

A Study On Stereotyping Women's Leadership Roles

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ABSTRACT

Political, economic, educational, and status changes in contemporary culture have made it possible for there to be a large increase in women leaders. Women leaders exhibit the same broad leadership traits as males, but they could have leadership philosophies that are especially suited to the demands of the present. Some of the prominent barriers in women's leadership roles in Manipur state are due to several prejudices and stereotypes which need to be confronted over time. These prejudices will be recognised and justifications would be provided to examine stereotypical attitudes in regional levels of inquiry. As a means of enhancing effective leadership skills in the region of Manipur among the womenfolk, this paper aims to carry out a discursive study on the stereotyping of women's leadership roles in Manipur. With the help of a questionnaire, the descriptive method of inquiry has been taken up to study the stereotypical attitudes of males and females of Manipur. Moreover, this research based inquiry will recognise the main concerns of stereotypical attitudes in institutes of Manipur. The study will also examine the various gender role theories to examine social constructs in leadership management arrangements. Lastly, this research paper will also provide interventions to eliminate stereotypical attitudes and grow

parallels with contemporary advancements of women leaders in organisations.

Keywords: Leadership roles; stereotype; women development; gender role; power dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary debates revolving around women empowerment structures in India have rather been contested by the established patriarchal order which has been dominant for centuries now. Different forms of empowerment in the economy, education, politics and perceptions that have been developed over time for women have been highly multi-faceted, and with every initiative of reform, several constraining barriers that limit the role of the woman are also coming into shape. According to Ghosh and Narendran (2017), just 36% of Indian workers are women. This becomes problematic when the women who hold prominent leadership positions account for only 3% to 6% of the existing working sections (Catalyst, 2013).

While leadership roles are examined largely for the upper echelons of women's occupational roles; the investigation for this paper centrally revolves around the challenges faced within the wide spectrum of leadership occupations. There is no doubt that women are gradually taking up leadership roles in several organisational fields. According to Vasava (2012), global forces are responsible for changing the tapestry of the workforce in India by capturing the implications of a new economic environment. The role of women leaders and the growing significance of Indian society in establishing women under leadership recognitions are severely affected by the patriarchal structures that contribute towards stereotypical attitudes of women in workforces. In this paper, an attempt will be made to recognise women's leadership roles in various stereotypical attitudes on economic, historical, sociological and political fronts. The deliberate hindrance to their development caused by external and internal systems by highlighting the notion of 'stereotyping' will be identified and plausible interventions to change this narrative/perception will be taken forward.

BACKGROUND

Throughout the debates on women's roles in economic spheres, feminist Marxist historians have claimed that the presence of female oppression in the persistence of household labour conducted by women as an integral part of production reveals several underlying challenges in their economic recognition (Menon, 1982, p.30). While women have been the driving force behind labour production, they are still under-represented in positions of power. Generally speaking, discrimination is not the cause of the underrepresentation of women in executive roles. However, the disparity is a result of several barriers inclusive of cultural perceptions of gender, and institutional preferences for men in positions of authority in the workplace (Treasurer et. al, 2013).

The issue of stereotyping is not just cultural but has several dimensions. It is important to address the issue of power dynamics in this case which is an intrinsic aspect in the lens of leadership roles. In the driving economic force of the contemporary world, men have been the *prima facie* dominant financial drivers, whereas women are designated the service-oriented role towards their community. While these submissive roles continuously exist in lower-level occupational roles in the economy, there are several instances of stereotypical attitudes in the upper echelons of organisations as well. Stereotypical attitudes would also include general instances where males are generally compared to be successful managers more than women (Fischbach et al., 2015).

Looking at the Indian context, leadership roles taken up under political contexts should be taken up. Where 33 per cent of seats in Lok Sabha booked according to the Women's Reservation Bill sought to improvise women's leadership rules across the nationwide spectrum. However, inherent patriarchal structures within all functioning systems of the country have eventually transgressed the debate of women's leadership roles that need to be examined from micro levels.

This leads us to move towards societal notions of women's leadership roles. Because of the gradual development of 'gender roles' and 'gender perceptions' shaped by power structures and class dynamics, the established norms constructed by decision-

making bodies have impacted or rather ignited gender stereotypes and gender-based appointed schemes.

