LEADERSHIP STYLES: GENDER SIMILARITIES, DIFFERENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT: A comprehensive definition of leadership is that of a process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Over recent years there has been major expansion of research on gender relations in leadership. The growing presence of women in the international workforce continues to motivate research on the leadership styles of women, particularly to determine if women have their own ways of leading. The relationship between leadership styles and gender roles could be demonstrated as masculinity with task-oriented and femininity with people-oriented. Though a number of researches have been carried out in this area the question of whether there is a leadership style that distinguishes female leaders from male leaders is yet to be answered. In this context this paper attempts to review and analyse the past literature on gender differences, similarities and perceptions in relation to the leadership styles and to examine under what circumstances men and women differ.

Keywords - Differences, Gender, Leadership styles, Perceptions, Similarities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The construction industry, which is portrayed as a typical male dominated one, is growing faster than any other major industrial sector in UK. This leads to increased labour and skills demands. This skill and labour demand may be a threat to the long term growth of the industry and it may also challenge the industry's capability to deliver the projects on time, within the budget and at the desired quality. UK construction industry is also facing recruitment problems within its traditional male workforce. The constant reliance on a limited recruitment base disadvantages the industry by disregarding half the population and the diversity of skills these people have to offer. By restricting the possible workforce, the industry is limiting the choice of applicants at its disposal, which in turn may lead to the recruitment of lower quality employers. In this context recruiting women into construction is imperative for the long term survival of UK construction industry. However, the high under-representation of women leaders and women in top positions could be a great hindrance to convince the potential females who want to choose a career in construction. Therefore promoting women into leading positions in construction is a matter of concern. In this regard, this paper intends to analyse the leadership styles in relation to gender. The background enlightens the research interest in leadership and gender. The background in this paper aims to examine under what circumstances men and women differ. To fulfil this aim it is important to understand the gender, gender role, gender differences, similarities and perceptions in relation to leadership styles. Thus the following sections discuss how gender and gender role are seen by other authors in the social science researches. It then moves on to a review gender differences and similarities. The perceptions regarding gender role in relation to the leadership are discussed thereafter. These finally lead to a discussion followed by conclusion and way forward. Thus this paper gives a basis for a research which aims to promote women leaders in construction.

2. BACKGROUND

The leadership as defined by Gardner (1995) is 'the ability to influence – either directly or indirectly – the behaviour, thoughts, and actions of a significant number of individuals'. A comprehensive definition of leadership is that of a process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2004). Though these definitions look simple the concept is least understood and in itself involves much more. According to Gardner (1995, p. 292), "The greatest challenge the leaders face is to bring about significant and lasting changes in a large and heterogeneous group". Leadership style is by definition leadership behaviour with two clearly independent dimensions: the task dimension that includes goal setting, organization, direction, and control; and the relationship dimension involving support, communication, interaction, and active listening (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988). A precise definition of the perfect or ideal leadership style would be useless considering the numerous factors that might shape such a style (Trinidad and Normore, 2005).

In recent years, both mainstream management literature and organizational policy show evidence of a marked turn to leadership rather than management as the means to enhance organizational performance in contemporary organisations. This is matched by a growing trend in the UK to attribute ever-greater significance to leadership as a way of solving organisational problems not only within the private sector, but also within the public sector (Ford, 2005).

Although mainstream research on leadership generally continues to ignore gender relations, over recent years there has been major expansion of international research on gender relations in leadership, organizations and management (Hearn and Piekkari, 2005). Previous studies have found differences in leadership styles in terms of gender and managerial hierarchy. Discussions on the gendered differentiation of leadership have centred on the different qualities and styles of leadership of men and women; that is, the so-called masculine and feminine styles of leadership (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). The presence of feminine or masculine characteristics in leadership styles is related to the construct of gender (Larson and Freeman, 1997). Gender, race, class, and other elements of social difference are acknowledged to play an important role in the development of leadership styles. Fitzgerald (2003) suggested that it is impossible to create conceptualizations of leadership and management without taking into account issues of gender and ethnicity.

