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WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Mira Stankevikj Shumanska

*Faculty of Design and Technology of Furniture and Interior -Skopje,
Republic of North Macedonia,
e-mail: stankevik@fdtme.ukim.edu.mk*

ABSTRACT

In recent years, we have witnessed continuous progress in the representation of women leaders, which progress is happening thanks to ongoing efforts to promote gender equality in the workplace. The percentage of male and female leaders is still far from equal, but more and more women are leading the domestic economy and managing small and medium-sized companies.

This paper shows the need and efficiency of women's ability, organisation, and their management, as well as the extent to which employees and the environment accept women as leaders, in our country and in the world.

Keywords: leadership, women, characteristics, organisational culture, efficiency

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the achievement of a goal by directing personal influence exerted by a certain person on other people. All this is done through the process of communication, with the intention of achieving the set goals.

Possessing the good characteristics with which they stand out and which are particularly significant in the process of cooperation and influence on others, we can say that the role of women as a leader has a special meaning and benefit in management. It is believed that being a woman does not affect the ability to perform certain tasks. It's just one feature, just like the rest, and that's another reason why it shouldn't be highlighted. The commitment, education, and power of mind are the best aspects of a leader, regardless of whether he is a female or a male.

Given the interest in this topic, the paper presents a review of the literature on the impact of female leadership on the operations of the companies themselves, especially in furniture production. The subject of research is female leadership, with an emphasis on its efficiency, female characteristics and abilities in management, as well as the importance and benefits of its implementation in the management structures of enterprises.

The main goal of the paper is to highlight the importance of leadership directed by women, as well as its efficiency and the skill of women in achieving a new, distinctive, positive, and very significant work environment.

2. REVIEW OF LEADERSHIP WITH AN EMPHASIS ON FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a broad concept, and therefore there are various theories and styles of leadership. This term has been defined in many ways and by many authors. One definition is according to Tanenbaum,

Weschler, and Masaryk: Leadership is defined as interpersonal influence that is implemented and directed in a certain situation through the communication process, with the intention of achieving certain goals. (Tannenbaum, R., Shmit, W. H., 1973)

Women's leadership represents only one part of the broad concept called leadership. Just as a broad concept, leadership should not be distinguished at all from the aspect of the gender that practices it.

Different stereotypes of female and male characteristics and roles in society still exist and are felt. However, everyone has their own individual characteristics and strengths, and therefore stereotypes should be avoided. By emphasising men as more effective in working life, important and valuable characteristics possessed by women remain undervalued. Stereotyped attitudes slow change and can act as a major barrier when it comes to women's career opportunities. (Sherman, W. H., 2005)

There are certain characteristics of leadership that are described as feminine characteristics and masculine characteristics. Some of the characteristics often found in male leaders are competitiveness, focus, goal orientation, inventiveness, and a desire to be the best. Female leadership characteristics include social skills and social interaction, conversational communication style, acceptance of differences, being multi-skilled and working well in groups, and, of course, they are excellent at managing multiple responsibilities at the same time. (O'Neil, D. A., Hopkins, M. M. & Bilimoria, D., 2015) These characteristics do not imply the gender of the leader, but rather they only represent the different kinds of leadership behaviour that can be applied by both women and men.

Female leaders possess the emotional intelligence that is necessary to motivate others. They also use the special collective talents of the group to achieve the goals. The modern woman who is a leader supports a culture where women are empowered, and also modern women-leaders create an environment where the right to choose reigns. Women leaders' natural tendency to inspire and build relationships is the foundation upon which they create meaningful change and impactful results.

