

The Effect of Gender on Leadership and Its Sub Variables in the Indian Service Sector

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Abstract

Numerous researches have been conducted and published which explore the link between leadership and gender. Still, there is a paucity of such research in the Indian context. The present study empirically examines the relation of leadership and its sub variables namely administrative skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills with gender in the Indian service sector. A total sample of 424 employees across nine different industries was studied with the help of leadership skills questionnaire by Peter .G. Northouse (2012). The results revealed statistical significant relationship ($p < .05$) between leadership and gender. The female employees were found to be more effective leaders as compared to males. The study also support the notion that diversity management practices much be given due concern in the organizations and discrimination on the grounds of gender must be curtailed.

Introduction

The business world is very dynamic and competitive in nature. The changes can be noticed in any of the domains of the business like technology, services, business legislations, demography of the working population etc. and these all imply that in order to achieve effective organizational outcome, change must be incorporated in the employees of the organization. Leadership proves to be of immense help as Kotter (1996) defines it as all about coping with change. The demand for effective leaders is growing at an accelerated pace with businesses and technology becoming increasingly advanced and competitive.

Hogan et al. (1994) were of the opinion that a leader is instrumental in impacting an organization's bottom line which improves the quality of the services and the profitability of the business. Chemers (1997) defined leadership as "A process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the

accomplishment of a common task". A wide variety of approaches to leadership has also been proposed by different researchers.

Stogdill (1974) quoted that there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define its concept. Many questions have been raised which try to inquire the reason behind some people emerging as leaders while not others Yukl (1998). Leadership has a wide range of interpretations encompassing human life. It can be perceived as an emotion-laden phenomenon, with emotions entwining with the social influence process (George, 2000). Most often, leaders are understood as people who are able to turn their beliefs and visions into reality, through the control and influence they exercise over other people (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). With more and more female employees joining the workforce, the organizations are focusing towards the differentiating aspects of male and female employees. The mediating role of gender on

leadership is one such crucial area which is constantly being researched in the business world as the organizations are of late realizing the enormous benefits of a workforce operating with both men and women. The area of leadership is evolving continuously and with organizations adhering to diversity management practices, the studies have gained further momentum. The purpose of the present study is to find out the observable differences in the leadership capabilities of both the genders and how it can be beneficial for the economy of the country.

Leadership and gender

Gender can be understood as a construct which enables men and women to conduct themselves in a characteristic style and help them understand what role to play in the family and society. Researchers have constantly studied the effect of gender on various organizational behaviors. As previously male employees were predominant ones in the workforce, hence their leadership styles were considered as standard. Hennig and Jardim (1977) proposed that if women employees want to succeed, they are required to learn to act more like their male counterparts which would help them succeed in organizational leadership. Kanter (1977) studied the settings in which women were trying to succeed, and found that women lack success not because of gender differences but merely on the grounds of distribution of opportunity and power. Carroll (2006) concluded that men are perceived as better and more effective leaders than women. Whereas Kouzes and Posner (1999) in their research concluded that there is no significant difference in the leadership styles of both the genders. Similarly, Andersen and Hansson (2011) in their study concluded that the only difference found between the two genders lies in their decision making capabilities and that too not significant. Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation. Komives (1991) was of the opinion that male and female leaders do

not have any difference in their transformational leadership qualities. Kent et al. (2010) too found out that male and female leaders behave in the similar manners. Book (2000) was of the opinion that transformational leadership style comprises of relationship-oriented behaviors in which female managers are more superior to male managers. Williams (2012) reported that in modern organizations, female leaders have an advantage. The leadership of modern organizations needs to be based on team work, effective interpersonal relationship and should be non coercive in nature and these are the styles mastered by women leaders (Colwill and Townsend, 1991). Bass et al. (1996) conducted a study of fortune 5000 firms and showed that female leaders were rated higher than their male counterparts on all transformational leader dimensions by their subordinates.

After reviewing the literature, the authors were convinced that there is some link between leadership and gender. The present study has been undertaken to explore the relation between leadership along with its sub variables (Administrative skills, Interpersonal skills and conceptual skills) and gender in Indian service organizations. Therefore, we hypothesize as under:

H₀1: There is a significant relationship between leadership and gender for the employees of the service sector in India.

H₀2a: There is a significant relationship between administrative skills and gender for the employees of the services sector in India.

H₀2b: There is a significant relationship between interpersonal skills and gender for the employees of the services sector in India.

