level of the organizations and of the society as a whole.

2. OBSTACLES A WOMAN HAS TO OVERCOME IN AN ORGANIZATION

One of the reasons why it may be more difficult for women to be selected for top management jobs is that their management experience is not sufficiently diverse. Therefore, the exposure of women to different operations of the company is small and, thus, they do not gain sufficient experience over several functional and management areas, compared to men.

However, taking into account the state of mentalities and the evolution of women's professional qualifications, this will change as soon as the top level of the hierarchies. Modernity also pushes us to evolve on this plane. Unfortunately, the pace so far is extremely slow, which means that the expected progress will be limited.

Causes commonly encountered are barriers to gender equality, which are not only objective (organizational and political) but also subjective, imposed by lack of confidence in one's own strengths and lack of perseverance in the struggle with the male gender for affirmation. The current management demands require the recruitment and retention of the best employees, mainly those willing to dedicate themselves totally to the management activity. Because of this, women tend to withdraw from the competition for power or become less involved. This is the main factor in the absence of their assertion and desire for gender parity in leading an organization, assuming gender roles is a hindrance for women who want a managerial career.

The difficulties of women in reaching the top positions within the company are not always due to a resistance of the male power or of the female inhibition mentioned above, but also to the fact that the logic of the power is not the same for women and men. From the man's point of view, power is the desire for dominance, fame or recognition. These desires are not exclusively dedicated to men, but categorically fewer women see power as a source of glory and social appreciation compared to men.

Another cause that hinders a woman's leadership career, this time a structural one, is the well-known glass ceiling, based on gender stereotypes. This invisible barrier prevented women from accessing higher management positions simply because they are women. Women are considered more emotional, less combative compared to men, less involved or lacking initiative. They present only a few misogynistic images that prevent decision makers from objectively assessing competence. Therefore, the ceiling built in this way, removes women from certain positions that can lead them to higher levels of

leadership. Thus, men can achieve a leading position and associate their professional success with qualities that are traditionally theirs.

Internal factors can also be identified as a cause of low participation of women in power structures, which concern distrust of their own forces and underestimation of capacity. And these are also placed on the conscience of the traditional, inferior role played in the family, transposed in the public life or of the organization. However, with the increasing number of qualified women, this aspect is becoming less and less important. These elements present an image of the complexity of the problems that represent major shortcomings of the qualified women who want to enter the managerial top level.

2.1. Reasons why there are not more women managers

Based on a rigorous literature review that included articles, books and case studies published in relation to the researched topic, it was possible to generate a summary of the reasons why there are no more women managers. These are mentioned below:

 • Women have more family responsibilities than men (Wiersma and Van den Berg, 1991; Boden, 1999; Gutsell and Remedios, 2016);

 • Male-centered corporate culture (Bierema, 1996; Negra and Tasker, 2013; Gilligan, 2019);

 • Women do not have sufficient managerial experience (Izraeli et al., 1994; Singh et al., 2008; Billing, 2011);

 • Few models in management for women (Chaganti, 1986; Krishnan and Park, 2005; Ladge et al., 2019);

 • Men are not encouraged to take leave for family responsibilities (Sweet et al., 2016; Thébaud and Halcomb, 2019);

 • Lack of equality policies and programs within a company (Meier et al., 2006; Yenilmez, 2019);

 • Stereotypes against women (Terborg, 1977; Kirkwood, 2009; Hoffmann and Musch, 2019);

 • Lack of training, professionalization for women in management (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2002; Collica-Cox and Schulz, 2019);

 • Lack of more flexible working hours (Wheatley, 2017; Langner, 2018);

 • Lack of a strategy for keeping track of qualified women (Barreto et al., 2017)

 • Gender preferences in recruitment and promotion processes (Powell et al., 2002; Peterle and Rau, 2017; Régner et al., 2019)

 • Management is generally regarded as a job exclusively for men (Burgess and Tharenou, 2002; Chin, 2018);

 • Lack of implementation for gender equality policies existing in a company (Cullen and Murphy, 2018);

• Inadequate, insufficient labor and non-discrimination laws (Misra and Ferdous, 2017).

2.2. Solutions for promoting more women in management positions

Based on the undertaken literature review, a series of solutions for promoting women in management positions is proposed below:

• Equal development opportunities and policies - written and disseminated (Doherty, 2004; Linehan, 2019);

• Notifying company managers about gender and diversity stereotypes (Vokić et al., 2019);

• Evaluation of employee profiles: gender, age, abilities, etc. (Choroszewicz and Adams, 2019);

• Survey / consultation on the needs of employees in relation to family responsibilities (Erden Bayazit and Bayazit, 2019);

• Career planning programs for both men and women (Burke, 2019);

• Providing trainings for both genders (Chuang, 2019);

• Exposure of women and men to the entire operations within the organization (Powell, 2018);

• Flexible working hours (Langner, 2018);

• Encouraging men to engage in family care (Hardee et al., 2017);

• Allocation of awards to motivate employees based on assessments of employee performance (Cappelli and Tavis, 2016).