Although a number of researches have been carried out in this area the question of whether there is a leadership style that distinguishes female leaders from male leaders is yet to be answered.

3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The proportion of women in executive roles has nearly tripled during the last three decades of the 20th century (US Dept. of Labour, 1998). More and more organizations are actively looking for women to join their top management ranks (Vinkenburg, *et al.*, 2000). This growing number of women in managerial positions created interest in the role of women as leaders (Klenke, 1996). The leadership roles are said to have traditionally been occupied mainly by men. However, the increased numbers of women managers in recent past created a need to research into various leadership styles in relation to gender.

The growing presence of women in the international workforce continues to motivate research on the leadership styles of women, particularly to determine if women have their own ways of leading (Trinidad and Normore, 2005). Intuitive reasoning suggests that early

socialization patterns develop different qualities in women and men that would likely result in variations in leadership styles (Powell, 1993). The real issue in leadership differences lies in the equity in selecting the right person with the appropriate skills and qualities to ensure the effectiveness and success of the organization (Bass and Avolio, 1994). The integration of women in leadership roles is not a matter of "fitting in" the traditional models, but "giving in" to the opportunities for them to practice their own leadership styles. Since leadership in organizations has been mostly occupied by men, some women have chosen successful male leaders and their styles as their role models (Appelbaum and Shapiro, 1993). Others dare break the mould and start with leadership styles that openly reveal feminine traits and behaviours as "silent cries" for social justice and a place of their own in organizations (Trinidad and Normore, 2005).

Thus more attention has been devoted to the possible differences between the leadership styles of women and men. High masculinity may give rise to a fairly macho type of leadership, whereas high femininity may lead to a more empathetic consideration type of leadership (Giritli and Oraz, 2004). As organizational structures and cultures change, directive, task-oriented and hierarchical leadership of subordinates has to make way for managing high-involvement work teams with an emphasis on consensus decision making and learning instead of control (Bohl *et al*., 1996). Also with or without open acknowledgement, management is described more and more in traditionally feminine terms such as sharing responsibility, helping and developing others and building a connected network of relationships (Fondas, 1997). This is also supported by Ely and Meyerson (2000) stating that the 'relationship orientation' of feminism can constitute an effective management style. The strategic value of these styles for organizations lies in the merging of both innate feminine characteristics and professional skills developed in the workplace that contributes to the attainability of organizational goals.

Despite the increased number of women entering into managerial positions, and the importance given in feminine management approach, women are still rare in the highest positions of large business organizations. The gender differences in terms of leadership styles is rapidly disappearing; however the rate of advancement of women in highest position is relatively low. Interpreting gender relations as either equality (similar) or difference (dissimilar) represents two lines of inquiry common in gender-related studies. If one opts for equality, one is forced to accept the notion that difference is antithetical to it – i.e. ignoring that gender had any effect. But if one opts for difference, one admits that equality is unattainable (Brandser, 1996). This constitutes a dilemma.

In this context this paper attempts to review and analyse the past literature on gender differences, similarities and perceptions in relation to the leadership styles and to examine under what circumstances men and women differ.

4. DEFINING GENDER AND GENDER ROLE

This chapter gives a review of previous studies where the gender and gender role are defined by various scholars.

Early feminist theorising distinguished between sex (biologically based) and gender (a social construction) (Oakeley, 1972 *cited in* Calas and Smircich, 1994). The distinction between sex and gender as interpreted by Goktope and Schneier (1988), where sex is the biologically invariant factor and gender is comprised of various social, cultural or historical variable components. Brandser (1996) explained that the sex/gender split meant that scholars could distinguish *sex*, referring to attributes of men and women created by their biological characteristics and *gender*, referring to the distinctive qualities of men and women which are

created culturally. In all cultures, biological sex is not the only factor to define being male or being female. Societal values and expectations perpetuate gender role stereotypes in a culture, and mandate males to be "masculine" and females to be "feminine" (Kilianski, 2000). The concept of gender denotes a rejection of the biological determinism implicit in the use of terms like sex and sexual differences. Gender was appropriated to refer to the social quality of distinctions between the sexes (Scott, 1988 *cited in* Brandser, 1996) and created a space in which socially mediated differences could be explored apart from biological differences. According to Ciancanelli's (1992) view, gender is best seen as a process (rather than a fixed, immutable given) and rooted in asymmetric power distribution (rather than in biology) is attention to the dynamic interplay between the individual and broader social structures, social memories and socialized needs.

