

Appraisal of Gender Discrimination in Leadership Position

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Abstract

The study appraised gender discrimination in leadership position. Gender awareness as a central feature of all facets of everyday life and society has become widely spread. Gender points to the disparities between men and women as enforced by society. Leaders carry out the important responsibilities of drawing out approaches for the growth of the organization. Without the presence of leaders, there would not be any definite goal before the organization and this will naturally hamper its progress. It was revealed in the study that the lack of gender equality in leadership exists due to the male-controlled values that permeates and dominates the structure of leadership. The difference in gender tasks and responsibilities mostly transforms to dissimilarity and not complementarily. This then leads to a kind of hierarchy in which it is men and men's activities and characteristics that are highly noticed, valued and subsequently men are accorded greater position than women and girls. The result is that the society dictates male domination and female subordination.

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Introduction

Women in the globe share a common characteristic; they are side-lined in the compass of public life. Although they account for about half of every nation's population, women are yet to be fairly represented in public life anywhere in the world. Gender awareness as a central feature of all facets of everyday life and society has become widely spread. The idea of gender was for the newly brought about in the 1970s by an assembly of feminists. The underlying issue was to use the concept of gender as a yardstick for appreciating the fact that women do not relate the same way in all circumstances in every culture to men; and more importantly, that the status of women in society differs considerably.

The idea of gender assumes a social construct as against biological context of men and women. Sometimes the phrase-sex gender relation is commonly used; this brings to mind that there is a connection between biological differences between men and women and the social belief about masculinity and femininity (Rowbotham, 1992).

In Nigeria, there has been a wide inequity between men and women, especially in politics, economic management and general leadership. The male gender control in government and socioeconomic spheres, thereby holding tenaciously the reins of power relations and exerting sole power over resource allocation and control (Akinboye, 2004).

The Concept of Gender

Gender, according to Hannan (2001) is known to as the social traits and chances associated with being male and female and the connections between women and men; girls and boys as well as the relations between women and women and those between men and men. These characteristics, chances and connections are socially constructed and are learnt via socialization process. Hannan further stated that gender defines what is anticipated, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context.

Gender' as an idea is different from sex. While sex is the biological/physiological variations between a male and a female, gender refers to the roles, tasks, chances, privileges and anticipations given to males and females by the society. This means that the society defines these and expects men and women, boys and girls to behave in particular way. In other words, what the society expects from the man, the role to play at home, in the market, office, government and so on varies from the role expected to be played by the woman. Gender looks at the position of women in comparison to that of men.

Gender points to the disparities between men and women as enforced by society. It is not innate; rather it is learned and nurtured as part of the process of socialisation. Gender is the socially-constructed tasks and duties of women and men. The concept of gender also entails the expectations held about the attributes, aptitudes and likely character of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). These duties and tasks are learned, fluctuates over time and variable within and between cultures. Gender analysis has widely shown how women's subordination is socially constructed and therefore able to change, as opposed to being biologically predetermined and therefore static (Akinboye, 2004).

The term sex is used to refer to the classification of individuals as female or male based on their genetic makeup, anatomy and reproductive functions, Gender on the other hand is used to refer to the meanings that societies and individuals give to male and female categories (Becker & Eagly, 2004). This difference happen in most social contexts and, as it is seen in this paper: beyond social beliefs derived from gender behavioural stereotypes,

individual-level studies seem to have found that there are differences in the way that women and men leaders lead.

A feminist-sociological view maintains that the concept of gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed dimensions of one's biological sex. Gender functions as a social category, similar to race-ethnicity and class that establishes, in large measure, our life chances and directs our social relations with others. According to this definition, gender is a social structure which places women and men in different, and unequal, positions in society based on expectations, division of labour, and access to power and resources, thereby shaping the life experiences of men and women.

A gender dichotomous society is where women's experience is assumed to vary from that of their male counterparts. The society's cultural opinion about women generally has been that they are of the weaker sex, inferior, shameful, the scum of the earth and in a highly unattractive position. A woman's lot in life could be viewed as being extremely wretched and sad when viewed against the backdrop of the statement above.

Concept of Leadership

The concept of leadership has much to do with human beings collectively, a society, group or organization without which the concept is worthless. Mbiti (2007) defined leadership as the behaviour of a person that direct/control the activities of a group toward a shared goal. Leadership is also described as influential task over and above mechanical compliance with the routine commands of the organization. It is also seen as a technique of assembling institutional, political, psychological, and other means so as to motivate, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers. It has been described as a process by which one or more persons succeed in attempting to frame and define the reality of others (Yukl, 2008).

Leadership according to Ajayi (1998) is the capacity to encourage others to seek defined goals enthusiastically. It is the human factor that connects a group together and motivate group member's towards set goals. Leadership transforms potential to reality. It is the definitive instrument that brings to the front burner the capacities of an organization and those of its people.