2.1 Characteristics of the female way of leadership

The following are considered as one of the main characteristics of the female way of leadership: (Heim P, Golant, S.K., 1993)

- knowing one's own employees is an important characteristic of women who are leaders, and it helps all managers to do their jobs. A good knowledge of one's own employees is considered as the basis for the success of today's organisations. Namely, it is very important to recognise within the organisation what the person is like and how he cooperates with others so that a leadership style can be applied that will make the most of the organisation;
- participation is the foundation of interactive leadership. Women with their strong empathetic characteristics encourage employees at all levels to participate in all parts of the business, from setting goals and designing strategies to defining tactics and executing tasks;
- the female leadership style is also characterised by highly developed skills;
- the sharing of power and information is characteristic of the so-called feminine leadership style. Female leaders share information and make decisions, giving positive feedback, which helps employees grow;
- encouraging the self-confidence of employees is another characteristic of female leadership, especially motivating other women to be self-confident, to upgrade their knowledge, and to give their best in every work task;
- cultivating enthusiasm and job satisfaction among employees is another very important aspect of female interactive leadership. More specifically, people perform better if they feel good about themselves and are satisfied with their work;
- teamwork is a hallmark of women leaders. Managers who use the so-called female leadership style feel best when they are part of a community, when they interact with others in order to achieve better results.

2.2 The role of the woman-leader

Women are taking more prominent roles in their workplaces. It is due to the fact that women prove their ability to manage successful projects, are determined to achieve the desired goal, and their successful management affects the growth of companies, or rather they inspire financial success.

Female leaders are characterised by professionalism and leadership qualities that create impressive results in a company. The presence of such women in the workplace often complements the company's values, and it is their leadership abilities that create space for more women to prove themselves in the workplace. The women bring a strong work ethic and motivate the team. They function as role models for their subordinates. They inspire their team and spend a lot of time with them to train them. Female leaders always emphasise teamwork and communication as the key to success while also taking great care of their personal development. (Kotterman, J., 2006)

Another remarkable trait is that as women, intuitiveness is a very strong point of theirs. It is the role that depends on the need of a company to raise itself to a higher level. (Madsen, S., 2008)

Another role of women leaders is the possibility of managing multiple responsibilities at the same time, which it has been proven that they do better and more organised than men. There is no doubt that women also have a desire for competitiveness and are able to create a suitable working environment where they can implement strategies in the organisational culture, with the aim of achieving quality results.

As managers, they can recognise areas that need focus and are excellent at paying attention to detail. With that, they leave almost no space for mistakes and at the same time direct the attention of employees, which is a key factor for quality work in an organisation.

One of the most important roles in leadership is the possibility of quality analysis of business activity and predicting risk factors involved in certain business activities. The possibility of a woman to direct activities, that is, to mix all leadership styles as a motivator, a leader who satisfies, and an innovator, is a role that can contribute to a quality organisational culture and atmosphere in a company. (Wolverton, M., Bower, B. L. & Hyle, A., 2008)

For the growth and development of the company, the business needs to recognise how to recruit women leaders to fulfil the company's goals.

3. CHRONOLOGY OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Globally, women's presence appeared in industry from the thirteenth century in a non-dominant way, but it was not until the eighteenth century that they began to do some basic jobs as spinners and weavers, although they received very small and precarious wages. For centuries, certain organisations defended the position of absent women's participation in the world of work, whose only purpose in life was reduced to family care, and it was considered that the man, as the head of the household, was the one who provided for the family.

If we were to go back to a not-so-long-ago chronology of events, we can say that the inclusion of women in the labour market began already in the twentieth century. It represented a significant transformation, breaking down the old limiting structures for the inclusion of women in a society dominated by a male perspective of professional development.

At the beginning of this century, International Women's Day began to be celebrated for the first time. As a result of the transformations in the economic, political, and social conditions in the world in the twentieth century, the figure of the woman acquires a more active and managerial presence in different environments. In this context and as a result of feminist struggles, women are beginning to have a greater participation in the public sphere, gaining access to the labour market through various organisations of a different nature.

With the increasing participation of women in various work organisations, women's leadership is manifested, which was characterised by women who managed to skilfully stand out.

In 1960, Siriwamo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka became the first woman elected prime minister in the world, and in 1974, Isabel Peron of Argentina became the first female president—and at the same time a woman was made acting head of government, while previously there were two other female acting heads of state. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-IRTB-1147>)

In 1999, Sweden became the first country to have more women ministers than men. Out of a total of 20 ministers, 11 were women and 9 were men, while in 2007 the Finnish government had a rate of 60% women. In 2009, Monaco became the first country in the world to have its first female minister in the government. (<https://epthinktank.eu/2012/10/04/first-women-in-governments>)

Today, female leadership in companies is a real and accessible achievement for women, as the feminist movement of recent years has contributed to the issue of gender equality. More equal and flexible labour laws have begun to be put in place, with benefits that will enable women not to have to choose between motherhood and work.

