

Differences between male and female leadership



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There are a variety of conflicting views regarding the differences between male and female leadership styles across the world. The researchers have come up with conflicting results and therefore there are two clubs now that project two opposite views. I will go on now to describe the research associated with the topic.

Gender Differences are Significant:

The first groups of people under discussion are those who believe that gender differences in leadership styles are very significant and obvious.

According to Judy B. Rosener, (1995), A professor in the Graduate School of Management at the University of California, the male and female leadership styles are different, as in, the male leaders generally believe in “ command and control” form of leadership where they dictate orders whereas women believe in “ participative” leadership where they are interactive and want to involve all the people around them in their vision and plans.

According to Professor Judy, males are usually very keen about status distinctions, competition and hierarchy in general, whereas women are more interested in focusing on proper communication and breaking down hierarchy.

Sally Helgesen (1995) in her book the Female Advantage observes that women in general have a behavior pattern that encourages equality among peers. “ Not letting their role get in the way.” Helgesen continues, “ they seek to empower those around them by being direct and natural in a way that minimizes their own ego and strips them of the trappings of power which emphasizes boundaries and divisions” (p. 144).

Similarly Nancy Badore, Executive Director of Ford Motor Company's Executive Development Center does not mind admitting that she doesn't mind showing that she doesn't know something or being herself. Mostly, men believe that they need to maintain an aura of control and knowledge to seem superior. She on the other hand has no issues admitting that she is human and does not believe that it makes a difference to her perceived respect as an executive. This highlights a key difference in the way men and women think. (Helgesen, 1995, p. 151).

Diane Lewis (1998) claims "women are different" as if it were a fact in her book "Equal to the Challenge". In her book she claims that women are very different from men in not just the way they look, they are different as people and have entirely different personality traits. They have different attitudes, behaviors and beliefs and these have come into play because of the vast differences in which men and women are raised in society.

She says in her book that "" These internal differences add up to one big external difference. We women often behave in ways contrary to our success, even to our survival, in the world of work"" because men are naturally competitive and put winning ahead of harmony and are generally comfortable with rules and structure, where as women are naturally inclined to put harmony above all and sometimes will break rules for the purpose of protecting their loved ones.

According to (Powell. 1999) " Women network; men do not. Women share information; men do not. Women place cooperation above competition; men do not. Women are more concerned with how things are done, with process,

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than with merely getting things done; they are more concerned with means than with ends. Unlike men, women do not have an instrumental view of work or of the workers. For women leaders, workers are ends in themselves, not means to an end.”

This, according to Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli in “ The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence” is an advantage as females are more transformational leaders where as men in general are transactional leaders (based on their personality traits)

Thus, these researches make the point that women and men are essentially different from one another and therefore have varying leadership styles that in turn effect their advancement up the corporate ladder.

No Visible Differences:

Then, another group that counters these researchers is the group that claims that there are no significant differences in the way men and women lead people.

Epstein (1990) argues that even if women do bring a different set of qualities to the workplace its myopic to say that its only women who possess those set of qualities. It may be true that men in general are lower on levels of empathy as compared to the average woman; however it does not mean that men who are leaders have lesser empathy as compared to women leaders.

Similarly, Gary N. Powell (1999) concludes in his research that “ sex differences are absent in task-oriented behavior, people-oriented behavior,

effectiveness ratings of actual managers, and subordinates' responses to actual managers" (p. 165). he also goes on to say that most of the studies conducted about differences in leadership styles among the sexes are basically biased in themselves as they were not conducted in the actual workplace or among people who were actually leaders (after all, gender differences among ordinary people do not necessarily reflect differences in personality traits of actual leaders)

Another later research done by Jane Mansbridge (1991), the differences in between the gender leadership styles are just 1/5th of a standard deviation and are small enough to be ignored. She writes in her book that "...the difference between men

and women styles may be much smaller than the differences between managers of small and large

companies, of old and new companies, or old and young managers" (pp. 154-155)."

These people therefore argue that the claimed differences in male and female leadership styles are basically stereotypical and severe oversimplification of reality based on our own perceived biases. In actuality men and women are not so different in leading styles as they are projected to be.

So what is the conclusion of all this research? Unfortunately, the research is inconclusive. It depends according to Captain Willie L. Parker, Jr. on which particular woman and which particular man we are talking about. This is

because women and men are extremely broad classifications. They include people from different ages, education backgrounds, social settings they were raised in and different values. There is no one way that we can use a description that fits all the women all across the world.

Therefore its when asking ourselves about qualities that define women, its important to ask ourselves which particular woman and which particular man we are talking about.