



**GENDER AND LEADERSHIP STYLES: A  
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The existing body of literature presents evidence that impact of gender differences on leadership styles is still inconclusive, yet it is clear that gender differences in leadership styles have not vanished. Variations in leadership styles are due to the stereotypes associated with the genders and also because people have different beliefs and assumptions about characteristics that are deemed effective for leadership. It is argued that gender differences in leadership styles are largely a consequence of the context in which male and female leaders work. Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to examine whether leadership styles vary as per genders, and accordingly proposes a gender-leadership-performance (GLP) model. It is designed in such a way that it maps in detail the perspectives of both the genders vis a vis leadership styles with reference to the subordinates' genders and the effect thereby on organizational performance. Apart from this the paper also presents an overview of gender differences in leadership style.*



## **I. INTRODUCTION**

With the huge influx of women into the workforce, there has emerged an increasing interest in study of the gender differences in various aspects of human and managerial functioning. Generally, men and women have always been viewed as different and unique sets of people, be it the way they communicate, influence, or lead. However, according to Adler and Izraeli [1988], there are two contrasting views regarding women in management- the equity view, which assumes similarity between male and female contributions and strives to provide equal access and identical norms for men and women and the complementary-contribution view, which on the other hand, assumes differences between male and female contributions and strives to recognize the value of these differences. The recognized differences have implications for differences in communication styles, influence tactics and leadership styles. The research of Eagly [1987] suggests that two types of qualities are valuable to study the gender difference: Communal and Agentic. As per this view the communal dimension represents a concern with the welfare of other people and includes nurturance, affection, ability to devote self to others, eagerness to soothe hurt feelings, helpfulness, sympathy, awareness of the feelings of others, and emotional expressiveness. Various studies have demonstrated that, in general, females are more often characterized by communal qualities (Rosner 1990). Whereas the Agentic dimension of behavior is primarily an assertive, goal directed, and controlling tendency and includes qualities like aggressiveness, ambition, dominance, independence, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, directness, and decisiveness [Eagly 1987]. Various studies have demonstrated that, in general, males are more often characterized by agentic qualities (Rosner 1990). Accordingly these qualities are expected to influence the leadership style preferred by the male and female managers. Men in leadership employ more strict and threatening styles of leadership. (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam 2003). They adopt a top-down style in general which is the command and control style. Female leaders, in contrast, are seen to adopt a more democratic and participative style than their male counterparts.



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Conversely some literaturesupports that there exists no assessable differences in leadership styles between genders, but the fact remains that leadership styles are highly situationaland role linked. In line with this, contingency theories make out that there exists no best style of leadership, but ratherleader effectiveness is dependentupon the interaction of leader, behavior and the situation (Riggio, 2008). Thereby, indicating that gender differences do not exist in leadership styles given equivalent situation and positions of power. Powell (1990) argues that, when looking at studies as a whole both genders use equal amounts of task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors and as such theleadership differences between men and women are insignificant because they are cancelled out. Researchers,in general, are of the opinion that when both male and females take up equalandtop roles in their organizations they would closely display similar styles as they confine to the guidelines of their positions rather than behaving stereotypically. Against this backdrop this paper proposes a framework to develop an understanding of gender differences in leadership styles in relation to gender of subordinates and its impact ontheorganizational performance, apart from presenting a review of relevant literature.

## **II. REVIEW LITERATURE**

A voluminous amount of leadership literature argues that men and women do differ in their leadership styles or abilities. Men and women are different and unique sets of people. The differences between men and women are evident in their communication style, influence tactics and leadership style. Men and women differ psychologically in the way they act, from the style in which they communicate to the way in which they attempt to influence others. These gender differences in communication and influence tactics have implications for gender differences across leadership styles of men and women. Most researchers agree that gender differences in leadership styles do exist and that men often use a more task-oriented approach, while women, on average, rely on leadership style heavily based on quality of interpersonal leader-follower relationships (Eagly& Johnson, 1990; Gray, 1992; Eagly, 1987; Eagly&Karau, 2002). While



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women strive to be more social in their interactions with others, men value their independence (Chodorow, 1978, Eagly, 1987; Grilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976). These gender differences across communication styles and influence tactics help explain why gender differences in leadership styles exist. Researchers have found that women tend to emerge as transformational leaders while men are likely to use a transactional leadership approach (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Rosener, 1990). While men use a task-oriented leadership approach, women are much more concerned with the bonds they have with their followers. This relationship-oriented style is characterized by democratic and participative leadership characteristics (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). So much of the research supports the fact that difference does exist and male and female use different styles of leadership.

