

Gender and women in the workplace essay



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Contents Gender diversity: Gender diversity and women in the workplace1

Introduction1 Literature Review2 Gender diversity in a workplace2 Women in

the workplace3 Conclusion8 References9 Gender diversity: Gender diversity

and women in the workplace Introduction Gender diversity was not taken

into consideration and most companies have very little knowledge on how to

take advantage of it. Despite the effort to increase diversity of workforce

over recent decades, the number of female and minority executives has

remained disproportionately low. (Celia & Antonio, 2007) It may not be true

for every country. In the USA women now represent approximately half of

the working population, while in the UK women constitute just over 50 per

cent of the total workforce and considerable evidence has been gathered

that these women are mostly in the executive level positions (Cross &

Linehan, 2006) According to leading US research organisation Catalyst, there

is a difference between companies that managed to take advantage of

gender diversity and those companies that did not. (Robinson, 2008)It is

therefore important that an organisation should take a closer look at the

issue of gender diversity internally within their workforce which could help

see how it impacts their operation.

(Farrer, 2004) Literature Review Gender diversity in a workplace Heilman

and Welle (1998) conducted a study whereby the effects of diversity

initiatives on the perceptions of competence were examined. . This study

was further revealed by Hartel (1998) that ‘telling people that gender

diversity was a consideration in group member selection increases

stereotyping’. Gender-role stereotype is a reflection of people’s perception of

differences in personality traits and behaviors related to a person's gender (Lueptow et al. , 2001; Moskowitz et al.

, 1994). While social change over the past 50 years has been widespread, research has shown that it has not been followed by a change in gender stereotyping. In their meta-analysis of research on leadership and gender, Lueptow et al. (2001, p. 1) found that: .

. there has been stability in gender stereotyping of women and men from at least the 1950s to the late 1990s, and even an increase in gender stereotyping, especially regarding self concepts focusing upon the personality traits of women. A study of Jackson (2004) indicate that women, for example, were rated less competent and less likely to be selected as a group leader but the reason to it was not found. Weyer und Hansen (2007) completed a similar study and found that it is not that men are preferred as leaders but rather because leadership is described as a task that requires behaviors deemed masculine. Thus, if women become leaders, they are likely to behave in a manner that is not expected of their gender based on gender-role stereotypes, and they therefore may have to fear negative consequences. Most of the work by Jackson (2004) indicates that discriminatory behaviours in the workplace affect an individual's openness to diversity.

This may not be entirely true as Hartel (1998) explains that it is openness towards diversity that has been found to effect discrimination and suggests that organizations “ should be working hard to instil a climate of openness in their organisations, work groups and employees. Women in the workplace A

2001 survey of human resources professionals found that 91 percent of the respondents said that diversity initiatives help the organisation keep a competitive advantage, primarily through corporate culture, employee morale, retention, and recruitment. (Society for Human Resources Management Survey Programme, 2001, p. 16). In 1995, the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission reported that surveyed corporate executives confirmed “the bottom-line value and economic imperative of including minorities and women in senior corporate management” (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, p.

). An American Management Association (1998) survey revealed strong evidence that a mixture of genders, ethnic backgrounds, and ages in senior management teams consistently correlates to superior corporate performance. Many researchers studying management behaviour reported that males and females style of management has no significant differences. (Vilkinas, 2000; Vilkinas and Cartan, 1993, 1997). These authors were arguing that it was the determination of how males and females in senior management teams were perceived based on the level of effectiveness and not their gender.

Oshagbemi and Gill (2003), in their study of UK male and female managers, reported that there were more similarities than dissimilarities in the management styles of the two genders. Also, in a New Zealand study in the manufacturing sector, McGregor and Tweed (2001) reported that female and male managers identified similar managerial competencies that they possessed. However, other research has argued that the gender of the manager does matter (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Bass et al. , 1996; Rosener, <https://assignbuster.com/gender-and-women-in-the-workplace-essay/>

1995, 1996); that is, male and female managers do display different managerial behaviour. Contrary to the above findings that male and female managers consider themselves to share similar competencies, other studies have observed that women and men in management positions do perceive themselves differently.

Female managers participating in these studies indicated that they believed they were more innovative (Bass et al. , 1996) and better at getting the job done and setting priorities than their male counterparts (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995; Bass et al. , 1996; Rosener, 1996). In addition, the women expressed the opinion that female managers were stronger team builders and developers of their staff than were the male managers. Van der Boon (2003) reported that female managers used different skills from the males in their study, with females being more intuitive and empathetic. In a study of the leadership style of male and female accountants, females were again found to manage differently from males.

Women were perceived as more interactive, more effective in coaching, and better communicators (Burke and Collins, 2001). The findings and studies by the researchers have been affirmed by U. S leading research and advisory organization, Catalyst. The gender behaviors are displayed according to this classification scheme in Table 1.

Read also: “ Gender and optical illusions” Table 1: How leader behaviors connect to feminine and masculine stereotypes Source : Women “ Take Care”, Men “ Take Charge”: Stereotyping of U. S Business Leaders Exposed, Catalyst , 2005 Milliken and Martins (1996) reviewed the diversity literature

and drew the conclusion that racial and gender diversity can have negative effects on individual and group outcomes in certain instances. For example, group members who differ from the majority tend to have lower levels of psychological commitment and higher levels of turnover intent and absenteeism. Group coordination costs, such as increased communication time, appear to increase with diversity. Diversity appears to create additional coordination and control costs.

However, these negative effects may diminish with time (Watson et al., 1993) and may be offset by better quality and more creative decisions. Catalyst (2004) has reported that gender diversity asserts that companies that recruit, retain, and advance women will benefit organizations where educated and skilled segment of the talent pool will be reached. Women currently earn more than one-half of all bachelor's and master's degrees in the United States (57.

percent and 58.5 percent, respectively) and nearly one-half of all doctorates and law degrees (44.9 percent and 47.3 percent, respectively) (Catalyst, 2004). Organizations that leverage its female talent internally will be better able to develop products and services that could appeal to its external customers as well as make more innovative business decisions than non-diverse groups. (Catalyst, 2004) Figure 1A & 1B: Average Women's

representation in Top Management Teams – Overall Sample Source :

Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity, Catalyst, 2004. The link between representation of women in top management and a corporation's financial performance was studied by Catalyst (2004). Not only does the link exist but on average, companies that have higher women

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representation in their top management teams financially outperformed those companies that have higher women's representation.

Catalyst (2004) researched based on companies that appeared on the Fortune 500 rankings at least once during the five-year period between 1996-2000 for which there exists reliable and consistent gender diversity information. Two customary measures were used by Catalyst: Return on Equity (ROE) and Total Return to Shareholders (TRS) where it reflects corporate financial performance and changes in stock price. Most sectors of the industry were studied. An example could be used from the financial industry. Figure 2: Average ROE and TRS by Gender Diversity Top and Bottom Quartiles – Financials Source : Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity, Catalyst , 2004 There were 46 financial companies in Catalyst's overall sample, and the representation of women on their top management teams ranged from 0.

0 to 38.1 percent. The 13 top-quartile and 15 bottom-quartile companies were examined and concluded a high financial performance by the companies. Conclusion Up till today, gender stereotyping still takes place in a working environment.

Nevertheless, organizations will have a role to play to reduce such stereotyping. The results of this research have implications for practitioners. In general, companies with a high representation of women in the top management level will perform better internally and externally if compared to companies with lower female representation. Future research could take the form of a contingency approach to identify which functions (e. . policy

development, service delivery) require different leadership behaviours associated with the roles of vision setter, motivator, analyser and task master.

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