In the state of Manipur, women have had a rich history of being active participants in leadership roles in almost all aspects of economic structures, and socio-political contexts and carry with them a rich history of active participation in state affairs. It thus becomes imperative to look into roles of women leadership which deviates from the mainstream narrative. We are going to specifically examine the notion of 'stereotypes' which are addressed towards women's leadership roles in the city of Imphal, Manipur.

ATTITUDE AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ROLES

The transition from household to leadership roles in women's lives has transgressed significant changes in women's lives. According to Treasurer et al. (2013), women make up about 60% of the global workforce and are getting advanced degrees more quickly than men. Only 8% of the highest-paid female employees in Fortune 500 businesses are female (Catalyst, 2014). According to recent studies, women may even do better than their male counterparts in high-level professions (Treasurer et al., 2013). Although many explanations for the dearth of women in several leadership positions have been put up, including social, legal, cultural, educational, and organisational aspects, new forms of oppressive perceptions to discourage the womenfolk have been taken into account (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2010).

Power dynamics in the roles of women's lives is highly contested. For women, the notion of power in social, economic and political terms is a fairly recent development, given its depravity throughout centuries in the Indian subcontinent. While the idea of 'leadership' and 'power roles' have been associated with a masochist worldview, it is the need of the hour to recognise these notions in the context of women. By changing this narrative, the leadership roles played by women can become a new arena of inquiry which develops women's intrinsic traits in situations.

STEREOTYPING OF GENDER IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Chemers (2000) identifies three theoretical differences between male and female leaders which include biological, cultural and

structural factors. Despite these distinctions in behaviour between men and women, all genders are conditioned by cultural and social forces to adopt societally acceptable behaviour patterns. Empirical studies conducted by Chapman (1975), contrast the leadership styles of men and women under influential performance and employee goal fulfilment and claim that women tend to adopt more accommodating techniques than their male colleagues, according to research on female leadership behaviours. When participating in competitive activities, women often establish cooperative coalitions, whereas males are more exploitative and use coalitions to their advantage.

This leaves us to counter-argue the stereotypical notions of women in leadership organisations. Problems faced by women in organisational structures are often characterised by identifying women's roles from the gaze of the significant 'other'. While it is easy to identify these established differences, the focus should rather be on the qualitative roles in determining women's leadership roles. There has been a plethora of workplace negligence established by the males in the workplace, hindering the overall growth and potential leadership qualities of women. Understanding gender stereotypes and the traits of leadership is essential given the ongoing emphasis on the need to properly utilise women's leadership abilities in traditionally or predominately male contexts.

Stereotypical attitudes have contributive towards the deprivation of leadership roles in women's lives. The gender role theory made by Eagly (1987), propounds the stereotypical attitude influenced by perceptual developments enforced by rigid norms of society. These conflicting spaces create barriers to the overall growth and development of women. The congruence model developed by Mussen (1969), further reflects the importance of congruence between one's gender identity and the role they perform. The predominance of one's gender identity must be in line with their 'attributed gender role and identity' as it fosters self-esteem and helps in shaping self-perception.

It is important to look into distinct areas of stereotyping women's leadership roles. For Korabik (1990), women have either been overlooked in leadership studies or sex differences have taken centre stage. In addition to reviewing the data on the relationship between androgyny and management performance,

an alternate idea based on sex-role orientation is also imperative for investigation. Through his research, the embracement of an androgynous management style may assist women in overcoming the detrimental impacts of sex stereotyping at work. The Androgyny Model is important in asserting androgynous individual inherent characteristics, which further advocates assertiveness, autonomy and positive feminine traits.

