

Stereotyping of Effective Male and Female Leaders: A Concomitant of Gendered Workplaces

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The present study is an attempt to explore the prevailing gender stereotypes of effective leaders, held by male and female employees across varied organizational sectors. Five employees reporting to one single leader, served as respondents from each organization, making a total of 400 employee respondents. Modifications were made in the original Bem's Sex-Role Inventory of 60 attributes and a reduced version of 30 attributes was used as a tool to study the perception of gender stereotypes. Multiple response analysis was carried out to generate the frequency and percentage of times each of the 30 attributes was chosen by the employee respondents, from the attribute checklist to describe an effective male and female leader. Findings reveal a difference in the stereotypical attributions of effective male and female leaders. Differences have also been noted in the stereotypes held for effective male and female leaders, across the varied gendered contexts.

Keywords: Gender Stereotypes, Gender congeniality, Effective male and female leaders, Gendered workplaces.

Stereotypes are overgeneralized beliefs about people based on their being a member of any of the social groups and/or categories. These stereotypical beliefs may be held for leaders in general, men and women in general, and for male and female leaders, more specifically. When stereotypical attributions are made keeping gender of the target in mind, they come to be known as gender stereotypes, which typically reflect the social roles performed by men and women in a given context. When stereotypes are automated for male and female leaders, this is denoted by the term 'leader gender stereotypes' in the gender literature (Basu, 2008, p.61). The managerial stereotypes that are thus, construed incorporate the communal and agentic traits. Men are typically stereotyped as possessing the agentic traits of independence, being assertive and the like; and women are more often stereotyped as having the communal traits of warm, nurturing and the like (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). Furthermore, in leadership research, the essence of leadership roles lies in agentic tendencies as opposed to communal tendencies,

thereby making it pestilent for women to step into leadership and earn a fair evaluation. Gender stereotypes can further be understood in the light of what men and women are like (descriptive gender stereotypes), and how men and women should behave (prescriptive gender stereotypes). More specifically, for females in non-traditional occupations, the functioning of descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes, results in biased evaluations (Heilman, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 2002), challenging their capacities as leaders.

For centuries, the division of labor established and reinforced the present day gender roles. These dichotomous gender roles further generated the prevailing gender stereotypes of women as engaging in communal behaviors akin to warmth and submissiveness, and men as engaging in agentic behaviors akin to dominant and aggressive (Eagly, 1987). Eagly and Karau (2002) proposed the role congruity theory, which states that female leaders specifically run across a 'no-win' situation at the workplace. They become victims of prejudice in two such instances; one when a female leader emerges

in a male-dominated workplace leading to incongruence between prescribed leader role and gender roles; and another, when a female leader exhibits agentic tendencies, thereby causing incongruence between leader role and prescribed gender role. Prentice and Carranza (2002) stated that "Gender stereotypes are highly prescriptive" (p.269). Perceptions of competence in female leaders depends to a larger extent on how they should behave, and not on how they prove themselves as successful, in men's domain (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 2004). On a similar note, Gill (2004) concluded that prescriptive stereotypes would result in greater gender bias as compared to descriptive stereotypes. In addition, there is an increased tendency of negative evaluations toward female leaders displaying masculine roles, and heightened positive evaluations for male leaders displaying masculine roles. Studies in the past have also revealed how a good manager is still described in predominantly masculine terms (Gupta, Turban, Wasti, & Sikdar, 2009; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002).

Female leaders have been continually perceived as more effective in the care-taking behaviors, and their male counterparts are perceived as more effective in action-taking behaviors (Prime, Carte, & Welbourne, 2009) further aggravating the stereotype against women leaders. Yoder (2001) explains in his work, "Leadership itself is gendered and is enacted within a gendered context" (p. 815). Bass (2000) provides further evidence that male leaders win more favorable evaluations as compared to their female counterparts, owing to the observer's biases and stereotypic expectations. Interestingly, Denmark (1993) and Garcia-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra (2006) point out that stereotype against female leaders are more typically held by females. Also, that the leader is perceived as empowering depending upon his/her position in the organization. However, evidence shows less number of females in the top hierarchy of the organization, thereby resulting in failure to assess women leaders as empowering by subordinates.