There are many women who have left a special mark through their leadership and who will forever be admired for their strategic leadership and ability to pave the way for the people who come after them. It would be inevitable to mention the women leaders from the ranks of almost the most famous global furniture manufacturing company, which is the IKEA group. As an example of significant women in that sphere, we can list the following:

- Ulrika Bissert is the global manager of human resources and culture at the Ingka Group, under whose headquarters the famous company IKEA has been for more than 20 successful years. Ulrika has a master's degree in social sciences, economics, and psychology and has over 20 years of leadership experience, attracting and developing people and teams and promoting diversity and inclusion. She leads the Group's human resources in a total of 400 IKEA stores and is responsible for some of the leading people in various positions and cultures in the Ingka Group's retail and expansion organisation, covering a total of 30 markets with almost more than 370 stores and 166,000 associates. (<https://www.ingka.com/bios/ulrika-biesert>)
- Susan Pulverer is another significant female leader from the composition of the IKEA company. She took the helm of IKEA India in February 2022, making her a reliable and stable female CEO of the Swedish home furnishings retailer, which is part of the Ingka Group. She also serves as Chief Sustainability and Development Officer and continues to establish IKEA as a significant brand in India, maintaining its long-term commitments till 2030. (<https://www.afaqs.com/people-spotting/ikea-india-appoints-susanne-pulverer-as-its-ceo-cso>)

There is no doubt that besides the Ingka Group, more and more companies in the world are following the trend of equality and satisfaction of women's rights and equalities.

4. EFFECTIVENESS OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

The ability to influence is an essential leadership skill. To influence means to elevate one's behaviour, attitudes, and opinions, as well as the choices of others. Influence should not be confused with control because it is not about manipulating others. This is about what motivates employee commitment and the use of knowledge to leverage performance and achieve positive outcomes. (Caraballo, M., 2013)

A common characteristic among female CEOs is risk-taking, resilience, agility, and crisis management. These leaders influence teamwork and, through their leadership influence power, encourage others to achieve desired results and effectiveness.

The effectiveness that women achieve as leaders is seen through many studies. But years of research by various platforms and organisations of women leaders have concluded that if women were to participate equally with men on the same level, it could lead to a growth of 28 trillion US dollars at the global level, which is proportional to the size of the US and Chinese economies combined. On average, there would be an 11% increase in global GDP if each country achieved the fastest rate of progress towards gender equality in its workforce. With such widespread gender disparity in corporate leadership, what would, or could, change if there were more gender equity at the highest corporate levels? Throughout the years, researchers have slowly begun answering that question. In 2014, General Motors

named Mary Barra as the first female CEO in the automotive industry, and 45% of the Board of Directors are women. In 2018, the same company named Divya Suryadevara as the Chief Financial Officer. One of the priorities of the first female CEO, Mary Barra, was the acceptance of new technologies, such as investments in autonomous vehicles, electric vehicles, and environmental protection. It was found that women play a key role, especially in the manufacturing sector, implementing effective company transformations. Statistics have shown a 29% increase in efficiency in this sector by appointing women leaders. (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kweilinellingrud/2019/01/30/how-women-leaders-change-company-dynamics/?sh=319ff51a4733>)

Today we recognise three key strengths that research shows make female leadership more effective than male leadership. Namely,

- women score significantly higher in all so-called creative dimensions: Female leaders score significantly higher in their ability to "connect with others" in competitions for authenticity and awareness of organisations. The women leaders are not only better at building relationships, but the very relationships they build are characterised by authenticity and an awareness of how they contribute to the "greater good beyond the leader's immediate sphere of influence",
- women are better at creative thinking. Women leaders are more often driven by the idea of winning, or rather success-focusing on their natural curiosities about what matters most to them for the future. They create and collaborate with others to move toward that desired goal;
- women build and nurture stronger working relationships. Female leaders emerge in a significantly different way than male leaders, in terms of building caring relationships, mentoring and developing others, and showing concern for all members of the community.

