

# Literatur review



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**Abstract** In the contemporary world, inequality between males and females in the workplace is becoming a critical issue. This has been often considered a part of our past and yet now in modern times men and women are entering into the workplace in equal numbers but women still face gender discrimination in their occupations, especially in managerial positions.

There are certain limitations and restrictions that women encounter while in workplace. There is a common idea that people firmly believe, that women are not suitable for upper division positions because they do not have the characteristics suitable for those positions. It is very important to understand the basic biases and factors which are deterring women from reaching their goals and creating inequality in a male dominated workplace. The main factors affecting gender inequality in the workplace which have been studied here are leadership, power and perceptions.

**Keywords:** gender bias, sexual discrimination, workplace segregation

**Fiction** This research seeks to support the fictive notion that gender equality exist today and gender biases are a thing of the past regardless of current efforts to create equality among genders in the workplace. To increase understanding of factors affecting women this study focuses on: leadership, power, and perceptions. Throughout history there has been a struggle for equality. The suffrage movement and later affirmative action were efforts to increase equality among genders.

As the economy of the nation changed to a more industrialized one it demanded more workers. While Men were at war, the demand of workers needed for war production increased. Women decided to do their part to help with the war efforts: taking over the Jobs left by men. This was a huge step for women, and the realizing of women's potential in the workforce. Women were now becoming more and more present in the workforce, diversifying the population of employees. The introduction of women brought with it new theories through research, assessing and further supporting the existence of inequality for women in the workforce.

To further assess and support the existent inequality between men and women; research was obtained through a search on the University of California, Merced's library data base. Over 278 studies preceded using key descriptive words: women, power, perceptions, and leadership. Studies found support the differences within gender and the workplace. Looking in detail at studies like Roos and Brook (1981) that assessed data from the 1974-1977 that showed that women have a large earning gap compared to men due to sex segregated characteristics at an occupational level.

The research showed, women mostly work at low paying Jobs and they are less likely to exercise authority in those jobs. In a related study on economics, Mano-Negrin (2004), showed a significant ncrease in participation of women in the labor market without a parallel decrease of gender wage gaps. Adler (1994) research results showed that men hold higher position, higher supervisory, and authority compared to women. Women have less access to power and authority at work. Policymakers and

supervisor make equal rules for them but women exercise less power than men.

Avolio (2009) results showed a significant difference in the effect sizes for leadership interventions conducted with all-male and majority-male participants versus all-female and majority-female participant studies. Bosak (2008) showed in their study that women perceive themselves less suitable for high positions because the perceived notion that they do not associated with masculine characteristics of men. Research has served as evidence for change. Major developments include formation of new associations and legislations.

The Association for Women's Rights in Development purpose is to strengthen movements that advance women's rights and promote gender equality worldwide (AWID). The Equal Pay Act was signed into law by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 (EEOC). The Equal Pay Act was a law against reduction of wages that is discriminates due to sex. President Kennedy emphasized : " Adds to our laws another enter the labor force they will find equality in their pay envelope. "(EEOC) However, regardless of efforts it is clear that subtle biases of gender still contribute to discriminate against women in the workplace especially in male dominated workforce.

Existential biases affect the prevalence of women in leadership, job performance, and male dominated careers. It is important to understand underlying biases and factors in the work place that may hinder woman from reaching a state of equality among men in the workforce. Factors studied across genders in the workplace: leadership, power, and perceptions.

Leadership and Power Let us first observe the two omnipresent notions that are leadership and power. It has long been understood and accepted albeit bias, that leadership and power are traits commonly associated with the male sex.

Also, positions of power and of authority are linked to such generalizations. For example, this can be seen in the workplace where women are often segregated into professions that ultimately reduce the possibility of exercising autonomy and supervisory authority (Oaffee, 1989). We see time and time again that women, when being considered for a position are subject to a bias comparison that subjugates their attempts at equality and fair judgment. The majority of the time the employers that are doing the considering prefer masculine gender characteristics to feminine characteristics (Goktepe & Craig, 1989).

In their study, Goktepe and Craig found that interpersonal attractiveness and sex role orientation are both associated with the emergent candidate for the position. In this, we can see that it is of the utmost importance to understand what influences the emergence of a leader and note any difference between genders. So persistent is this notion of a gender bias that even women themselves cannot escape acknowledging it and even falling susceptible to its ideas.