Although, female leaders suffer disadvantages for negative evaluations, they

derive an added advantage in leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Rosette & Tost, 2010). Leadership styles of female leaders are different from that of male leaders and are perceived as more effective in certain situations (Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller, 2002). Also, research evidence indicates that female leaders exhibit more of transformational behaviors, as opposed to their male counterparts, who exhibit laissez-faire leadership and aspects of transactional leadership (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). Moving away from a paradoxical phase, female leadership now defies being oxymoronic (Lipman-Blumen, 1992). Past research evidence has echoed an increased rating on effectiveness of female leaders when compared with their male counterparts (Kabacoof, 1998; Padgett, Caldwell, & Embry, 2008; Rosette & Tost, 2010).

For the last couple of decades, vast amount of research has been consumed to answer the research question: 'How does gender of the leader affect leadership effectiveness'? A review of literature reveals mixed findings, displaying the presence or absence of differences in perceived leadership effectiveness when taking into consideration the gender of the leader. No significant differences have been revealed between gender of the leader and their perceived effectiveness by significant others (Patel & Biswas, 2011; Vilkinas, 2000). Cann and Siegfried (1990) rightly argue that an emphasis should be laid on the 'androgynous' behaviors leading to effective leadership where effective leadership is possible when the leaders display "consideration" (feminine trait) and "structuring" (masculine) behaviors. Singh (2007) in a study on male and female software professionals demonstrated that both the male and female software professionals were found to be above average on leadership effectiveness scale. Similarly, Hollander (1992) and Powell (1993) noted no gender differences in one's effectiveness to lead, although, there are some situations that are more favorable for women and some that favor men. Eagly and Johnson (1990) in a study reported no gender differences in leader's use of interpersonal oriented style and task oriented style, even though gender

differences were perceived in the leader's use of democratic and autocratic styles, with females adopting a more democratic style than male leaders. A meta-analysis of Three Research Paradigms by Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, and Ristikari (2011) indicates a changing pattern in leader stereotypes, where leaders in educational organizations and leaders at moderate-status leader roles were described in less masculine terms.

Eagly and Johnson (1990) point out that while carrying out leadership research, it is important to take into consideration whether the leadership roles are congenial for men or women. Several studies indicate that there is a connection between the managers' sex and the gendered context. As an example, the quantitative gender equality in a work group (the number of men and women in the work group) has been found important for the managers' possibilities to lead the organization (Wolfram & Mohr, 2010). Depending both on the managers' own sex and the gender congeniality in the organization, managers in female and male dominated organizations seem to have different working conditions and also a difference in power. Patel and Biswas (2011) indicated toward a differential use of influence tactics by leaders belonging to the education sector and the corporate sector. According to Kankkunen (2014), sex segregated workplaces usually have cultural norms about gender that create different patterns of behavior for women and men. As rightfully stated by Basu, Dasgupta, Chakraborty and Basu (2012), smaller variations of the culture get manifested in gender-role stereotypes. Leadership is no exception as it is commonly and culturally associated with being a man (Wolfram & Mohr, 2010). There is a need for research on leaders' gendered and cultural contexts (van Engen, van der Leeden, & Willemsen, 2001). Many females confront stressors in the leadership role that stem from stereotypical expectations and biases. The insidious perception that women are stereotypically feminine and do not fit the image of an ideal leader is still pervasive (Chemers, 1997). These negative perceptions not only affect the evaluation and perception of the women in a leadership role but, they may

also affect women's perception of themselves as leaders.

On the backdrop of the existing research findings on gender stereotypes and effective leadership, the present study attempts to answer the following research objectives:

- i. To find out differences if any, in the stereotypes held for effective male and female leaders, by male and female employees, and
- ii. To find out differences if any, in the stereotypes held for effective male and female leaders, by employees across varied gendered context, differentiated by assumed gender congeniality.