In today's business environment, this acts as a superpower that facilitates leadership and collaboration and increases operational efficiency.

4.1 Women leaders in organisational culture

In recent years, new trends in business behaviour have emerged that are critical to the growth, development, and survival of today's organisations. Modern organisations rely more on teamwork and the style of communication or leadership represented by women, which becomes key to success. In addition to teamwork as a factor for a modern organisation, employee involvement in decision-making, information exchange, trust, consensus, and cooperation, as well as encouragement, self-confidence, and enthusiasm among employees, are also characteristic. These characteristics relate to female leadership and are typical of women. For these reasons, the percentage of women in management positions is increasing today. Women are better than men at multitasking, team building, and communication, which in today's business is much more important than the strict principles and formalities that were continuously followed in the past.

The analysis of the influence of women in a certain organisational culture showed that the influence of women leads to greater motivation and better results. One benefit of women's leadership is the increase in measures to promote the balance between work and family, which is important for the development of the country, as well as for improving the quality of life of families. Female leaders show a greater focus on relationships, understanding of others' behaviour and problems, intuitive problem solving, and especially a willingness to admit their own mistakes. The result of these traits is a harmonious relationship with less conflict and more personal satisfaction. It is important to know that women are more emotionally resilient and more resistant to the frustrations that the modern work environment brings. They have more self-control and more stability in attitude.

Female leadership marks significant changes in relation to the elements of an organisational structure and contributes to the authentic modernisation of the organisation and the organisational culture in general. Such a way of elementary changes led to the introduction of a completely new functioning within an organisation, as well as changes in interpersonal relationships.

Since leadership is a method by which an individual influences a team to achieve a common goal, it follows that leadership is not just influence but the pooling of individual skills from all involved in achieving a common goal.

What can organisations do to help more women advance into leadership? (<https://www.apa.org/topics/women-girls/female-leaders-make-work-better>)

Identifying potential leaders early. "One promising approach is early identification of leadership potential". Behind this thought in particular is Dr. Anna Marie Valerio, who is an executive coach and adjunct professor of psychology at New York University. This includes enabling potential leadership candidates to receive a wealth of feedback early in their careers, through assignments and mentoring, all of which can enable them to develop their networks and demonstrate their ability to take on greater responsibilities.

Supporting women to join professional organisations that are led by women. Women also strengthen their leadership skills by joining women's professional organisations. Researchers surveyed members of a women-led professional organisation in the southeastern United States and found that experiences in these women-led associations allowed members to hone their leadership skills, connect with other women, work directly with and observe women leaders, and gain support from others to take leadership roles.

Establishing mentoring programs that also focus on sponsorship. Numerous studies highlight the benefits of successful mentoring programs, including greater career success for individuals and higher levels of employee engagement, retention, and knowledge sharing for organisations. However, when it comes to mentors, it is important for women to identify with both a female mentor and a male mentor, specifically a mentor who can provide career guidance, support, feedback, and knowledge, as well as sponsors, who go beyond the role of mentor, and they use their position and influence to proactively advocate for the junior employee's advancement, upgrade, and success.

Focusing on alliances. According to Victoria Mattingly, founder and CEO of Mattingly Solutions, a consulting firm, women are not the only ones who can help increase the number of female leaders. Male executives who are trained to be allies and good collaborators are much more likely to speak up about incidents of gender inequality than men who are not trained in this approach. It is for this reason that trained male executives strive to change the number of female leaders who will be equal with them.

We can say that a leader lives up to his title when, despite the achieved success and progress in his work, he simultaneously manages to create persistent and hard-working colleagues who love the work they do and are motivated for even greater success. Motivating employees is an incentive in the work situation, with which employees would like to behave in a certain desired way for the organisation, ready to cooperate and satisfy their own desires and interests.

