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Inside

Dr. Pundlik V. Rasal
[Executive Editor]
[IJORS]

Research Papers presented and Proceedings for
Two days State Level Seminar on

"Qualities of Leadership Development"

held at
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8. Gender Aspect of Leadership

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Abstract

Leadership is the process through which one member of a group (the leader) influences other group members toward attainment of shared group goals. The power exerting behaviour intrigues social scientists from the field of Psychology, Sociology, Political science, Education and of course Management and Commerce.

Keywords

Power Exerting Behaviour, Socialization, Fear of Success, Sticky Floors, Glass-ceiling Effect, Maternal Wall, Equal Opportunity.

Introduction

Leadership is the process through which one member of a group (the leader) influences other group members toward attainment of shared group goals. The power exerting behaviour intrigues social scientists from the field of Psychology, Sociology, Political science, Education and of course Management and Commerce.

Scope

The scope of this study is related to the area of psychology in general and to the Gender Aspects of Leadership in particular. The tool of data collection used in this study is Archives and so it is based on secondary data.

Objectives

- To understand the gender differences in leadership
- To know which factors contribute to these differences

Social scientists use two separate terms to designate biologically determined differences between men and women, which are called "sex differences", and those constructed socially, which are called "gender differences". Both define the differences between men and women, but they have very different connotations. Sex refers to the permanent biological characteristics common to individuals in all societies and cultures. Gender goes far beyond the physiological and biological specifics of the two sexes in terms attitude toward oneself and of the roles each is expected to play.

Gender Perspective in Psychology examines the behaviour, biology, and social context in which both women and men function (Linda Brannon, 2007). It looks at the impact of gender on people's thinking, feelings, and the expression of feelings, interactions, self identity, self image and social image. All these factors seem to play an important role in leadership development.

In various fields like politics, business, education it is seen that female leaders are quiet less in numbers. Being a woman leader in itself becomes a focus of attention, news and discussion. It is seen as something rare and exceptional. An important reason behind this underrepresentation and extra attention can be the social expectations and roles assigned to both genders. In most societies, females are expected to be more dependent, submissive, and obedient and follow others' instructions, the qualities hazardous to leadership. In contrast, males are expected to be independent and imperative. Due to the reinforcing experiences, both genders tend to internalise these expectations and behave accordingly. This nurturing effect very well explains the reason behind fewer female leaders.

In socialization process, women learn to be less ambitious, less aspiring, less dominating. Though they work, very few of them seek high career goals. Most women work to support household expenses and do not strive for professional goals. They are taught to value family over profession. Due to these family and societal expectations, women also do not prefer to devote extra time to acquire higher positions and willingly choose to stay at the lower end of the ladder. According to Matina Horner (1969) women also develop fear of success. Sometimes women try to step out of this comfort zone. But they are perceived as less assertive, less confident and less ambitious and are denied of the opportunities. Women receive little or no encouragement to seek leadership positions, while men are

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encouraged to enter administration to a greater degree than women. These social factors mentioned above make it difficult for women to achieve and exert power.

But in recent years, women have risen much higher. They are grabbing higher positions in managerial grid. We can see increasing number of top female authorities in politics and business. The distinguishing personal characteristics and unique environment owe great credit. But social change in the form of industrial revolution, feminist movement, and education system should not be neglected. The change gave women a much easier access to education and job opportunities. Many scholarship programmes for women are there to help. They are getting reservations too. Most importantly many leadership training programs aiming to support and train female workers are introduced. The common salient feature of these programs is the focus on changing attitude of women to themselves and changing the way others look at them. For instance, The Wall Street Journal emphasizes Self promotion, Office image management and Observational learning. Women and Leadership Australia is dedicated to female leaders working all over Australia. Such active efforts can lead to more success.

With increasing number of female leaders, researchers are also focusing on difference between leadership styles of men and women and their success as leaders. Alice Eagly, a frontrunner in the research on gender differences in leadership, found through multiple studies that there are small, but significant, differences in the way men and women are perceived in leadership roles and their effectiveness in such positions, as well as their leadership styles. But Growe and Montgomery of University of Louisiana found that women school principal emphasis more on relationships, compared to men who focus more on completing tasks, achieving goals and winning. Women emphasis process and men stress products. Women encourage feelings of self worth, active participation, and sharing of power and information, which helps to transform people's self interest into organizational goals. Men utilize the traditional top-down administrative style. Women believe in sharing information and men tend to hoard it. These contrasting styles can be attributed to differences in thinking pattern and emotional set up of men and women resulting from distinct socialization process. Such diversities in style can be effectively used in different work settings and situational demands.

A study by Alice Eagly (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995) found no overall differences in the effectiveness of male and female leaders in facilitating accomplishment of their group goals. So it can be said that women are getting more efficient at breaking traditional roadblocks like Sticky Floor, Glass-Ceiling Effect and Maternal Wall. They also are getting more role models than yesteryears.

Conclusion

The work of Alice Eagly and many other social scientists have shown that men and women are equally influential as leaders. The difference exists in style but women need not to shed all their feminine qualities but just learn to manage them well. Of course, the process of socialization must be modified. If given equal training and opportunities, women can lead successfully.

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