Sample

In order to meet the requirements of the above objectives, the sample organizations were drawn from varied organizational contexts, assumed to be gender congenial to either male or female leaders. From a total of 80 organizations, 40 organizations were selected that were assumed to be more gender congenial to male leaders (i.e. the corporate sector, and the law enforcement sector) and 40 organizations assumed to be more gender congenial to female leaders (i.e. the education sector, and the development sector). From each sector, 20 organizations located within Vadodara District were selected for the study.

From each of the sample organizations, five employees directly reporting to one single leader were selected as sample respondents for the study. Drawing 100 employees from each sector, the total sample size for the study was 400 employee respondents.

Measures

The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) by Sandra Bem, since its inception in 1974, remains the most popular and widely used measurement for gender roles. Past validation studies have resulted in mixed findings, revealing cultural differences to the extent, in which the BSRI is considered as a valid tool. While studies by Holt and Ellis (1998), Katsurada and Sugihara (1999); and Singh and Agrawal (2007) reported BSRI to be a valid measurement; studies by Ward

and Sethi (1986); and Zhang, Norvilitid and Jin (2001) do not consider it a valid measurement tool.

For the present study, in order to measure gender stereotypes prevalent at the workplace, items were selected from the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). The (BSRI), as constructed by Sandra Bem (1974) contains 60 items in form of traits; 20 masculine, 20 feminine, and 20 neutral items. For measurement of existing gender stereotypes of effective male and female leaders, the researchers selected 9 masculine traits, 9 feminine traits, and 12 neutral traits to prepare a random list of 30 adjectives. The traits were selected on the basis of ratings given by five experts, rating each of the 60 traits from the BSRI, on their appropriateness and salience as a feminine trait or masculine trait or neutral trait in the Indian context. Moreover, the researchers decided to keep more neutral adjectives, considering the changing and transitional nature of the societal values and perceptions. The Indian society in general and the organizational environment in specific are in a mode of transition from traditional patriarchy to a more liberal form because of globalization, increasing participation of women in the workforce and the fast growing economy. This change might get reflected in less gender-typed attribution to male

and female leaders, which in turn might show with more neutral attributions to female leaders.

In Table 1, two lists were presented: one for adjectives to describe an effective male leader and another to describe an effective female leader. From a total of 30 adjectives, the sample respondents were required to select five adjectives each, for describing effective male leaders and effective female leaders, respectively. The five selected adjectives were then rank-ordered in terms of their appropriateness in the tables given below.

Results and Discussion

The data was subjected to multiple set analyses to find out variations in attributions of effective male leaders and effective female leaders by male and female employees across various organizational sectors. Multiple Set Analyses is performed to select most frequently assigned attributes when there are multiple responses given to a particular question. Each employee respondent rated and rank ordered five attributes in descriptions of an effective male leader and an effective female leader. The data of 400 employee respondents was coded and subjected to the SPSS package, and multiple response analyses was carried out. This generated the frequency and percentage

Table 1: The modified adjective checklist used for the present study

MASCULINE	NEUTRAL	FEMININE
Independent (1)	Secretive (4)	Understanding (2)
Willing to take a stand (3)	Sincere (5)	Childlike (7)
Willing to take risks (8)	Unsystematic (6)	Warm (9)
Masculine (10)	Jealous (11)	Soft spoken (15)
Assertive (14)	Conscientious (12)	Loyal (16)
Analytical (17)	Conventional (13)	Yielding (20)
Aggressive (21)	Unpredictable (18)	Feminine (22)
Ambitious (24)	Truthful (19)	Cheerful (23)
Makes decisions easily (25)	Moody (26)	Does not use harsh language (27)
	Adaptable (28)	
	Conceited (29)	
	Reliable (30)	