Early feminist theorising, to oppose biological sex against socially constructed gender, accepts the idea that biology (the body) is separate from culture (the mind). Later feminist theorising does not accept this distinction. Instead its focus is on gender relations. It is through gender relations that 'men' and 'women', two categories of persons, are created and their bodies connected to culture. From this perspective, both men and women are 'prisoners of gender', although in different ways (Flax, 1987; Scott, 1986 *cited in* Calas and Smircich, 1994).

The construct of gender implies the way meaning associates with sex in members of a culture in terms of expected learned behaviours, traits, and attitudes (DeMatteo, 1994; Northouse, 2004). The concept of gender role is situationally constructed in organizations, and based on: masculinity involving aggression, independence, objectivity, logic, analysis, and decision, and; femininity involving emotions, sensitivity, expressiveness, and intuition (Fernandes and Cabral-Cardoso, 2003; Bem, 1974). Barrett (1995) summarises that another approach views gender as a human invention, much like language, that organizes social life. This constructionist view argues that gender is a social institution that has produced historically variable sets of norms and expectations regarding how one ought to behave, decide, think, how one should relate, where and how one should work.

Some have argued from an essentialist view of gender. In effect, this view holds that the dichotomous biological categories of male and female mark the essential difference between men and women. Thus boys by biological nature are more aggressive and girls more nurturing. Socio-biological theories, such as Tiger's (1969, *cited in* Barrett, 1995) popular study, *Men in Groups*, which emphasise the innate aggressiveness and competitive nature of men, fall into this category. Following this argument, social structures and cultural practices in which men are more likely to hold positions of power, are simply mirroring human nature.

A body of research that goes further in including the influence of social forces on gender has been sex role theory. In a powerful critique, Connell (1987) points out that sex role theory tends to ignore questions of power differences between men and women; ignores the dynamic processes by which gender relations are contested and negotiated; reifies expectation, exaggerates consensus, fails to appreciate alternatives to the stereotypical norms, and does not concern itself with historical change. In short, sex role theory tends to accept gender as dichotomous categories that are historically stable and replacing biological determinism with a kind of cultural determinism.

One of the debates in feminist scholarship concerns the nature of femininity – including whether feminine traits are biologically given or socially constructed – and whether there are varieties of behaving and generally being-in-the-world that are particular to women and men. When something is labelled Masculine or Feminine, it does not necessarily relate to the intrinsic characteristics of actual men or women; it is however, culturally associated with the categories male and female (Fondas, 1997).

According to Barrett (1995), gender is a powerful institution with rules and patterns of expectation regarding what is "normal". Most of us learn to comply with these rules and experience them as natural and common sense. However, these structures have no validity other than through the daily practices and actions that people engage in. The constructionist view holds that human beings are agents, whose actions and practices either accomplish or challenge the taken-for-granted gender order. Humans behave in ways that are appropriate to these learned norms, or they resist and rebel against them, or they transform them. What they cannot do is ignore them. Thus, gender is neither a biological necessity nor a stable role set that determines behaviour. Human beings actively accomplish, or "do gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1987 *cited in* Barrett, 1995) continuously – in the way we talk, the way we walk, the way we shake hands, the way we dress.