H₀2c : There is a significant relationship between conceptual skills and gender for the employees of the services sector in India

Methodology

The present study has chosen a sample of 424 employees working in Indian service sector. The reason for choosing this sector for study was its growing contribution to the GDP. In the post independence era (1950), services sector was contributing only 15% to the overall Indian GDP which became 56.8% in the year 2010-11. For the year 2014-15 the projections show the value to reach beyond 60%. Owing to the time and cost limitation, nine industries from the services sector were chosen as per the ministry of Statistics and programme implementation. The industries were tourism, IT/ITeS, Real estate, health, education, media, retail, banking and hospitality. Disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was used. The study was conducted for an overall period of 19 months. The overall sample distribution is demonstrated as below in table 1.

Table 1: Sample distribution of the study

Gender	Male (246*)	Female (178)							
Age	20-30 (146)	31-40 (133)	41-50 (48)	51-60 (97)					
Education Qualification	Technical (202)	Non technical (222)							
Work experience	0-5 (103)	6-10 (126)	11-15 (83)	16-20 (74)	20 and above (38)				
Management level	Lower (137)	Middle (184)	Upper (103)						
Industry	Tourism (37)	IT/ITeS (65)	Real estate (40)	Health (43)	Education (41)	Media (59)	Retail (40)	Banking (65)	Hospit ality (34)
Geographical region	East (159)	West (86)	North (93)	South (86)					

*The figures in parentheses indicate the number of participants

Tool

The tool identified to measure leadership was leadership skills questionnaire developed by Northouse (2012) of the Western Michigan University. The leadership skills questionnaire comprises of 18 questions and is designed to measure three broad types of leadership skills: administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual. The response to the items are to be made on a 5 point likert scale where 1=Not true and 5=very true. The

participants were asked to respond to an online self administered questionnaire which comprised of their demographic profiling and the leadership skills questionnaire. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the leadership skills questionnaire was found to be 0.789. (Nunnally, 1978) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient which proved that the tool was reliable enough for the study to be carried ahead.

Analysis

The data analysis was done using SPSS 21.0 version. The normality of the data was checked so as to determine whether parametric or non parametric tests would be suited for the study. According to (Kim,2013) for sample sizes which are more than 300 the absolute skew value larger than 2 or an absolute kurtosis value larger than 7 are used as the reference values for determining non normality of the data. The skewness value for all the 18 items of the leadership scale were found to lie in the range of -.588 and -1.919 while the kurtosis value lied in the range of -.125 and 3.997 (Table 2). Since, the values were in the specified range, parametric test such as independent t test was used to test the observable differences in the leadership skills of both the genders.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Questions

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Q1	424	4.56	.627	-1.417	.119	2.151	.237
Q2	424	3.97	.727	-.803	.119	1.730	.237
Q3	424	4.38	.659	-.693	.119	-.125	.237
Q4	424	4.10	.666	-.548	.119	.820	.237
Q5	424	4.47	.680	-1.180	.119	1.186	.237
Q6	424	4.22	.889	-.748	.119	-.508	.237
Q7	424	4.36	.680	-.912	.119	.888	.237
Q8	424	4.31	.678	-.699	.119	.303	.237
Q9	424	4.17	.864	-.777	.119	.009	.237
Q10	424	4.67	.619	-1.919	.119	3.399	.237
Q11	424	4.43	.772	-1.654	.119	3.541	.237
Q12	424	4.53	.724	-1.790	.119	3.997	.237
Q13	424	4.04	.897	-.790	.119	.328	.237
Q14	424	4.32	.663	-.948	.119	1.984	.237
Q15	424	4.29	.793	-.800	.119	-.258	.237
Q16	424	4.25	.698	-.558	.119	-.179	.237
Q17	424	4.43	.753	-1.366	.119	1.659	.237
Q18	424	4.23	.979	-1.312	.119	1.292	.237
Valid N (List wise)	424						

Results

Leadership and gender:

Hypothesis 1 suggested that there is a significant relationship between gender and leadership for the employees of the service sector in India. To test the hypothesis we conducted an independent t test. The results thus obtained are shown in table 3a and 3b.

Table 3 a: Descriptive statistics for male female employees

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Leadership	Male	246	76.07	6.589	.420
	Female	178	80.02	7.551	.566

Table 3b :Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Leadership	Equal variances assumed	7.349	.007	-5.724	422	.000	-3.948	.690	-5.303	-2.592
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.601	349.194	.000	-3.948	.705	-5.334	-2.562

The sig (2tailed) value $<.05$, hence we accept the hypothesis, H_01 and conclude that there is significant relation between gender and leadership for the employees of the service sector in India and female employees are better leaders with a mean score of 80.02 as compared to male employees who have the mean leadership score as 76.07.