Note. The number preceding each item reflects the position of each adjective as it actually appears on the Inventory.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of five most frequently chosen attributes to describe effective male and female leaders

Sr. No.	EFFECTIVE MALE LEADERS			EFFECTIVE FEMALE LEADERS		
	Attributes	Frequency	Percentage	Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Willing to take a stand (M)	196	9.8	Reliable (N)	150	7.5
2	Independent (M)	176	8.8	Loyal (F)	141	7.1
3	Understanding (F)	173	8.7	Ambitious (M)	140	7.0
4	Sincere (N)	150	7.5	Understanding (F)	139	7.0
5	Willing to take risks (M)	139	7.0	Adaptable (N)	120	6.0

(M) Masculine Attributes, (F) Feminine Attributes, (N) Neutral Attributes

of times each of the 30 attributes was chosen by the employee respondents from the attribute checklist. The five most frequently chosen attributes, as indicated by the highest frequency and percentage cases, were selected for result and discussion purposes.

Attributes of effective male and female leaders:

As seen in Table 2, the employee respondents have assigned more masculine attributes like willing to take a stand, independent, and willing to take risks, to describe an effective male leader. For centuries, leadership has been a male domain, and research on leadership has also been gendered. It is only since the past few decades, that upcoming research trends draw facts on differences and comparisons between male and female leaders. Studies in the past have supported the findings of the study where male leaders are more favorably evaluated when they engage in a structuring and directive style of leading (Bartol & Martin, 1986) and less favorably evaluated when they become more considerate (Bartol & Butterfield, 1976). Therefore, for a male to be evaluated as effective in his leadership role, he needs to engage in more structured leader behaviors and task-oriented leadership styles. In other words, an effective male leader has the pressure to perform in accordance to the prevailing gender stereotypes of an effective leader.

To describe an effective female leader, employee respondents have more frequently employed the masculine attribute of 'ambitious'; feminine attributes of 'loyal', and 'understanding'; and neutral attributes of 'reliable', and 'adaptable'.

Relying on the neutral traits for descriptions of an effective female leader implies that the image of a female leader is still unclear and is still in the process of getting fully formed. Female leaders in the past have been in a dilemma, for they were pressurized to fit into the stereotypical roles of leaders, which were highly masculine in nature; exhibition of more structuring behaviors lead them to be evaluated negatively but, exhibition of more of consideration behaviors, conflicted with the stereotypical expectations of effective leaders. Therefore, if and when female leaders engaged in consideration behaviors, they would be perceived as less effective in their leader role, and if and when they engaged in structuring behaviors, they were not well received. In an attempt to resolve the conflict, effective female leaders are described as displaying a combination of feminine, masculine and neutral attributes.

The employee respondents of the study, however, describe both effective male and female leaders as displaying the feminine attribute of 'understanding'. This is also revealed in study findings by Cann and Siegfried (1990) that effective leadership is possible when the leaders display both 'consideration' and 'structuring' behaviors. Understanding as an attribute is rated as third in descriptions of effective male leaders and rated fourth highest in descriptions of effective female leaders.

In assignment of attributes, we find major differences in patterns of attributions between effective male and female leaders. Where effective male leaders show highest attributions of masculine attributes of 'willing to take a stand'

and are 'independent', female effective leaders show highest attributions of neutral trait of being 'reliable' and the feminine trait of being 'loyal'. This contrast pattern of attribution indicates toward the disparate images of male and female leaders.

Attributes assigned to describe Effective Male and Female Leaders across different sectors:

In order to understand the perception of employee respondents about common attributes of effective male and female leaders in work contexts segregated on the basis of assumed gender congeniality, the highly ranked attributes (first five) for both male and female leaders are identified and compared. Differences are observed in the attributions held for female leaders, and not in the attributions held for male leaders.