5. LEADERSHIP STYLES: GENDER DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

5.1 Gender differences

In leadership research, gender has been distinguished from sex, with the former viewed as a collection of qualities labelled male or female that is created culturally, and the latter seen as comprising attributes that are the results of biological characteristics (Brandser, 1996). Male gender qualities characterized as; aggressive, independent, objective, logical, rational, analytical, decisive, confident, assertive, ambitious, opportunistic and impersonal are distinguished from female gender qualities described as; emotional, sensitive, expressive, cooperative, intuitive, warm, tactful, receptive to ideas, talkative, gentle, empathetic, and submissive (Park, 1996)

Many researchers have tried to find out the relationship between gender role and leadership style. They assumed that gender role is an important personality trait that influences leadership style. Thus, they have related masculinity with task-oriented leadership style and femininity with relationship-oriented leadership style. Hofstede (2001) suggests that the masculinity/femininity dimension affects the meaning of work in people's lives.

While men still dominate in leadership positions, there is research suggesting that when women do occupy leadership positions, they display different leader styles compared to males. In a review of the extant literature on female leadership, Eagly and Carli (2003) concluded that among managers women tended to be more democratic in their leadership styles compared to men. They also reported that a meta-analysis of 45 studies examining gender differences in transformational leader behaviours found compared to male leaders; female leaders used a more transformational style.

The notion of male and female gender qualities facilitates the argument that male gender qualities are oriented towards more impersonal, task oriented or transactional approach to leadership, while female gender qualities tend towards a more nurturing, relationships oriented style of leadership that underlies the transformational leadership approach (Pounder and Coleman, 2002). Women seem to lead in a rather democratic way, while men show a more autocratic leadership style (Eagly and Johnson, 1990). Research findings of Trinidad and Normore (2005) also show that women adopt democratic and participative leadership styles in the corporate world and in education. Moreover, female leaders seem to prefer a transformational leadership style (Eagly *et al.*, 2003). The characteristics of transformational leadership relate to female values developed through socialization processes that include building relationships, communication, consensus building, power as influence, and working together for a common purpose. This is also supported by Shane *et al* (1995) stating that femininity was found to be positively correlated with transformational leadership. In addition,

several studies focusing on transformational leadership indicated that women are perceived, and perceive themselves, as using transformational leadership styles more than men (Bass *et al.*, 1996; Druskat, 1994; Rosener, 1990 *cited in* Kark, 2004).

5.2 Gender similarities

In contrast, other scholars have argued that there are no significant gender differences between males and females in their leadership behaviours.

Powell (1990) in his analysis of a number of research studies, found that male and female leaders exhibit similar amount of task oriented and people oriented leadership behaviours. Further Pounder and Coleman (2002), citing a number of studies undertaken by various researchers (Davidson and Bruke, 1994; Brenner, 1982; Carless, 1998; Komives, 1991; Maher, 1997; Vilkanas and Carton, 1993, Thomson, 2000; Evetts, 1994) have summarized the idea of 'little or no difference' and 'no evidence of any dissimilarity' in the leadership styles, leadership effectiveness and competencies of men and women. Shimanoff and Jenkins (1991) demonstrate in their research that there are far more similarities than differences in the leadership behaviours of men and women and they are equally effective. Further, a study by Vinkenburg found no gender differences in managerial self-efficacy, self monitoring, managerial commitments and managerial effectiveness in terms of salary progression, performance appraisals and hierarchical progression (Vinkenburg, *et al.*, 2000).

The study done by Oshagbemi and Gill, 2003 has examined gender differences and similarities in the leadership styles and behaviour of UK managers. Their study found that women mangers delegate less than their male counterparts but their directive, consultative and participative leadership styles were similar. There are more similarities than differences found in their study in the leadership styles and behaviour of their managers, unlike the findings in other research studies where there are significant differences between males and female in the leadership styles and behaviour of their managers. However the authors suggested that although women are relatively similar to men in behaviour and effectiveness, women leaders tend to be more participative and less autocratic. Further, the gender reform approach, mostly represented by liberal feminism, asserts that gender differences are not based on biology and, that men and women are similar in their common humanity (Lorber, 2001). Therefore, biological differences should be ignored in order to achieve gender equality in work opportunities.

