

ISMC 2022
17th International Strategic Management Conference**HOW DO FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY RELATE TO
FEMALE MANAGEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM ACADEMIA**

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Abstract

In the present paper, female management styles are discussed in the context of femininity and masculinity. Interviews are conducted with female managers in academia to explore their perceptions of their own management styles. Results show that the female managers mostly define themselves as feminine, human oriented, emphatic, and participative. Some of the female managers define themselves both masculine and feminine at the same time, thus this may show that androgynous management styles are present among female managers. However, none of them define their style as purely masculine. In parallel with common beliefs, female managers may experience more interpersonal conflicts with their female colleagues compared to their male colleagues, mainly caused by not being able to keep a professional relationship. Future studies will be conducted to measure perceptions of the subordinates about their female managers' styles and evidence will be collected from various sectors to have broader and comparative understanding of female management styles regarding masculinity and femininity.

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1. Introduction

It has been commonly believed that if a woman wants to be a successful leader, she should be tough and authoritarian and should act like her male counterparts. There were women leaders like Margaret Thatcher who even adopted a more masculine than many of her male rivals (McCrimmon, 2019). Today feminine values are rising. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau identifies himself as a feminist and he works for gender equality, pay equity, and parental sharing benefits. His words reflect his feminine approach toward national governance: “What we've seen time and time again is when you have more fairness, more equality, you actually create better prosperity, more opportunity for everyone.” When the words feminine and masculine are used in organizational studies, most probably Geert Hofstede’s cultural study comes to the minds. According to Hofstede, femininity stands for “cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life” and masculinity stands for “achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success”. Just as cultures, leadership style can be categorized based on the values. From that sense a female or male leaders can behave according to their feminine or masculine values based on the context. Billing and Alvesson (2000) argue that it is dangerous to create a notion of feminine leadership since it leads to gender stereotypes. Thus, feminine leadership as a notion should be used very carefully, underlying that the notion derived from feminine values not stressing that women are superior to men or vice-a-versa.

In this paper, female leadership styles will be discussed in the context of femininity and masculinity. Based on the literature review and result of pilot study conducted via interviews with female managers in academia, it is aimed to explore that how the female managers perceive themselves and their female counterparts.

2. Literature Review

Leadership is traditionally associated to masculinity which refers to attributes such as instrumentality, autonomy, result-orientation; however today there is an interest in more participatory, non-hierarchical, flexible and group-oriented leadership styles (Billing & Alvesson, 2000). However, contemporary approaches emphasize people-oriented leadership which can be defined by being sensitive to followers’ motivation and needs; showing ideological and moral values, and focusing on individualized attention (Avolio et al., 2009). According to Fletcher (2004), post heroic leadership has emphasis on social processes instead of the traditional image of self as an independent entity. According to McCrimmon (2019) meaning of leadership is changing from ‘dominating’ to ‘providing direction’. Feminine leadership is generally defined through qualities of openness, flexibility, empathy, relational strengths, inclusiveness, a preference for collaboration (Cocchio, 2009).

Gender resistance perspective argues that “women’s ways of leading” and women’s relational skills and intuitive mode of thinking are advantageous for corporate effectiveness (Kark, 2004), thus women need to be themselves not to adopt a masculine style. Rudman and Glick (2001)’s study showed that women were discriminated for their agentic style when they apply feminine positions, thus from this perspective the women who choose not to behave feminine may also be discriminated and they are expected to “direct while not being directive”.

According to study of Gartzia and Engen (2012) on 157 Spanish managers, women’s scores were significantly higher than men’s scores in individualized consideration, contingent reward, and EI (emotional intelligence) which are the most important dimensions of feminine leadership. They consider expressiveness a feminine trait and instrumentalism as a masculine trait. As a gender identity type, they used 4 dimensions which are expressive, instrumental, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Androgynous leaders were defined as having high scores in both expressiveness and instrumentalism where undifferentiated leaders were low at both dimensions. The authors found that male participants low scores in feminine leadership traits are due to their problem with expressiveness. Among all gender identities, androgynous leaders, were found the most effective and undifferentiated leaders were found as the least effective ones. Some scholars argue that effective leaders change their style to fit the situation; since the appropriateness of their behaviors depends on the context (societal values, organizational culture, the nature of the task, and the characteristics of followers) (Eagly, 2007). However, Ayman and Korabik (2010) states that situational leadership theories are more likely to assume that the leaders are culture and gender neutral.