Perceptions related to females are developed through congruent social models- such as workplaces where women's perceptions have developed. According to Maume and Houston (2001), women's experiences of work-family conflict may represent the cost of competing in a work environment that is geared towards male employees. Due to their higher proportion of domestic duties than employed males, employed women may be more susceptible to family obligations interfering with their professional lives (Hinze, 2000; Shelton & John, 1996; South & Spitze, 1994). Therefore, assertive and autonomous attitudes in workplaces should be challenged keeping in mind women-centric roles in workspaces. It is extremely important to look into the stereotyped perceptions which are controlled by male preference and deviate from stereotypes by constructing the 'other'.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to study and assess the overall social mindset towards women in leadership roles. It has also been attempted to assess the different attitudes of the people towards women in leadership roles. An attempt has also been made to compare the male and female attitudes towards leadership roles.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

The descriptive survey method has been utilised in this study. An attitude scale (Likert) having statements has been utilised. The study was primarily focused on the city of Imphal, the capital of Manipur state. This is because the city boasts of highly employed women, with a rich historical background of being prominent figures in several organisational levels and the general perception towards women in leadership roles is highly prevalent in the city.

In this study, the stratified random sampling procedure has been adopted. Under which, 100 samples consisting of 50 males and 50 females between the age group 20 to 50 were the samples.

ANALYSIS

Simple percentage had been utilised for the tabulation of the data. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis have been utilised.

Table.1 Attitude Overall Score

N	FULL SCORE	OBTAINED SCORE	AVERAGE SCORE	PERCENTAGE
100	12500	9739	97.39	77.91

The above table represents the score of the 100 samples in the Attitude questionnaire. The obtained score is 9739 out of a total score of 12500. The average score of each individual is 97.39. The percentage of the score is 77.91.

The overall percentage score of the samples is above average. This shows that the attitude towards women's leadership role is going towards the positive.

Table. 2 Attitude Score of Female and Male

	N	FULL SCORE	SCORE OBTAINED	AVERAGE SCORE	PERCENTAGE
FEMALE	50	6250	5259	105.18	84.14%
MALE	50	6250	4480	89.6	71.68%

Table 2 represents the score of the female and male respondents. The 50 female respondents scored 5,259 out of total 6250. The average score is 105.18. And the percentage obtained is 84.14. The 50 male respondents scored 4480 out of a total of 6250. The average score is 89.6 and the percentage of the score is 71.69

The comparison between the female and the male respondents represents a difference in the score which is visible. The female respondents have more confidence in the leadership

qualities which are prescribed to be common leadership qualities between both genders, more than the male respondents. There is a difference of 15.58 in the score between the females and the males. The difference in the percentage is 12.46. This is a comparatively big difference in their overall attitude. Therefore it can be stated that there is a great difference between the attitude of females and males towards leadership roles

In contrast to their male counterparts, women still do not hold high leadership roles, despite the evidence that they are capable of becoming top performers (Baker, 2014). These findings contribute to the current body of knowledge on gender and leadership roles and may offer some explanations for why women continue to be underrepresented in executive and senior management jobs across a range of enterprises.

MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical leadership theories developed over time need to be re-examined from women's perspectives as several of these theories do not work well for women. It is important to discuss Role congruity theory in this context discussed by Eagly and Karau (2002), which goes beyond social role theory in the sense of leadership roles and gender roles to encompass bias against women. Their arguments bring out the contradiction between the expected leadership role and the gender roles of women, and state that female leaders experience two different sorts of bias. As a result of their conventional gender roles, future female leaders are seen as less promising than their male counterparts in the first category of discrimination, when the leadership position is seen as one embodied by masculine-stereotypical characteristics. The second type happens when actual female leaders are seen to be more successful in exercising their leadership roles as a result of the discrepancy between those roles and the expected gender roles. Eagly and Karau (2002) noted that these two forms of discrimination against women contributed to a culture where women had less access to leadership positions and faced more challenges to be successful in those roles.

When discussing the relevant results, the finding might be a result of the fact that the changing attitude of people towards women and the elimination of traditional stereotypes is happening at an evolutionary pace. Attitudes are social perceptions and can

be constructed over time (Niedenthal, et al, 2005). The narrow perception towards women as somewhat lesser beings by the mass population is a significant contributor towards hindering their potential realisation. The qualities of women are essentially embedded among women folks, as they go through similar forms of struggles. Therefore we notice a shift towards positive attitudes among women leaders which is evident among the respondent females.