Research shows that motivation as a factor for achieving greater success at work is conditioned by numerous factors that are interrelated, such as:

- ✓ individual characteristics of the individual,
- ✓ job characteristics,
- ✓ characteristics of the work environment,
- ✓ level and characteristics of technological and economic development of the organisation and
- ✓ the attitude of the leader towards the employees and his ability to motivate.

As we have already pointed out, women have certain abilities, such as sharing information and encouraging enthusiasm and self-confidence among employees, which makes it much easier to influence them, encourage their ideals, and motivate them, thus enriching the organisational culture in the company itself.

4.2 Women leaders in small and medium businesses

Constant changes in the contemporary global economic sphere, as well as in the technological information sphere, emphasise the growing importance of leadership, management, effective working relationships, teamwork, and the creation of partnerships (within and outside the organisation). All of them are actually the result of the factors of the unexpected changes in the competitive market

environment, the globalisation of the market, the diverse demands of the buyers, and the short life of the products. More and more companies are facing customers who have more and more wishes and more and more demands on deliveries. All those requirements require speed, flexibility, and responsibility on the part of the manufacturers. In that direction, in many companies, more and more attention is paid to leaders, and especially today's expansion of women leaders, because successful leaders are focused on vision, change, satisfaction of consumers and business partners, results, and improvement of interpersonal relations.

The role of women in business is becoming more pronounced, but we have to admit that it is still not at the level it should be or that is desired. It should continue at a faster pace in order to achieve more significant results. If women observe in a professional sense, they can notice great achievements in every area. He must state that the influence of women in the world is continuously growing. Certain sectors, which until yesterday seemed to be reserved only for men, will be occupied more by women.

What leads to the wild rise of women and their economic development? First of all, according to their intelligence, ability, resourcefulness, and persistence, women are in no way behind men. So they really deserve those positions. Probably the various previous stereotypes are to blame for why there was not a greater breakthrough for women in all pores of society earlier. Women and their role in entrepreneurship are becoming more relevant both in developed countries and in countries in transition. In developed economies, all factors that can contribute to development will be followed, and those factors will be used to the maximum.

As a more influential example related to women leaders of small and medium enterprises, we will highlight the so-called awakening and influence of the Canadian government. Namely, the Canadian government in 2017, after numerous surveys, began to recognise the need for more women business owners and leaders. In 2018, she commits to invest a serious amount of money to improve gender equality in both the workforce and the corporate world. The government is beginning to invest \$105 million in regional development agencies that support investment in women-led businesses and is also investing an additional \$1.4 billion over the next three years through the Canadian Business Development Bank, due to the conclusion that when women own businesses, growth is more likely. (<https://www.canadapost-postescanada.ca/blogs/business/ecommerce/the-power-of-female-small-business-owners-and-leaders/>)

Greater socio-economic inclusion of women is important and brings numerous benefits to the entire society. Greater inclusion of women results in higher GDP by about 10 percent on average, and in less developed economies by as much as 30 percent. According to a study by the World Bank, the countries of the Western Balkans lose about 18% of their GDP each year due to the gender gap in the labour market, with two-thirds of the loss resulting from the low activity rate of women and the remaining part from differences in the choice of occupations between men and women. Women in Macedonia are mostly owners of small and micro, less often of medium or large businesses. They take fewer risks and are more cautious, and empathy and emotional intelligence result in greater care for employees and the team. The whole society is very critical of women in managerial positions, first of all because business is perceived as a male domain. The gender wage gap ranges from 7 to 16 percent, which is contrary to the trend in the EU, where there is a continuous reduction in the wage gap between women and men. Women's lower employment and lower income also affect access to financing. In our country, about 55 percent of the total number of credit users are men, 62 percent of the total value of the credit portfolio of the banking system is located among men, and only 38 percent among women. (<https://kapital.mk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Zenite-vo-biznisot-2023>)

The potential should be primarily recognised by the woman, and it is a personal choice, courage, and commitment to succeed in the business world. Of course, the entrepreneurial initiative brings with it certain sacrifices and sacrifices, so this path is not easy at all. Second, the decision on entrepreneurial initiatives must be correlated with family and support from the closest environment. Family support is often a critical factor in women's successful career development. Flexibility in the family is important for achieving a balance between professional and personal life. Third, the opportunities offered by institutions and employers, the equal treatment of employees, and positive practices of gender equality, but also the flexibility of institutions and respect for the nature of women and their unique role in nature, motherhood.