Effective male leaders

Employees across organizational sectors, assumed to be gender congenial for male and female leaders, have uniformly and consistently described an effective male leader. Except the development sector, the other three sectors have chosen three masculine attributes out of five attributes to describe an effective male leader. According to the role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), male leaders are expected to display agentic traits and

possess characteristics such as: independent, decisiveness and risk-taking. Therefore, display of agentic traits represents both the prescriptive and the descriptive gender stereotypes. It is only in the development sector where a display of conscientious behavior is perceived as a measure of effectiveness of male leaders. Keeping gender of the leader aside, conscientiousness has been positively and significantly correlated with leadership effectiveness (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Silverthorne, 2001). An evolutionary perspective of personality states that psychological traits emerge and develop from mutation and selection. Individuals in leadership positions often display conscientiousness because "prudence, planning and diligence aid survival" (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). In the present study, specifically employees of the development sector consider conscientiousness as a prerequisite for male leaders to emerge as effective. Employees across all the four organizational sectors have also attributed an effective male leader as being 'understanding', a feminine attribute. Although, research evidence indicates that masculine gender roles are more consistent with structuring, and feminine gender roles are more consistent with consideration (Cann & Siegfried, 1990), the present study findings indicate that the prevailing gender stereotypes of effective leaders is gradually melting down. Along with masculine traits,

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of list of attributes selected by employee respondents across different organizations to describe an effective male and female leaders

Education Sector		Development Sector				Corporate Sector			Law Enforcement Sector						
Male Leaders	Female Leaders	Male Leaders	Female Leaders	Male Leaders	Female Leaders	Male Leaders	Female Leaders	Male Leaders	Female Leaders	Male Leaders	Female Leaders				
Attributes	%	Attributes	%	Attributes	%	Attributes	%	Attributes	%	Attributes	%				
Independent (M)	10.6	Understanding (F)	7.2	Willing to take a stand (M)	10.0	Reliable (N)	9.4	Sincere (N)	8.6	Understanding (F)	9.0	Willing to take a stand (M)	13.2	Reliable (N)	10.6
Willing to take a stand (M)	7.8	Independent (M)	6.8	Understanding (F)	8.6	Understanding (F)	8.4	Willing to take a stand (M)	8.2	Sincere (N)	6.4	Understanding (F)	11.8	Loyal (F)	10.2
Understanding (F)	7.6	Adaptable (N)	6.8	Independent (M)	8.2	Ambitious (M)	8.4	Independent (M)	7.8	Loyal (F)	6.2	Willing to take risks (M)	8.8	Ambitious (M)	8.4
Sincere (N)	6.8	Sincere (N)	6.6	Sincere (N)	6.8	Adaptable (N)	7.4	Willing to take risks (M)	7.0	Analytical (M)	5.8	Independent (M)	8.6	Trustful (N)	7.2
Willing to take risks (M)	6.2	Soft Spoken (F)	6.4	Conscientious (N)	6.2	Soft Spoken (F)	7.4	Understanding (F)	6.6	Reliable (N)	5.6	Sincere (N)	7.8	Makes decisions easily (M)	7.0

(M) Masculine Attributes, (F) Feminine Attributes, (N) Neutral Attributes

the feminine trait of 'understanding' is also considered as a chief predictor of effectiveness of male leaders. Therefore, we have moved beyond the stereotypical masculine descriptions of male leaders, and more toward an androgynous nature of male leadership.

Effective female leaders

Employees across the organizational sectors have differed in their attributions toward an effective female leader. However, the differences are not very vast. Employees of the three sectors of corporate, education and development have maintained a common pattern of attributing one masculine, two feminine and two neutral traits. Employees of the law enforcement sector differ from other sectors, as they chose two masculine attributes and only one feminine attribute to describe an effective female leader. In a workplace that is assumed to be more congenial to male leaders, female leaders may be effective as leaders not when they display communal traits but, when they display agentic traits. According to the role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), females in male dominated workplaces face the 'double-bind', where they are expected to behave in accordance to the masculine stereotypes of leadership but, at the same time, they are negatively evaluated for functioning in a manner that is incongruent to their social role. Also, Eagly and Johnson (1990) illustrated

the concept of 'organizational socialization', which states that men and women within the same organization are selected and subjected to similar environments, thereby reducing the gender differences of male and female leaders in the same type of organization. This implies that training within the law enforcement sector is such that it reduces the gender differences between the male and the female, where effective male and female leaders are relatively described more in masculine terms.