Contrary to the findings in the previous section, literature also shows that there are no assessable differences in leadership styles between genders, but the fact that leadership styles in their roles are highly situational. Contingency theories recognize that there is no best style of leadership, but rather leader effectiveness depends on the interaction of leader behavior and the situation (Riggio, 2008). Kanter (1977) argues that organizational roles override gender roles when it comes to management or leadership positions. He brings forward that genders in same leadership roles do not differ much in their approaches, because leaders at these roles are more concerned about managing effectively than about representing differentiated features of societal gender roles (Kanter, 1977). Kanter (1977) also argues that managers irrespective of their genders behave merely less stereotypic when they occupy the same leadership position. Thus, men and women in equivalent positions of power behave similarly, suggesting no gender differences in leadership styles (Kanter, 1977). Male and female leaders exhibit similar amounts of task-oriented and people-oriented behavior regardless of the type of study (Powell, 1990). Here, Powell (1990) argues that overall, leadership differences between men and women are insignificant because they are cancelled out when looking at studies as a whole as both genders use equal amounts of task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors. So, some of the research on gender differences



in leadership styles has come to the conclusion that there are no quantifiable differences between men and women in leadership roles, but rather that leadership roles are just extremely situational.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology applied is based on documentary study review and analysis of the concepts used in the literature. This paper is conceptual based on extensive review of literature from sources like journals, books, prior reports and internet to understand the relationship between the constructs and research variable. The understanding based on valid inferences have been developed to frame a model to understand the dynamics of relationship between gender, leadership styles and organization performance. The proposed framework will prove to be of great significance for future research and managerial use. However, this research needs to be followed by some case studies and explanatory studies to establish the proposed relationships empirically. The conceptual model developed thus is presented in the next section.

### **IV. LINKING LEADERSHIP STYLES, GENDER AND FIRM PERFORMANCE: FRAMEWORK**

The literature about the gender differences in leadership style is varied. It does not establish conclusive terms any specific relationship between leadership styles and gender of both leaders and subordinate. Literature although limited supports the relationship between leadership and firm performance, but needs to be revisited and studied in detail keeping in view its increasing importance in today's gender and culturally diversified work force. This has additionally gained more essence in view of changed business environment and new business models like Resource Based View of Firm, Balance Score Card, and Triple Bottom Line which consider human resource as key source of competitive advantage. As such, the proposed framework presented in fig. 1 focuses on the relationship between leadership styles and firm performance with the moderating effect of gender of leaders and subordinates. The framework is



for conceptual understanding and it permits to highlight specific connections between these issues and the implication of linking gender, leadership and firm performance. Here the intention is to focus on the major components of Figure 1 that show how leadership can be leveraged via gender to augment the firm performance.