This is also related to our culture as a people, from where the corporate culture that reflects the institutions themselves originates.

The most important thing for small and medium-sized enterprises, and above all for women leaders, is to use every opportunity to create new products and services, which they will place on the market, in order to expand the choice for their potential customers and thus create conditions for continuous rapid and efficient growth and development of their national economies.

4.3 IKEA example of female effective leadership

In early 2023, the global retailer known for its furniture and low-priced yet chic Scandinavian homeware products—IKEA—announced that it had achieved the rare feat of near gender parity in its top leadership roles. Fourteen out of a total of 31 countries in which there are CEOs are now women; that's 45%. Women also make up 56% of top retail management teams across the company's global footprint. That's up significantly from a decade ago, the company said in a report, when only 28% of the country's CEOs were women and its top management retail teams were only about 35% female. The numbers have reached that point in recent years, as leaders such as Suzanne Pulverer were tapped to head the company's India unit last year, and, in January 2023, Doris Lahn became CEO of Ingka Group operations in Denmark. (IKEA is run as a franchise system, with the Ingka Group being by far its largest, accounting for approximately 90% of IKEA sales, with more than 170,000 employees and 379 stores). The International Labour Organisation has determined that a balanced employment relationship is one where no more than 40% to 60% of employees are of the same sex. IKEA's process of pushing towards gender equality started back in 2002, when the company's CEO at the time made it a priority, but it started in earnest 10 years ago, when the first IKEA company meeting called the Women's Open Network was held in Sweden with the presence of all the top leaders from the entire company. Salary is another significant factor: namely, in 2021, the company begins to give salary based on the value of the job and not on the ability of a woman to negotiate, helping to avoid entrenching the pay gaps of the past. The company notes that it has also worked to reduce pay gaps that cannot be explained by differences in experience or workload, reducing the gender pay gap for similar jobs by nearly 8.04% in its fiscal 2020 bill. to nearly 4.84% in the 2022 bill. (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jenamcgregor/2023/03/06/how-ikeas-largest-retailer-reached-gender-balance-globally-for-leadership-roles/?sh=527b02174154>)

Finally, it is perhaps not surprising that Sweden-based IKEA, which is known for its generous parental leave for both men and women, has achieved gender equality faster than many other companies. And indeed, the company offers much more in terms of parental leave in many countries—which may encourage more women and men to return to their jobs after becoming parents—than is required by law.

5. CONCLUSION

Women leaders are constantly developing and progressing, thereby reaching new milestones across the wide spectrum of human activities in modern times. Using their abilities, they are an example of inspiration for continuous progress, both for the other female collaborators and for the male leaders.

Women as leaders have the ability to improve organisational culture and motivate teams and employees to achieve set plans and goals.

Analysing the benefits of female leadership, modern science has found that women lead less autocratically than men and have a greater sensitivity to the importance and use of human potential. Among the other reasons for the increased involvement of women in leadership positions is the use of diversity, the leadership style for business operations, their expertise, knowledge, and abilities, and being built with ethical commitment to others.

The recommendations for the greater representation of women in leadership positions mostly derive from the positive results provided in the work.

Women leaders embody the change they want to see and possess the emotional intelligence necessary to motivate others. They also raise organisational performance to a higher and more professional level.

Research shows that organisations with women in senior leadership positions are somehow more profitable, more socially responsible, and provide a safer and better customer experience.

Female leadership and the efficiency of its actions in the world are at an enviable level, unlike here, where society is much more critical of women in managerial positions, first of all because business is perceived as a male domain.

The key factor to bring about substantive change in terms of women's leadership is embracing equality in its entirety, not just on paper. In order to reach more female entrepreneurs, managers, and other leading positions, a greater social incentive is needed to strengthen female leadership, especially in the economy.

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