Leadership is a means of guiding. A leader's actions are devoted to helping a group to attain its objectives. Leadership is the ability of management to induce subordinate to work towards group objectives with assurance and keenness. Leadership also means that the leader admits responsibility for the attainment of the group goals and it is therefore essential for trust and co-operation from both sides to be in evidence all the time. Leadership influences a process by effectively changing the behaviour of others. Leadership effectiveness is the acknowledged ability of a manager to guide a group towards goal accomplishment.

Effective leadership qualities and skill is compulsory, in order to have discipline and decorum at the work place. Leaders carry out the important responsibilities of drawing out approaches for the growth of the organization. Without the presence of leaders, there would not be any definite goal before the organization and this will naturally hamper its progress. Leaders can make workers more confident and train them in key areas for optimal results. The process of decision making becomes much easier and successful with a good leadership group. A sound leadership also make workers feel secure about their occupations and very assured about their future in the company, thus increasing their efficiency. A sense of cohesion and passion for work can be developed among workers only by effective leadership.

Theoretical Paradigms on Gender and Leadership

Two Factor Theory

This is a body of opinion that searches to give a detailed explanation of the idea of leadership in organization. It is a clear withdrawal from the other approaches in that it commenced empirically to explore what leaders actually did. On this basis, Becker and Eagly (2004) argues that leadership comprise of a task-oriented –masculine side and a relationship-based –feminine side. Through several studies, groups were observed to recognize the basic aspects of leadership. The studies suggested many factors but fundamentally these factors can be decreased to two aspects- first, *accomplishment of task* and second, *maintenance of relationship*.

In essence, it means an effective leadership in an organization needs to attend to these two and key fundamental factors. The need to attend to these factors could probably describe some noticeable gap in organizations. For example, within the private sector particularly large manufacturing companies, the function reflects a fragment by sex. The line often has the highest proportion of men and the staff and support functions (i.e. administrative, human resources, public relation, among others) and has the highest percentage of women. An incursion into several other organizations may show some similar fragment along sex as touching leadership needs of an organization.

The suggestion of the two factor theory is briefly put as follows: - For men, this specifically means to round out their leadership skills by identifying and developing their relationship skills. For women, the opposite may be correct to round out their leadership skill by identifying and developing their assertive and decisive task orientation.

Researchers who study sex and gender issues mostly take one of two paths. They either emphasize on the similarities between men and women or the variations between them. Researchers who observe the similarities viewpoint seek to expose men and women are basically similar in their intellectual and social behaviours. Any variations that happen are as a result of socialization, not biology (Bohan 2002; Yoder & Kahn, 2003). This viewpoint is also known as the beta bias. Researchers with this opinion carried out a number of studies that challenged the prevailing belief that women varies from (and inferior to) men.

Another approach called the alpha bias emphasizes the disparity between men and women. Historically, these variations have been thought to come from essential qualities within the individual that springs from biology (Bohan 2002; Yoder & Kahn, 2003). This concept is known as essentialism. These differences link men with reason and civilization and women with emotion and nature. Women's disparities were often connected with men with inferiority. Men set the pace, while women were seen as deviations from that standard (Strickland, 2000).

The Glass Ceiling

To comprehend the limited promotion of women into prominent positions of leadership, concepts such as the "glass ceiling" have been widely use. The term is widely used to describe the invisible barrier that debar women's opportunities for further promotion or advancement up the corporate ladder. The glass ceiling is not only a barrier for individual women, but it also concerns women as a group, who are kept from developing simply because they are women.

There are several causes of the glass ceiling for women. One essential cause is occupational segregation. The labour industry and especially executive positions, remain separated by gender. Women executives are majorly concentrated in specific areas, such as

personnel, public relations, and even finance specialties, which often lead to the most powerful top management posts. The path to power generally assumed by presidents and chief executive officers is that of the business mainstream, an arena which has the numbers of women largely insignificant. While there are indeed women who have attained high managerial positions, they are often scarce and viewed as “tokens” so that corporate management cannot be accused of discrimination.

Many women in seats of leadership insist that the most essential career route for advancing to senior levels is to steadily exceed performance expectations. In other words, for women to move up the corporate

Ladder; they must work harder and longer than their male colleagues. A standard reason given by the male power structure is that, as a group, women have not migrated into the most powerful posts because there are very few women with the right combination of training, education, and seasoning. In other words, doors have not been open long enough for women as a whole within the top leadership milieus.

Bureaucracies that steadily reveal a scarcity of women in choice executive posts insist that it is just a matter of time before women close the impartiality gap with men in terms of leadership. But many women who are on the move to climb the corporate ladder disagree. They believe that the lack of gender equality in leadership posts exists due to the male-controlled values that permeates and dominates the structure of leadership. In essence, women fail to get to the top because of systemic bias against them.

The Old-Boy Network

Another hurdle, and perhaps the most important to women, is that the “old-boy network” which shuts women out of top managerial positions. This old-boy network comprises of males who are literate and at the same institutions or who have climbed the corporate ladder together. The “old boys” tend to promote people who are like them. Men who are in these top decision-making roles often look to former colleagues and friends to occupy these posts.