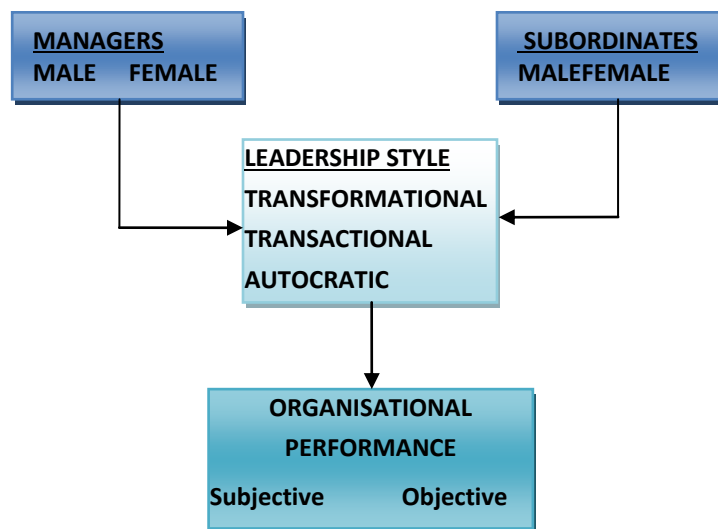


Figure: 1- Framework for Analysis of Leadership Gender Performance

## Leadership Styles

From the available literature it is evident that the most commonly studied leadership styles are autocratic, transformational and transactional leadership styles. Autocratic leadership style is task oriented, more convincing and manipulator being efficient to communicate a clear vision and conceive strategic objectives. Transformational leaders transform the values, needs and the aspirations of the subordinates and help them to perform beyond expectations (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Transactional leadership style is associated with transaction between leader and follower and is based on reward of the subordinates' work (Burns 1978). The leadership styles chosen for





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the study are transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style and autocratic leadership style.

The concept of transforming leadership was first introduced by Burns (1978). He established two concepts: transforming leadership and transactional leadership. According to Burns (1978), transforming leadership is a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance a higher level of morale and motivation. On the other hand, the transactional approach is based on a give and take relationship. Transactional leaders usually do not strive for change in the organization but they work in the existing culture. Another researcher, Bass (1985), extended the work of Burns (1978) and used the term “transformational” instead of “transforming”. Bass (1985) added to the initial concepts of Burns (1978). According to Bass (1985) the transformational leaders offer followers something more than just working for self achievement; they provide followers with an inspiring mission and vision. The followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader and because of the qualities of the transformational leader are willing to work harder than originally expected (Bass, 1985). In transactional leadership, leader-follower relationships are based on a series of exchanges between leaders and followers; these leaders can be effective to the extent that they clarify expectations and goals, but they generally neglect to focus on developing the long-term potential of followers (Bass, 1985).

Later, Bass & Avolio (1990) developed a Full Range Leadership Model. Bass & Avolio (1990) identified the components of transformational and transactional leadership which they termed as Full Range Leadership Model. A basic assertion of this Full Range Leadership Model is that transactional and transformational leadership are not opposite ends of a continuum. The same leader can display each of the full range of behaviours or styles. Thus, transformational leadership does not replace transactional leadership but adds to it by encouraging followers to put in the extra effort, and the Full Range Leadership Model constitute components from both the transformational and the transactional leadership models. While idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual considerations are included from the



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transformational leadership style, theContingent Reward, Management-by- Exception-(Active) and Management-by-Exception-(Passive) are included fromthe transactional leadership style, which are presented table 1 and 2.

**TABLE 1**

<b>Autocratic leadership style</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impulsive</li> <li>Impatient</li> <li>Overconfident</li> <li>Aggressive</li> <li>Action-oriented</li> <li>Direct supervision</li> <li>One-way downward communication</li> </ul>
<b>Transactional leadership style</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectations and reward</li> <li>Control and corrective action</li> <li>Relies on human relations</li> <li>Short or medium term goals</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2**

<b>Transformational Leadership style</b>	<b>Leadership Behaviors</b>
<b>Idealized Behaviors:</b> living one's ideals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk about their most important values and beliefs</li> <li>Specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose</li> <li>Consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions</li> <li>Champion exciting new possibilities</li> <li>Talk about the importance of trusting each other</li> </ul>
<b>Inspirational Motivation:</b> inspiring others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk optimistically about the future</li> <li>Talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished</li> <li>Articulate a compelling vision of the future</li> <li>Express confidence that goals will be achieved</li> <li>Provide an exciting image of what is essential to consider</li> <li>Take a stand on controversial issues</li> </ul>





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<b>Intellectual Stimulation:</b> stimulating others	Re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate Seek differing perspectives when solving problems Get others to look at problems from many different angles Suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments Encourage non-traditional thinking to deal with traditional problems Encourage rethinking those ideas which have never been questioned before
<b>Individualized Consideration:</b> coaching and development	Spend time teaching and coaching Treat others as individuals rather than just as members of the group Consider individuals as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others Help others to develop their strengths Listen attentively to others' concerns Promote self development

Transformational Leadership Styles and Behaviours (Bass and Avolio, 1994)