Attributes of effective male and female leaders by male and female employees

Both male and female employees do not differ in their stereotypical attributions toward effective male leaders. However, a difference is observed in their frequency of attributions. The five most frequently chosen attributes by male employees in the order of most frequently chosen to less frequently chosen are: willing to take a stand, understanding, independent, sincere, and willing to take risks; and attributions chosen by female employees are: willing to take a stand, independent, sincere, understanding and willing to take risks. For decades, men had gained prominence over the leadership positions, be it in the domestic setting, or the organizational setting. Imagining a man in leadership roles was easy as it was to imagine a man in a farmer's role or in a surgeon's role. As a

Table 4: Five most frequently chosen attributes of effective male and female leaders by male and female employees

Effective Male Leaders						Effective Female Leaders					
Male Employees			Female Employees			Male Employees			Female Employees		
Attributes	f	%	Attributes	F	%	Attributes	f	%	Attributes	f	%
Willing to take a stand(M)	139	10.0	Willing to take a stand (M)	57	9.3	Reliable (N)	111	8.0	Understanding (F)	53	8.6
Understanding (F)	130	9.4	Independent (M)	52	8.5	Loyal (F)	105	7.6	Ambitious (M)	46	7.5
Independent (M)	112	9.0	Sincere (N)	45	7.3	Ambitious (M)	94	6.8	Soft spoken (F)	44	7.2
Sincere (N)	105	7.6	Understanding (F)	43	7.0	Understanding (F)	86	6.2	Adaptable (N)	42	6.8
Willing to take risks(M)	100	7.2	Willing to take risks (M)	39	6.3	Adaptable (N)	78	5.6	Reliable (N)	39	6.3

(M) Masculine Attributes, (F) Feminine Attributes, (N) Neutral Attributes

result, stereotypical attributes of leadership roles came to be described more readily in masculine terms. Thus, we infer from the findings of the study that both male and female employees have a clear and definite picture of an effective male leader.

Male and female employees do not differ widely in their attribution patterns toward an effective female leader. In the order of most frequently chosen to less frequently chosen, attributes by male employees are reliable, loyal, ambitious, understanding, and adaptable; and attributes by female employees are understanding, ambitious, adaptable, soft spoken and reliable. The pattern of attributions is also similar, i.e. one masculine trait of being 'ambitious', two neutral traits of being reliable and adaptable, and one feminine trait of understanding. We observe a difference in selecting one feminine attribute; male employees have selected loyalty as an attribute and female employees have selected 'soft-spoken' to describe an effective female leader. This finding of the study is unique to the literature on gender stereotypes of female leaders. The findings indicate that male and female employees share a clear and specific image of an effective female leader. The expectations from an effective female leader by a male or a female employee are similar across organizations assumed to be differing in their gender congeniality.

Conclusion

In descriptions of effective leaders, more specifically for male leaders, there is an increased and repeated use of masculine traits. The feminine attribute of 'understanding' has a place for itself in descriptions of both male and female leaders. This finding indicates the gradual withdrawal from the stereotypical images of gendered leadership, and the trend of moving toward the androgynous nature of leadership. In observing the descriptions of male and female leaders across gendered context, male leaders have been uniformly and consistently perceived by employees across the organizational sectors. In contrast, variations have been observed in attributions toward effective female leaders across organizational

sectors. The paper concludes that gender congeniality of workplaces may have an effect on the conceptualization of effective female leaders. Although, the leadership research has repeatedly asserted the 'male advantage' in descriptions and experiences of male leaders, the 'female advantage' is slowly gaining momentum and will soon swan itself across the leadership terrain in the coming decades.

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