Women mostly are not even considered when it comes to promotions because they are outside these networks. Although corporations claim to be meritocracies—institutions in which advancement up the corporate ladder is dependent on performance and skill—the reality is that, despite men and women's same educational attainments, ambitions, aspirations, positions, starting salaries, and commitments to their careers, men generally advance faster, attain higher-status posts, and get significantly higher compensation than women.

Men's associations with their male colleagues play an essential role in their journey to power and prestige. Given that women traditionally have not been an integral force within corporations, they simply have not developed similar networking systems.

Gender Discrimination in Leadership Position

The term “leaders” refers to persons assuming a formal position of leadership in complex organizations in industry, government, education, politics, the arts, sciences, and professions. Interest in gender and leadership started in the United States in the early 1970s, when women slowly began to seek and gain entry into management.

From the archives, gender excluded most females from becoming leaders in such organizations; as a result, the notion that males were better suited than females for leadership roles was, until recently, rarely probed. Since the early 1970s, the foundation of that assumption has been shaken by the large number of women who, have (1) been elected

prime minister (in Britain, Canada, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Norway, Sri Lanka, etc.) and to other high government offices; (2) been promoted to managerial positions in business organizations; and (3) bagged Master Of Business Administration (MBA) degrees. In addition, the assumption that a leader should be a man have come under scrutiny by a growing body of scholarly writing on the subject of gender and leadership.

Gender disparity is a serious dilemma confronting women in leadership. Unique barriers that affect women's capability to shatter the glass ceiling involve career assumptions by management about women as a group and contradictory expectations for women. Discriminatory attitudes are often covered in inaccurate "facts" about women's capacity for leadership. Women are presented as not aggressive enough, lacking the self-confidence required for the job, and not being serious enough about their careers to climb the corporate ladder. But prejudices and gender stereotypes persist because they allow males to protect their privileged status and keep women in their place.

Despite overwhelming evidence that these stereotypes are incorrect, they persist. Many female executives are persuaded that they are not taken seriously by their male colleagues; many have reported being mistaken for secretaries at business meetings. While few women in executive posts submit serious anti-women attitudes at work, the forces of bias are far more subtle: Women are simply ignored more than men.

Furthermore, female executives are mostly paid less than their male counterparts with similar tasks. Women's status in the leading vocations of health, education, law, accounting, and engineering is same with those in corporate settings. Female health professionals are more in low-status and less prestigious posts. In higher education, few women fill the positions of president, chancellor, or provost. Initiatives that must be on ground to rectify prevailing attitudes toward women include education on gender awareness, diversity, and combating sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is a serious challenge for women in bureaucracies. Harassment is used as a mode of power by an employer; sexual harassment scares and depresses women and creates an atmosphere of silence, because many women fear that reporting sexual harassment will ruin their careers. Indeed, men-dominated value structures allow men to believe that they have a right to control women. Feminists assert that defined notions of gender roles are central to this understanding; these lead to a wide range of rules relating to gender resolute behaviours and expectations. Society's acceptance of these rules establishes the rationale for male dominancy and the potential for male harassment or ferocity against women.

Another obstacle to women in management is the lack of a critical mass of senior or obvious successful female role models and mentors. Mentoring is a procedure whereby a person who has experience and understanding in an identified field can actively guide and offer support to facilitate the learning of another individual. The arrangement mostly involves an individual in a leadership posts providing guidance and help to an individual in a more junior position. While establishments or institutions of higher learning have identified the significance and value of mentoring for their employees and have put formal structures in place to support this process, mentoring mostly happen in an informal basis.

Given the old-boy network that has been pivotal to men's mentoring and advancement, women traditionally have fewer mentoring chances open to them than their male colleagues. Women in executive posts stress that inadequate mentoring among women has been damaging to their rising up the corporate ladder. Because men mostly occupy the

highest leadership posts, men are more likely to be in powerful positions to pave way for those with inferior status. This is a serious barricade to women's advancement. Since the basis of patriarchy has been organized through men's relationships with other men, same unity among women is an effective way to combat institutional forms and norms that majorly exclude women.

Unions looking for means to be more effective and better able to represent the growing number of women as union members would do well to pay attention to the question of gender and leadership. Scholars suggests that women bring to leadership characteristics associated with what is now known as —transformational leadership—a mode of leadership that is being increasingly promoted as a key element to union renewal. These attributes include being bothered with union members at a personal level, involving others in decision making, being moved about collective than individual attainments, finding new and creative ways of tackling challenges, searching for various opinions, and, most especially, collectively developing a vision of the union's passion and finding means to build commitment to that vision (Clark, 2000)

In other words, establishing and developing women's leadership should be accepted as a way forward for unions that want to grow and develop, and build power through membership involvement and the active participation of women and other equality-seeking groups.

Conclusion

The difference in gender tasks and responsibilities mostly transforms to dissimilarity and not complementarily. This then leads to a kind of hierarchy in which it is men and men's activities and characteristics that are highly noticed, valued and subsequently men are accorded greater position than women and girls. The result is that the society dictates male domination and female subordination, men are greater and stronger than women and are to make decisions while women are onlookers, passive and are not free to make decisions even when those things to be decided concern women directly.

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