### **Leadership and Organizational Performance**

Leaders play an important role in the attainment of organizational goals by creating a climate that would influence employees' attitudes, motivation, and behavior. Since the organisational performance is a blend of financial and non-financial measures, leadership is directly or indirectly linked to these measures. For many years the researchers made attempts to know whether leadership influences the organisational performance. It was evident in most of the studies that leaders do influence the overall organizational performance. Researchers then approached the study of leadership assuming that leaders contributed significantly to organizational effectiveness. Consequently the researchers focused on such issues as identifying the trait or characteristic of leader, the appropriate style or behavior of leadership or the development of specific leadership skills effective for the success of an organisation. Since the Second World War, research emphasis shifted from a search for personality traits to a search for behavior that makes a difference in the performance or satisfaction of the followers (David and Stanley, 1966). David and Stanley (1996) generated a network of variables for



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predicting outcomes of organizational effectiveness. The measures identified were: Satisfaction with the company, satisfaction with the job, satisfaction with the income, satisfaction with the manager, business growth, business volume and business costs. Their study indicated that supportive managers lead to greater satisfaction of employees with the company; satisfaction with the job and the company are associated with lower business costs, which in turn affects the overall organisational performance. David and Stanley (1966) claim employees are satisfied with their managers if they are supportive and knowledgeable. Various other researchers also support the fact that employees are satisfied with the supportive managers.

**V. GENDER LEADERSHIP GRID**

From the model, proposed in the study, Gender Leadership Grid is developed which depicts four types of relationships vis-à-vis gender of leaders and gender of subordinates, shown in figure 2.

1. Male managers with male subordinates
2. Male managers with female subordinates
3. Female managers with male subordinates
4. Female managers with female subordinates

		SUBORDINATES	
		MALE	FEMALE
MANAGERS	MALE	1	2
	FEMALE	3	4

Figure 2: Leadership Gender Grid



As per fig 2. Four types of leadership behaviours can develop as per the type of leader employee relationships based on gender. It is proposed that for effective results managers should customize or modify their behavior as per the gender characteristics of subordinates. It is evident from the grid that cell 1 and 4 have homogeneity of gender and can use any type leadership style freely as leader as well as follower can understand each others emotions, feeling and logic easily. They can also express and understand each other easily. However, cell 2 and 3 of the matrix presents the challenge for leaders in general which becomes more challenging across cultures particularly in conservative cultures or diversified work force cultures. If a harmonious relation is developed between managers and subordinates productivity, organizational commitment, sense of belongingness and innovativeness increases which all lead to enhancement in organizational competitiveness and above average performance. This lends competitive advantage to the organization which by nature is inimitable and thus can be sustained over a long period of time.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

The literature implies that gender does not make any one a better leader. Men are not better leaders than women neither vice versa. They just have different skills due to their psychological and biological differences. These differences have implications on how they think, work and the way they lead. Men may succeed at some level and women at the other. In this context the paper provides the model which can help to study the leadership styles vis-à-vis gender of managers and gender of subordinates and the effect thereby on organizational performance. The model can be applied to get empirical evidence as to which leadership style is more effective in relation to organisational success. It can also be applied to compare the achievements of male managers and female managers with respect to their male and female subordinates. This can be helpful for selecting the right person for right place in order to get the improved outcomes. The available



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literature also presents a diversified view. While some suggest that men and women practice the same leadership skills and techniques, others are of the opinion that men and women use completely different leadership styles. Researches who support gender differences in leadership styles suggest that because men and women differ psychologically and the way they communicate and influence, it is obvious to assume that they will differ in their leadership styles as well. Men tend to use task-oriented leadership styles while women generally use relationship-oriented leadership styles. Contrary to this, some researchers who oppose this argument say that that leadership styles are highly situational and organizational roles override gender roles when it comes to management or leadership positions. In this context, the paper presents a model, which is designed in a way that it gives a detailed perspective of the leadership styles preferred by both the genders with reference to the gender of subordinates and which can be implemented to get the empirical evidence in the said context. The model has also added one additional aspect i.e. organizational performance, which is dependent on the leadership styles preferred by both the genders. The model also provides an opportunity for researchers and scholars to empirically verify it across different cultures and industries.

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