When a woman leader's management success is proven and known to be outstanding, her performance will not be evaluated using gender stereotypes, but guided by the available known information. It is evident how women leaders are assumed incompetent until proven competent. But it also surprising how women take up aggressive qualities in the attempt to lead any task, in which they are deemed as having 'manly' characteristics.

Since interactions between people can be influenced by gender, this view of leadership does not entirely escape the biological burden of primate history and its dependence on physical and behavioural traits. Sociobiologists maintain that the sexual universals that underlie stereotypes are a result of the underlying dispositional differences between men and women (Fausto-Sterling, 1985).

Contrary to appearances, obvious discrimination is rarely the cause of the underrepresentation of women in senior roles. The disparity, however, is a result of invisible hurdles, societal gender stereotypes, and institutional biases favouring males in positions of authority in the workplace. (Baker C, 2014). According to Baker (2014), The secret may be found in leveraging the contrasts between men's and women's leadership styles, rather than comparing their similarities.

Women must develop their leadership styles rather than emulate the traits and behaviours of men if they want to advance in their careers.

TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE

Smith (2005) claims that due to the challenge of global competition, contemporary organisations have completely reorganised and re-engineered themselves, making ample space for women's leadership qualities to thrive.

According to him, organisational leadership is no longer clearly defined; it could be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal. As a result, managing employees rather than controlling them demands far more personal responsibility and is now considerably more challenging.

Men in leadership positions have historically been characterised as being aggressive, independent, ambitious, and directive. Women in leadership positions are typically stereotyped as being persuasive, people-focused, and consensus-driven. These distinctions are undoubtedly supported by experience, and cultural norms and education further solidify them. Men and women will lead in various ways depending on how much these stereotypes hold. Such distinct incongruence towards men and women who don't fit these clichés and whose leadership styles aren't constrained by the traits implied by the stereotypes. Forgetting these prejudices and learning to utilise all of their strengths, whether they have been viewed as feminine or masculine, will help men and women achieve greater success.

The 'think manager-think male' syndrome is emphasised by several studies. Many women and men strongly believe that for women to succeed in their advancement to leadership roles, they must act and think like men (Schein, Mueller, and Lituchy, 1996). In that sense, females suppress their own to fit in with such environments, which still exist today.

Such circumstances demand that female executives demonstrate their accountability by adjusting to the dominant masculine style of leadership. Numerous studies highlight the "think manager-think male" syndrome. Many people, both men and women, are adamant that women must behave and think like males to ascend to leadership positions (Schein, Mueller, and Lituchy, 1996). To be suitable for high management positions, ladies repress their normal behaviours (Boulgarides, 1984). People frequently despise these female leaders when they demonstrate their capacity as aggressive and directive since their actions do not conform to the stereotype. However, many individuals "consider women unqualified because they lack the stereotypical directive and women are therefore subject to double standards where neither decision is acknowledged and respected (Carli and Eagly, 2007), and this is because good leaders are aggressive (Carli and Eagly, 2007, p. 128). Interventions taken up at political, social,

economic as well as grassroots levels have started becoming the centres of stereotypical elimination of women's leadership roles. In Manipur, this development or rather cultural reinforcement is not new as women have been at the forefront of leadership arenas since ancient times. Therefore, the mere adaption of women in leadership roles can be stated as an inherent characteristic of the state.

CONCLUSION

Women have faced several forms of stereotypical challenges in many historical and social circumstances, which restricts their potential to acquire empowerment by striving to secure leadership positions. This research has described these challenges. Additionally, it has been argued that this research paper offers a dynamic view of gender roles and social constructs in the elimination of all forms of gender stereotypes. Therefore, gender stereotypes help to establish men's superior status over women in society and shape the unequal relationship between men and women. It should come as no surprise that one's performance and perceived status are both impacted by one's status, which in this case is lower for women and higher for men. Additionally, women leaders encounter resistance when they attempt to exercise power in ways that defy gender stereotypes and unfavourable reactions because of the gender preconceptions they broke. Gender stereotypes in the state can be recognised as transformative, and there are visible forms of an equal society in the state as stereotypes are no longer becoming the dominant attitude of the society.

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