6. PERCEPTIONS

Historically, men have been perceived as being better suited to become leaders than women. Traditional gender stereotypes are a major reason for the negative perception of female leaders. Several studies have indicated a stereotype of the "typical" man and woman across groups differing in sex, age, marital status, and education (Neubert and Taggar, 2004). The role of a leader may be particularly problematic for women because the schemas that people hold of leaders/managers are quite different from those they hold of women. Much evidence suggests that the prevailing image of a leader is more similar to that of a man than a woman (Becker *et al.*, 2002). Studies have shown that traditionally masculine characteristics generally are considered to be more positively valued than traditionally feminine characteristics. Specifically, traditional gender stereotypes depict men as effective achievers, competent, forceful, active, emotionally stable, independent, and rational, while women are generally perceived to be lacking in those attributes (Becker *et al.*, 2002). Traditional gender

stereotypes depict women as deficient in attributes believed necessary for managerial success (Eagly *et al.*, 2003; Vecchio, 2002).

A number of studies have noted a generally held negative perception of women as leaders (Deal and Stevenson, 1998; Powell and Butterfield, 1979, 1989; Schein, 1973, 1975; Schein and Davidson, 1993 *cited in* Pounder and Coleman, 2002). Stereotypes persist that portray women as less capable leaders than men. Female leaders will likely be refused by persons with traditional gender role attitudes, preferring women to be housewives and mothers. Because traditional persons endorse traditional role allocation between women and men, one could assume that these persons feel uncomfortable about women in high-status positions (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2003). These traditional gender stereotypes, when applied to work settings, affect subordinates' perceptions of female leaders. Therefore, even when the number of women in formerly male-dominated environments increases, this will not necessarily bring about an immediate change in the organizational context. Organizational context as defined here can be a major factor in enhancing the saliency of the gender of female leaders (Ridgeway, 1992). That is, the observers may notice the "femaleness" of female leaders in organizations in which, traditionally, men dominated the leadership positions and the norms of conduct are masculine. These traditional gender stereotypes have been very resistant to change (Dodge *et al.*, 1995; Ruble *et al.*, 1984 *cited in* Dawley *et al.*, 2004).

Stereotyping is central to their explanation of why gender is often perceived to be the central determinant of leadership style. Stereotyping is central also to the rejection of the gender determining leadership style thesis because stereotyping explains how the perception of a particular leader's performance can differ from the actual performance of that leader (Pounder and Coleman, 2002). According to Williams *et al.* (1999) gender stereotypes are the psychological characteristics believed to be differentially associated with women and men in a particular cultural group. Thus, stereotypes of gender roles created by culture govern the way of life throughout our existence (Littrell and Nkomo, 2005). Research evidence strongly indicates gender stereotypes affect perceptions of leaders and managers (Littrell and Nkomo, 2005). According to the social role theory (Eagly *et al.* 2000), cultures convey shared expectations for the appropriate conduct of males and females that foster gender differences in social behaviour. Eagly (1987) argues that expectation is a central aspect of the socialization process. Thus people behave according to societal expectations about their gender roles and the expectation that women will be more caring and relationship oriented than men largely accounts for different approaches to leadership based on gender. However from a female perspective, the downside of this process is that the view of women as nurturing may lead to a justification of women holding supportive roles, leaving men typically to play leadership roles (Pounder and Coleman, 2002).