In the literature, there are various definitions of female leadership styles in comparison to male leadership (see table 1). Some authors argue that there are no differences between two genders in terms of leadership styles, while some others argue that their differences due to nature or nurture or contextual factors such as status perceptions or access to power.

Table 1. Aspects of Female Leaders in Comparison to Male Leaders

Female leaders...	Author
have a transformational, democratic, and/or “web” rather than a hierarchical style of leadership and more satisfied subordinates than men managers	Fagenson (1993, p. 5)
women in positions of power) display the same characteristics as men, regardless of whether or not men are there to influence them	Fillion (1997)
have nurturance, compassion, sensitivity, empathy	Grant (1988)
are affective, imaginative and creative	Hines (1992, p. 314)
differ contextually (many of the so called gender differences in organizational behaviour stem directly from gendered differentials in opportunities and access to power)	Kanter (1977)
are no different to their male counterparts in terms of ‘internal communication’ and ‘personnel management’; are ‘more involved with others and less task oriented than men’; hardly differ from their male colleagues in the way in which they experience power’	Krüger (1996, p. 454)
relate to interdependence, cooperation, receptivity, merging, acceptance, awareness of patterns, wholes and contexts, emotional tone, personalistic perception, being, intuition, and synthesizing	Marshall (1993, p. 124)
differ contextually (gendered identities are in context more fluid and shifting than they are depicted)	Reay and Ball (2000)
have “interactive” leadership style involves: encouraging participation sharing power and information enhancing self-worth changing self-interests for an overall good relating power to interpersonal skills believing in better performance when feeling good	Rosener (2011)
are ‘more like men than men themselves’	Schein (1975)
differ contextually (as women achieve power, qualities normally associated with femininity are modified; sensitivity varied according to status not sex, with lower status people being significantly more sensitive to the feelings of higher status people than vice versa)	Snodgrass (1992)

Most of the leadership and gender studies concentrated on leaders' being either democratic/autocratic and being interpersonally oriented/task oriented. According to stereotypical expectations female leaders are expected to be more democratic and interpersonally oriented while male leaders tend to be more autocratic and task oriented. Eagly and Johnson (1990) conducted a meta-analysis and concluded that male and female leaders did not differ so much in terms of being interpersonally oriented and task-oriented style in contrast to stereotypic expectations. On the other hand, authors found that female leaders adopted more democratic/participative style compared to man as in line with stereotypic expectations. Similarly, Gupta (2019)'s findings suggest that female leaders outperform their male counterparts in many skills and competencies required to build democratic and inclusive organizations. Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) found that in male dominated industries female leaders tend to be less interpersonally oriented. They also reported more pressure from their jobs compared to men. Meta-analysis of 86 studies about gender and leadership effectiveness, Eagly et al. (1995) showed that men and women do not differ so much in organizational effectiveness, however comparatively men were more effective in masculine roles and women are more effective in feminine roles. Eagly et al. (1992) conducted a meta-analysis on leadership characteristics and gender and conclude that female leaders were evaluated less favorably than male leaders if they adopted masculine leadership styles (autocratic and non-participative) especially when they occupied male dominated positions. Thus, the authors argue that the evidence showed that there was selective devaluation against female leadership.