3. PROFILE OF BUSINESS WOMEN

Several studies have revealed, referring to the managerial style, that managerial women are more intuitive, less hierarchically oriented and somewhat more cooperative than men (Araújo-Pinzón et al, 2017; McGlen and Sarkees, 2018). Women are more oriented towards interpersonal relationships and more empathetic in decision making, adopting a more participatory and democratic style.

It is well known that regardless of the profile of successful women, who have a higher education, experience and results than their male colleagues, access to leadership positions is much more difficult for women. This is not about their training and skills, but about gender stereotypes that lead to discrimination when it comes to promotions in these positions.

Women tend to be more concerned with how things are done than with results, more open to cooperation, and have greater respect for diversity (Powell, 2018). For example, in an organization, women may adopt different leadership styles than men, but they are equally or sometimes even more effective in leadership positions. Studies on leadership style show that women are more democratic

than men's leadership style, which is more autocratic, and this is appreciated by employees. Referring to authority that a person appointed in a leading position requests and negotiates in order to exercise his or her attributions, the woman must negotiate for things that men most often receive automatically.

3.1. The differences between a business woman and a business man

Based on the analysis of the articles and the research undertaken to date, a series of differences have been identified that appear between a business woman and a business man, differences that can be grouped into three broad categories, as shown in the image below.
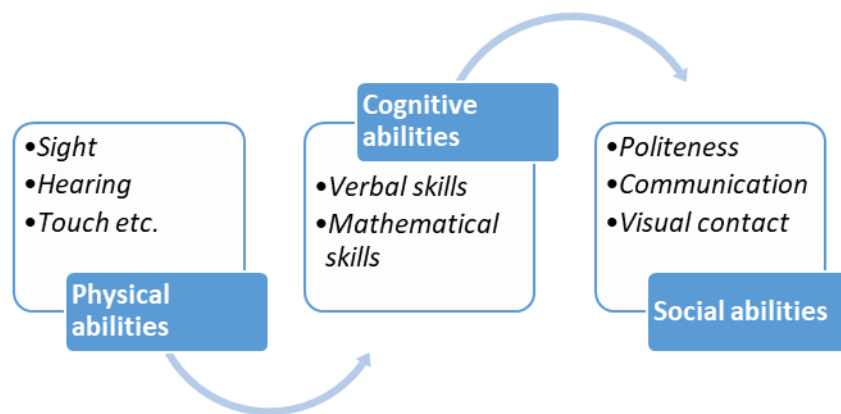

FIGURE 1. MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BUSINESS MEN AND BUSINESS WOMEN
Source: Created by authors, based on literature review

3.1.1. Physical abilities

Even when it comes to physical senses and psychological reactions, women and men are different. Although women lose sight sooner than men, they have a more acute sense of taste and hearing and are more sensitive to touch (Baker, 1996). With regard to men, the problems related to psycho-social imbalances are predominant, such as: mental retardation, antisocial attitudes, poor attention and gambling leading to pathological quotas. In contrast, women have their own dietary imbalances. These gender differences can influence men and women in their occupations. However, the differences are so small and the common features of the genders so strongly shaped that there are few restrictions for men and women who seek an occupation that requires physical attributions. Moreover, the focus of this paper is management abilities, and the qualities required of managers are usually more cognitive than physical.

3.1.2. Cognitive abilities

Over the years there have been thousands of studies on intellectual abilities, suggesting that much has been said about gender differences on this topic. Unfortunately, this is not true. Although there are more questions than answers in this complex area, Diane Halpern's book (2000) provides a compelling summary. Abilities are usually divided into three categories:

Verbal skills (communication)

Gender differences in communication skills are also accentuated by age. Girls tend to speak faster than boys, formulate longer and more varied sentences, have a richer vocabulary and make fewer mistakes. Men better solve analogy problems, instead women pass them in almost all verbal tests, including those related to vocabulary, anagrams and verbal fluency. In addition, women usually have fewer speech problems such as dyslexia.

Mathematical skills

At the higher levels of mathematical skills, most of the geniuses of this discipline are men. Given the population, gender differences are generally less consistent on this topic. However, even this much-discussed finding is approximate, especially with regard to adults, among which, men's advantage decreases substantially if a certain number of mathematics courses are taken into account. Moreover, the results are heterogeneous in the tests of mathematical reasoning, partly due to the verbal qualities of women who do better than men who excel in tests of geometry and statistics, based on the notion of space.

3.1.3. Social abilities

Women smile more often than men do, engage more sensitive and visual contacts in nonverbal communication than men. To be more sociable, they must communicate, receive and transmit messages. Thus, there are three ways we can communicate: verbal, paraverbal (the way words are spoken) and nonverbal. There are differences between men and women in all three ways. Women have more accentuated qualities than men. We will continue to look at the different ways in which women and men use verbal qualities to communicate. Note that many of these gender differences illustrate and strengthen the status differences between men and women.

- *Politeness*: Women tend to use more polite formulas than men. They are tempted to extend their requests with polite phrases such as: "Would you like...?" This technique is often used to turn requests and orders into questions: "Would you like, if you can, to finish the job today before you leave?"