Administrative skills and gender:

One of the sub variables of leadership in the present study was Administrative skills. Hypothesis, H_02a suggested that there is a significant relationship between gender and administrative skills for the employees of the services sector in India. In order to test the hypothesis, we conducted an independent t test. The result thus obtained for administrative leadership skills with respect to gender are illustrated in table 4a and 4b.

Table 4 a :Descriptive Statistics for administrative skills

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Administrative skill	Male	246	25.21	2.232	.142
	Female	178	27.04	2.774	.208

Table 4 b:Independent Samples Test for administrative skills

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Administrative skill	Equal variance assumed	7.708	.006	-7.532	422	.000	-1.834	.243	-2.312	-1.355
	Equal variance not assumed			-7.278	329.523	.000	-1.834	.252	-2.329	-1.338

The results thus obtained after analysis revealed that there is a significant relation (sig 2 tailed $<.05$) between gender and administrative skills for the employees of service sector in India. The female employees scored more (Mean=27.04) than the male employees (Mean=25.21). Thus we accept hypothesis, H_02a .

Interpersonal skills and gender:

The other sub variable of leadership in the present study was Interpersonal skills. Hypothesis, H_02b suggested that there is a significant relationship between gender and interpersonal skills for the employees of the services sector in India. In order to test the hypothesis, we conducted an independent t test. The results thus obtained are illustrated in table 5a.

Table 5a: Independent Samples Test for interpersonal skills

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Interpersonal skill	Equal variances assumed	3.918	.048	-3.115	422	.002	-.856	.275	-1.397	-.316
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.088	369.312	.002	-.856	.277	-1.402	-.311

The results thus obtained after analysis revealed that there is a significant relation (sig 2 tailed $<.05$)

between gender and interpersonal skills for the employees of service sector in India. The female employees scoring more (Mean=26.42) than the male employees (Mean=25.57). Thus, we accept hypothesis, H_02b .

Conceptual skills and gender:

Hypothesis, H_02c suggested that there is a significant relationship between gender and conceptual skills for the employees of the services sector in India. In order to test the hypothesis, we conducted an independent t test. The results thus obtained are illustrated in table 6a and 6b.

Table 6 a :Descriptive Statistics for conceptual skills

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Conceptual skill	Male	246	25.29	2.594	.165
	Female	178	26.55	2.708	.203

Table 6b:Independent Samples Test for conceptual skills

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std. Error Diff	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Conceptual skill	Equal variances assumed	.207	.649	-4.837	422	.000	-1.258	.260	-1.769	-.747
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.804	371.709	.000	-1.258	.262	-1.773	-.743

The results thus obtained after analysis revealed that there is a significant relation (sig 2 tailed < .05) between gender and conceptual skills for the employees of service sector in India with the female employees scoring more (Mean=26.55) than the male employees (Mean=25.29). Thus, we accept hypothesis, H_02c .

From the results thus obtained, we found that the sig (2tailed) value <.05 for all the three sub variables of leadership namely administrative skill, interpersonal skill and conceptual skill. Thus, we conclude that there exists a significant relationship between gender and the sub variables of leadership for the employees of the services sector in India.

The results also show that the female employees score more on all the three sub variables of leadership as compared to the male employees.

Discussions

The purpose of the study was to bring out observable difference in the leadership skills of male and female managers. It was hypothesized that there is a significant effect of gender on the leadership skills and its sub variables of the employees of the service sector in India. The results indicated that significant differences do exist between male and female employees of the Indian service sector when they are compared for leadership and its sub variables. It was found that females are better leaders as compared to males. The results are consistent with the findings of Petrides and Furham (2000), who found out that women's leadership is more effective. The study conducted by Chow (2005) also supports the findings of the study by stating that females project a more favorable image of leaders as compared to their male counterparts. The results of the study are also similar to the results of Antonaros (2010) who conducted a study on leaders in higher education field and postulated that females are slightly more likely to be perceived as effective leaders. Elmuti et al. (2009) concluded that women are perceived by most men and women as more sensitive and encouraging leaders than men and their conclusion is similar to the conclusion of this study.

Conclusion

Practical research and scholarly reviews prove that gender has a moderating effect on leadership and its sub variables in the Indian service sector. The results obtained encourage us to conclude that females are better leaders as compared to men. The study would further contribute towards shattering the "glass ceiling" which is defined as the barrier faced by women who attempt, or aspire, to attain senior positions in organizations (Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986). It would also encourage the mentoring and leadership development of women

employees as they would be looked upon by their organizations as effective potential leaders. On the other hand, society and organizations can take a cue from the study and work towards encouraging the practice of gender diversity and diminishing gender stereotyping for the growth and development of women, society and the economy.

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