Herrera et al. (2012) conducted a research on 314 workers and examined the impact of gender on the leadership and cultural dimensions identified in Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) research program. According to results, the greater the number of females, the higher the preference for participative leadership; the lower the preference for self-protective leadership; the greater the gender egalitarianism; and surprisingly the higher the preference for assertiveness. However, the more the managerial experience that women had, preference for assertiveness declined. Status construction theory suggests once gender status beliefs developed, they become the basement for gender inequality (Ridgeway, 2001). Even though perceptions of women had become more positive (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994); still women must display a higher level of recognized competence than men to be considered for the same position especially for masculine tasks (Ridgeway, 2001; Swim & Sanna, 1996; Foschi, 2000). This may be the reason why women leaders prefer being more assertiveness in the beginning of their careers, since they have to prove that they are competent. The performance-evaluation bias means men tend to be evaluated more on their potential while women are evaluated more on their achievements to date (Devillard et al., 2018). What is more, women receive less credit for success and more criticism for failure compared to men (Devillard et al., 2018). According to status characteristics theory, status differences organize interaction. For example, men generally talk more in formal and task-oriented environments as they feel that their status is higher than their female peers (Walker & Aritz, 2015).

3. Methodology

Literature review on female leadership had various findings. In order to understand the dynamics of leadership styles (i.e., feminine vs masculine) deeply, a pilot study was conducted on female

academicians that hold managerial positions at various private universities in İstanbul. Academia offers more equitable conditions for women and men compared to many sectors; thus this study's findings cannot be generalized to all sectors. Five respondents were reached via telephone and conversations were recorded based on their consent. Semi-structured questionnaire was applied. Duration of interviews were between 7.49 minutes to 16.03 minutes.

Following questions were asked to the respondents:

Q1) How would you describe your leadership style as a female manager?

Q2) Do you consider yourself people oriented or task oriented?

Q3) As a manager, do you think your management style is more masculine or feminine (regardless of appearance)? Masculinity refers to being results-oriented, focusing on material goals and reward whereas femininity refers to considering the well-being of the whole team, is being process-oriented and focuses on quality, qualitative goals and values.

Q4) Do you have to behave differently than you are, depending on the organizational dynamics and culture? Do you think you become a more effective leader this way?

Q5) What are the challenges you face as a female manager?

Q6) What are the features that make you more advantageous as a female manager?

Q7) Do you think that you have come to your position by working more than a male employee in the same position?

Q8) When you consider your subordinates, is there any difference between working with women and men? Are women or men more accommodating to your decisions and authority?

Q9) When you think of your superiors, do you work more comfortably with male or female managers? Why?

Q10) Do you see yourself as different from other women? If so, in what ways?

4. Findings

According to the results, R1 defines her leadership style as “energetic, motivational, team oriented, positive”, R2 defines as “agreeable, emphatic, inclusive, fair”, R3 defines as “servant leader, emotional, maternal”, R4 defines as “inclusive, emphatic, agreeable, participative”, R5 defines as “ active, open to dialogue, teamwork, reachable, empathic, maternal”.

All respondents find their leadership style as feminine, but respondents R1 and R2 mentioned that they are also masculine depends on the situation.

Two respondents (R2, R5) find themselves more people oriented than task-oriented, on the other hand three respondents (R1, R3, R4) evaluates themselves as both human oriented and task oriented. R1 and R2 find themselves feminine and masculine at the same time, while R3, R4, R5 defines themselves as feminine. Two respondents (R1, R2) think that their organizational culture does not force them to behave in a different way (i.e., more masculine) to be perceived as an effective leader, however two respondents (R3 and R5) think in some cases they feel to behave more autocratic. R4 declares that there are times that she feels if she behaves more autocratic managing would be more effective, but still she refuses to behave that way even this means extra work for herself.

Regarding challenges they face as female managers, R4 and R5 states it is difficult to balance work and family life especially due to motherhood responsibilities. R2 indicates that she feels thankful because she was let to work flexible, and this make her meet her motherhood responsibilities and managerial duties at the same time. R3 states that being emotional creates managerial problems, similarly R4 finds relationship management difficult. As an advantage, R1 thinks being empathetic and having good communication skills make her successful as a leader (she declares that she is not only manager but at the same time she holds leadership skills). R4 indicates that she is responsive to the subordinates' needs, this makes her to be accepted as a leader and she gets positive feedbacks from the people she managed. R5 states not being woman but being hard worker and having experience as an academician make her successful.