In contrast, Luthar (1996) found in her experiment with 290 undergraduate seniors, that autocratic female managers were viewed as being significantly higher performers than autocratic male managers, thus stereotyping does not always work in favour of male managers at the expense of female managers. However, Jago and Vroom (1982) found that female managers perceived to be autocratic were evaluated negatively, while male managers were evaluated largely positively, and have suggested that this is due to the link between stereotyping and expectation. This is supported by a recent study by Wolfram *et al.* (2007), on the professional respect for female and male leaders, where they revealed that the gender differences are in line with general gender stereotypes suggesting that women are gentler, more expressive, and more socially oriented than men. Persons who show gender role discrepant behaviour run the risk of being less positively evaluated by others. Wolfram *et al.* (2007) further explained that in case female leaders moreover show masculine leadership behaviour (i.e. autocratic style), they commit a double role deviance. Furthermore, autocratic behaviour in general is evaluated negatively. Democratic male leaders are also caught in a

discrepancy between the male gender role and feminine leadership behaviour. In contrast to female leaders, this incongruity is mitigated by the fact that the male gender role and the leadership role are in line with each other. Moreover, democratic behaviour in general is evaluated positively. Thus, they concluded that they could expect that gender role discrepant female leaders (behaving autocratically) are evaluated more negatively than gender role discrepant male leaders (behaving democratically). This is further supported by Eagly *et al.* (1992) stating that female leaders showing autocratic (i.e. masculine) behaviour are evaluated more negatively than male leaders showing the same. However democratic male leaders and democratic female leaders are not evaluated differently. In another study, Heilman *et al.* (2004) report that successful women receive less positive evaluations than successful men.

7. DISCUSSION

From the forgoing chapters it was seen that there are contradictory views and arguments regarding the leadership styles between males and females. Further it explained the perceptions from the society and from the subordinates do not support females to become effective leaders. This could be one of the major reasons for the under-representation of females in top positions in the corporate world. Although the number of women in middle management has grown rapidly over the last two decades, the number of top female leaders in large corporations remains extremely low (Eagly and Caril, 2003). The statistical analyses of western countries reveal that while the numbers of women entering management positions continues to increase, women remain under-represented in senior executive positions (Davidson and Bruke, 2000)

This may be because of the stereotypical masculine behaviours which are still considered important for leadership. Individuals who reported that they exhibited these behaviours without accompanying more supportive (feminine) behaviours were viewed as leaders in a higher percentage than any other category originally defined (Kolb, 1999). If sexes are perceived so differently in organizations, it would seem likely that leadership styles are also different. The common belief is that women need to be trained up to the level of men, arguing equal opportunities training, rather than value what they bring to organizations (Cubillo and Brown, 2003).

Central to the argument that gender determines leadership style is the idea of 'socialization'. Specifically the thesis is that, because of the socialization process, women have developed values and characteristics that results in leadership behaviours that are different from the traditional competitive, controlling and aggressive behaviours of men (Rosener, 1990). According to Ciancanelli's (1992) a social stratification in the lager society serves as a type of lens through which people are viewed and arranged. However unlike some relatively passive or benign strata (geological, for example), social strata are constructed for the purpose of controlling some groups for the benefits of others. They are neither efficient divisions of work nor functional distributions of status but systems of social control by which some benefit at the expense of others. Ciancanelli's (1992) further argued that even if it could be documented that women would run companies better than men, there is no social mechanism which would allow, require or encourage that to happen 'in the name of efficiency'. Equally true, even if it were proved that women are genetically unable to run certain kind of company, no feminist would take that to mean that women should be genetically re-engineered; rather they would argue that justice would require, instead the transformation of organizations.

However, in today's organisational context, many expect the leaders to be more people oriented as they believe that team work, empowerment of subordinates or followers,

relationship building are important for effective organizational management. According to one stereotype, women are insecure, over-controlling and unable to engage in team play behaviour (Madden, 1987), whilst the new stereotype suggests that women are relationship-oriented, non-hierarchical and interested in sharing power and information (Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1990). Thus, what was once labelled as women's weaknesses and cited as reasons for them being ill-suited for top jobs, are currently the very traits male executives are expected to possess (Fireman, 1990). Helgesen (1990) for example, suggests that men and women manage in sharply different ways, and supports the view that the female approach is superior, as mothers in particular, are better team players than men. As a consequence, women naturally form centre-archives, namely organizations with the leader at the centre, not on top. Helgesen (1990) further argues that women's central involvement in managing households, raising children and juggling careers give them a capacity for prioritization in a leadership role that men typically do not possess (Pounder and Coleman, 2002).