We see this recurring problem in several common patterns, one being that of women feeling vulnerable and out of place because they have no female role model in a position of power to revere. This lack of stimuli results in a reduction in chances of women to take on a leadership role (Carbonell &

Castro, 2008). In Carbonell and Castro's study we see when confronted with a female leader model, for more than half the time women take the leadership position, but when faced with a male leadership model the results are underwhelming.

And, the men in that study felt indifference when faced with either model, signifying a common acceptance of male superiority or dominance. Other studies have also supported this disparity of ideas concerning the similarity between women and managers. In a study conducted by Brenner, Tomkiewicz and Schein (1989), we observe that men perceive successful middle managers as having those characteristics, attitudes, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general.

Although the women in this study judged both male and female characteristics equally viable, it was only a function of change in the perception of women in general rather than a change in the perceived requirements for managerial success or even any perceptions of men in general. In other words, what has been perceived as approved managerial characteristics in the past has not changed. What has changed is how forward in positive and equally thinking is in truth very misleading.

Yes behaviors have changed but sadly male managers still hold onto their original attitudes which involve a skewed sense of what the proper qualifications may be. It seems that blind ignorance may also affect aspects of occupational labor in the workplace. In the study by Cann and Siegfried (1990), there is a strong indication that the behaviors people recognized as

indicators of a successful leader included those that are viewed as feminine. Leaders must be " behaviorally androgynous," they must have the flexibility to exhibit both male and female characteristics.

Thus, effective leaders are those that can appease an assortment of demands, and yet we witness the constant reminder of a societal gender bias implicating female characteristics as weaker and even less desirable. One can only wonder why some choose to ignore a possible fine addition to a firm because of a commonly held notion of gender superiority. Presumed notions of gender superiority in leadership qualities can easily be ascertained from many studies that have been conducted in the past, involving commonly held societal beliefs.

But, these same bias notions of leadership qualities can be enhanced by certain workplace organizational climates. The atmosphere in which business involving the hiring of future employees or any upper level position is conducted, can be greatly affected by the pressures that are applied during that time. In a study done by Katz (1987), when put into a discriminatory setting the test subjects preferred to hire males. In the same study test subjects were put into a nondiscriminatory setting and the results proved to be quite interesting, the preference levels were almost equal between male and female candidates.

From this information we can gather that a significant catalyst for discriminatory thinking is in part caused by the organizational climate that someone is in. Currently, sexual discrimination and gender bias in the workplace is alive and well. It is a widespread problem that is inhibiting many

women's rights and allowing or an unfair advantage for the opposite sex. Most of today's research concerning this notion is focused on investigating the debilitating effects that negative stereotypes have on the targets of said stereotypes (Hoyt & Blalovich, 2007).

In order to move forward and overcome this bias and discrimination we must discover new avenues in which to employ a politically correct attitude towards those individuals of the fairer sex. Perceptions Understanding perceptions of society, focusing on perceptions of women in the workplace, helps increase understanding of the existent gap between genders at work. There are many factors that may contribute to the differentiation in treatment and appointment to leadership between genders in the workplace. Trentham, and Larwood (1998), examined the effects of power and willingness to discriminate in the workplace.

Results show that people have a predisposition to discriminate against women. This study found that people in top positions of organizations had higher tendencies to discriminate against women than people with lower positions of authority. Individuals in power affect the disposition of a person of lower status to act in a discriminating manner often times going against own personal beliefs. The importance of this study is that biases exist against women due to perceived (1993) analyzes perceptions and attitudes of past events, and future measures implemented to reduce gap between genders in the workplace.

Results show that men feel that past measures affected their careers more negatively, however both genders showed equal dissatisfaction with past



measures. Men agreed with eliminating systemic barriers that limit advancement for women but were against preferential treatment. This clearly states that both genders have self interest in mind. Women want help to go up the ladder, men see that as a threat, therefore disapprove. Self interest conflicts held by men may hinder women from reaching equality in the workplace.

Another study that looked at perceptions of leadership qualities in groups of similar gender was done by Prime, Jonsen, Carter, and Maznevski (2008). This study looked at managers perceived qualities associated with leadership and gender. The study hypothesized that the qualities associated with leaders was more prominent in men than in women. Results show that in women respondents perceived women as more effective than men in: planning and role modeling, providing intellectual stimulation, and problem solving. Men on the other hand attributed that men were better at delegating than female leaders.

Both men and women perceived and stereotyped women leaders as being more competent in supporting. The study indicated that both genders were attributing more positive ratings to their gender than the opposing gender. This study indicates that self perceptions also affect beliefs of self and others in ability in the work place. Perceptions of the meaning of equality are different among individuals according to their self interest. Other studies examine perceptions of gender and leadership concerns in the workplace over time.