- *The disjunctive question*: Women often add disjunctive questions, giving the impression of insecurity: "This report tells us all we want to know, doesn't it?" Or "Will you have this report ready by Tuesday?" In either case, the interrogative form weakens the speaker's engagement in the statement and, implicitly, invites confirmation from the person to whom it is addressed, while at the same time measuring the speaker's status.

- *Qualifiers:* Women are the ones who qualify their statements more often than men. They usually say, "Maybe it's the best solution to this problem"; "I think I found a superior product", even in situations where they are well prepared.

- *Different words:* Women use many words that are rarely, if ever, included in men's vocabulary. Women use several exclamatory expressions not considered "profane" or more words that involve feelings, evaluation and interpretation. Men, make more references to time, space, quantity, aggression, perceptiveness. When their words were analyzed emotionally, it was observed that women use language that is meant to help them, and men use hostile language.

Para verbal communication refers to the way we say words and, again, women and men differ substantially. Men's voices tend to be lower and louder than women's voices, and contrary to the idea that women talk a lot, men tend to talk more. Men interrupt people they talk to more often than women, and usually the interrupted people are women. Also, according to the role of each gender, women play the role of those who educate and approve.

As for nonverbal communication, men tend to make a gesture called the bell: the joining of the fingers of both hands when resting their elbows on the desk, for example. It is a sign of intellectual superiority. Women, on the other hand, sit down with their feet close together, occupying as little space as possible, displaying what is called a "lady's behavior."

Eyes are famous for their communication skills and women look more often at people who do not look at them and warn them when they talk to other people. Men tend to look at the person in front. Eye contact is a learned skill and women learn it quickly to achieve higher status and gain leadership in today's organizations.

4. LEADERSHIP STYLES

Gender is one of the immutable dimensions of diversity, which characterizes the human species itself, divided naturally - and evenly - into men and women; in the structures of power the same parity is not found in almost any of the cultures. There is a generalized discrepancy between gender diversity in the

membership of organizations and gender diversity in decision making, even in strongly feminized organizations.

Leadership skills are not a matter of one gender. More and more leaders, men and women, are willing to employ both logic - pure reasoning - and intuition, to recognize both evidence and feelings, to express both technical and emotional integrity, using whole sets of skill features to get the best results possible. In the tendency not to limit the strengths of leadership by separating or desiring the style attributed to the other gender, the most appropriate leadership model integrates both male and female approaches. The main conclusions drawn from the literature review are:

- The strongest evidence of gender differences in leadership style lies in the tendency of women to adopt a more democratic and participatory style and that of men to adopt a more autocratic and more directive style.

- Male managers proved to be more task oriented, being able to organize activities to accomplish them.

- Female managers tend to be oriented towards interpersonal relationships, morale and human well-being.

4.1. Relations of executive and managerial functions

A survey conducted by the international human resources consulting company, Mercer (2014), provided information on the reports of the executive and managerial positions registered so far. According to the data, the women represent a ratio of 29%, compared to the men who occupy 71% of the positions of managers, the study being realized after analyzing 264,000 people who occupy managerial and managerial positions in 5,321 companies from 41 European countries.

Mercer also analyzed the promotion of women in management positions. Despite organizations having a diverse workforce, the majority (71%) do not have a clearly defined strategy for promoting women in leadership roles, something that is currently needed. The representation of women at managerial level is a big problem that makes enough waves in the EU due to lack of diversity in the workplace. This is not just a gender issue, of course, although discrimination in any form is not desirable. It is also a matter of talent, because this type of mistakes in a society limits the horizons and the skill set of the candidates. A more diverse workforce reduces the number of absenteeism and increases the power of innovation and creativity.

In order to better understand this need for a strategy to support women, Mercer data demonstrates the impact of cultural factors. For example, in Saudi Arabia, the percentage of women occupying an executive or managerial position is 0%, in Qatar is 7%, and in Egypt is 16%.

Currently, the EU has addressed the issue of gender and pay inequalities as part of the EU Gender / Gender Action Plan. According to the survey, the highest levels of participation of women in Europe are in Lithuania and Bulgaria, with 44% and 43%. In Western Europe, Sweden (30%) and Belgium (29%) were among the countries with the highest percentages. Spain, the United Kingdom and France gathered 28% each, followed by Finland, Switzerland and Norway (all 25%), and followed by Germany (20%) and the Netherlands (19%).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The relevance of the present paper is the set of assessments and analyzes of the existing situation regarding the positioning of women in the structures of power and responsibility. By investigating personality traits, we wanted to show that leadership skills are not the focus of a single gender. The strongest evidence of gender differences in leadership style lies in the tendency of women to adopt a more democratic and participatory style and that of men to adopt a more autocratic and more directive style. The male managers proved to be more task oriented, being more able to organize activities to accomplish them. Therefore, there is more and more evidence that achieving a gender balance and varied and diverse management teams proportionate to all levels in a hierarchy will automatically produce positive results, which will only bring performances to organizations. However, the old stereotypes still overshadow the contribution made by women in business.

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