Two respondents (R4, R5) think that they needed to work harder than their male counterparts to be promoted. Three (R1, R3, R4) of the respondents think it is easy to manage male employees since women react emotionally and take things personally. R1 also states that women can be greedier. R2 says there is no difference to manage men or women because everybody's responsibilities are well defined. R5 states that women are more compatible to rules. R5 added that in general male employees are flexible, have sense of humor and they have more joy at work however this may also cause them to break the rules. R3 thinks it is easy to work with men because men colleagues are more open and rational. R4 states it is difficult to put a distance when you manage women. When respondents are asked if they prefer female or male manager, R1 and R2 find no difference. R3 prefer male managers since they are more rational on the other hand female managers can take things personal. R4 states that they have very good relationship with her female manager, they can be friends and task oriented at the same time. R5 states she also prefers female managers even though it is difficult to generalize, since it depends on person to person. R5 adds that men can be more chauvinist, due to patriarchal culture, they may ask you to do something not compatible with policies.

Three (R1, R3, R4) of five respondents think that they perceive themselves different than other female managers in a way that they find themselves more emotional and humanist. One of the respondents (R1) indicates some female managers may behave destructive towards other women, since in deep inside they like power and do not want to lose their position. Also, same respondent indicates that women may engage personal conflicts with other women, while male counterparts may usually engage in functional conflicts which do not harm the relationships. R1 added that while some women may behave destructively, they are also great women colleagues in her life that give her continuous support. R3 states she is more reachable, open, agreeable at the same time she is more result oriented.

According to results, respondents consider themselves mostly feminine, human oriented, emphatic, participative. R1 and R2 consider themselves both feminine and masculine at the same time, in other words they can be categorized as androgynous. However, when it is asked that if they see themselves different than other woman, three respondents define other woman more masculine and destructive/merciless.

5. Conclusion and Further Studies

As organizations become more democratic, women are expected to experience less prejudice and gain increased representation in the leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). For a very long-time women have learned how to behave masculine in business life. However, evidence (i.e. Gartzia & Engen, 2012) shows that the most effective managers are the ones who can balance femininity and masculinity at the same time, who are called androgynous leaders. How women perceive themselves and each other also matters.

In present study, perceptions and opinions of female managers from private universities are shared and become inspiration for new studies. Since this study is a pilot study, the findings cannot be generalized. However, they can be used to design the future studies. The findings suggest that female managers mostly perceive themselves as feminine, human oriented, emphatic, maternal. Some respondents indicate that they are also masculine and task oriented at the same time who can be defined as androgynous. None of the respondents think they are forced to behave in a masculine style to exercise their power (with some exceptional situations). On the other hand, most of the respondents consider themselves less destructive, more gentle, open and reachable than their female counterparts. Some respondents indicate they prefer to work with male subordinates or managers, since male colleagues do not take things personally, and are more task oriented. It can be concluded that the main issue related to female management is potential interpersonal conflicts among women. They have some difficulties balancing formal and informal relationship, afterwards this may result in avoiding some responsibilities and cause tension. Cooperation and solidarity among women employees may foster effectiveness of female management. Some respondents indicate that they have a good relationship with their female colleagues, and at the same time they can also work efficiently together because they are also task oriented. The main limitation of this study is that the results are based on self-perceptions of the female managers, thus the results may be different if they are measured from subordinates of the managers. Second limitation is that this study is conducted only in academia, different sectors may provide various results considering female leadership styles. Similarly, even in the academia, different regions and/or public universities may have various results as well. Third limitation is the inadequate number of respondents. The main contribution of this study is that it provides insights about how female managers perceive themselves and others. It can be argued that even in the “most” egalitarian organizations, still women may need to cooperate more to breaking down gender prejudices against female management. In future studies, perceptions of subordinates who works with female managers can be measured through quantitative techniques to reach larger amount of sample from various sectors and regions.

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