The study done by Koch, Loft, and Kruse (2005) takes a look at changes in perceptions of women in leadership. With an increase of women in leadership the study compares the amount of change in beliefs now to the beliefs held 20 years ago. Results showed a tendency for gender association that went along with social perceptions; men were associated with terms: hard, strong, and aggressive. Women were judged as soft, sentimental, and delicate. Although data shows a shift towards associating women with leadership; it is not significant as the correlation between men and leadership.

Despite efforts to close the gap of inequality it still exists in positions of leadership, small shift seen of women in leadership, is not dismissed.

Perceptions of femininity in leadership Johanson (2008) seeks to find if prior conceptions of leadership exist between genders in perceived: conception, structure, masculinity, femininity, androgyny, and overall leadership ability. Results support the hypothesis that leadership ratings were associated with masculinity and structure; the positive correlation between consideration and femininity was clearly supported.

Leadership positively correlated with structure and not conception. The study indicates the importance of beliefs and associations of leadership without environment influence on perceived individual leadership style. This study proves that individuals still show a predominant belief that leadership is more closely associated with masculinity and structure than femininity and conception. Individuals overall continue to think of leadership as male oriented. For women characteristics associated with femininity are still not seen as positively affiliated with leadership characteristics.

A study that demonstrates the effects of on the perceived suitability of women and men in leadership of failing or succeeding organizations. This study looks at the inequalities that women encounter when trying to advance in the workforce. The study hypothesized that women are appointed to leadership positions when risk of failure and criticism are high. Results show that in general women are preferred over male candidates. The results state that the male was selected over a female when the company performance was improving. Women were often selected as the suited individual to take a leadership position in a company that was declining.

This study shows that there is a clear preference of men to successful companies. This may be due to perceptions and beliefs of the individuals who appoint leaders to a position. This study looked at the suitability of both men and women in a management position Ted H. Shore (1992). The study focused on the potential of performance in managerial positions by assessing cognitive ability, job advancement, interpersonal and performance skills. Despite women rating higher than men on performance style dimensions, they received lower ratings in management potential.

Management ratings of both genders were comparable. The study results serve as evidence of subtle gender bias within the workplace. Stating that despite higher performance rates in women the actual advancement in the job is the same as men of lower performance rates. The study analyzes perceptions of woman's interpersonal skills compared to men. Assessors deemphasized the fact that women outperformed men; giving more credit in interpersonal skills. A mismatch is perceived of women and attributes

associated with management due to stereotypical and perceived views of women.

Finally a study done by Wolf, and Fligsteing (2009) looks at factors that contribute to the unequal distribution of women compared to men in positions of authority focusing on education, experience, tenure, marriage, children, that help map how and why some individuals are in positions of authority. The study looks at composition of the workplace and situational beliefs of employers and women in notions of authority. The study assesses factors that influence job characteristics and allocation of male/ female in authority. The study concluded that men are given more authority than women in the workplace.

The importance of this study highlights factors like traditional gender roles, personal choices, and self perceptions that affect the prevalence of women in authority. Conclusion According to McTavish and Miller (2009) there are both pros and cons to the modernization agenda. Reform and structural change have led to greater opportunities for women. Reform and modernization in organizational procedures have led to somewhat gender friendlier environments. However, there are paradoxes in the modernization agenda. It seems like women have to conform to masculinist styles of management.

Many of the reforms are actually leading to re-gendering of job roles and procedures. (McTavish and Miller, 2009, p. 361-362). In the article Women's Leadership Development Strategic Practices for Women and Organizations Hopkins, O'Neil, Passarelli, and Bilimoria (2008) propose seven areas of

leadership development practice along with recommendations in each of these categories for consultants and human resources professionals working with individual women and organizations. They state that leadership development positive outcomes at both the individual and organizational levels.

They assert that responsibility for developing the human, social, and political capital of women resides at the individual and the organizational levels. They also state that leadership development of women employees is a major business advantage to organizations. Also stressed is that principal importance must be placed on women feeling connected to the goals and objectives of the greater organization and conceptualizing a comprehensive picture of themselves as vital organizational partners. They also emphasize that consulting psychologists and human resources professionals have an essential role in helping women and organizations.

They conclude that the assembly of leadership development that appreciates and addresses women's unique contributions will result in women fulfilling their individual potential and in organizational transformation, the two principal goals of effective, sustainable leadership development.