The current conception of transformational leadership, with its emphasis on follower empowerment, is in line with contemporary organizational changes and management theorizing stressing the need of organizations to become less hierarchical, more flexible, team-oriented, and participative (Fondas, 1997). Interactive leadership styles utilized by women have been beneficial in moving both genders towards a solution in so far as this styles involves four factors: encouraging participation; sharing power and information; enhancing self-worth of others and finally, energising other (Appelbaum and Shapiro, 1993). Rosener (1990) describes a more feminine leadership style that is said to be optimal for recent development in organizations. Within this research, there is a substantial body of opinion which holds that the leadership of modern organizations need to be non coercive, based on teamwork and adept at building relationships (Colwill and Townsend, 1999; Hirschhorn and Gilmore, 1992; Kolb, 1999; Moss and Jensrud, 1995 *cited in* Pounder and Coleman, 2002). As discussed previously this is the very style of leadership naturally employed by women.

The feminine leadership styles are not better or worse than the traditional male-oriented ones, they are just different. According to Shakeshaft (1993, p. 105 *cited in* Trinidad and Normore, 2005), "the point of examining these differences is not to say one approach is right and one is wrong, but rather to help us understand that males and females may be coming from very different perspectives, and that unless we understand these differences, we are not likely to work well together". It is supported also by Pounder and Coleman (2002) in that any conclusion on whether women are better than men in leadership roles or vise versa, may be missing the point. Arguably, a hostile, rapidly changing environment, replete with conflicting and competing pressures, confronts most modern organizations.

This situation demands leaders that have the flexibility to range over an array of leadership qualities that have been labeled masculine and feminine. Thus it has been emphasized that the modern leader to be androgynous, a term that is used to describe a leader, regardless of biological gender, able to combine the best of male and female leadership traits. Thus de-coupling gender from biological sex allows for the female leader to exhibit male gender qualities and vice versa, although the literature normally equates male gender qualities with male leaders and female gender qualities with female leaders. In terms of androgynous behaviours it may be the balance of behaviours, rather than a high amount of both behaviours, that becomes important (Kolb, 1999). The debate has progressed further to engage the concept of the androgynous leader which, rather than attributing the different qualities exclusively to any one gender, suggests that every good leader has available to them both sets of characteristics from which they are able to select the most appropriate for the situation (Singleton, 1993). Other researches indicate that the most successful leaders in any environment are those who can employ a range of styles depending on situational attributes. Possession of feminine characteristics, in balance of masculine ones, may be important in

perceptions of leadership (Kolb, 1999). This is also supported by Appelbaum *et al.*, (2003) saying that possession of feminine characteristics does not decrease an individual's chances of emerging as a leader as long as the individual also possesses masculine characteristics. If women are more likely to be androgynous, they may have a better chance of rising to leadership status. Some work has been done on the relationship between androgyny and transformational leadership. These studies stress that transformational leaders may employ a more androgynous style; calling for the best in both masculine and feminine sex-typed behaviour (Kark, 2004). This point needs a serious consideration as many authors refer to transformational leadership as a feminine leadership style. Therefore, the females may be in a better position to perform the role of androgynous leaders.

8. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The proportion of women in the managerial ranks has increased in almost all countries. The leadership-gender issue has become a significant one due to the increased number of women in managerial positions in recent years. Though many researches generally have found that males and females differ in their leadership styles, some researches still argue that there are no significant gender differences in leadership styles between men and women. Organizations and leadership are viewed as gender-neutral structures which provide the same opportunities for men and women. Equality can be accomplished only by appealing to the morals of organizations in accommodating women's special needs in association with childbirth and domestic responsibilities (Brandser, 1996).

Nowadays, though the use of androgynous leadership model has not yielded significant findings, there are common characteristics of successful leaders combining both the masculine and feminine models. Organizations and their top leaders need to expend their definition of effective leadership so that an interactive style can be valued, allowing these organizations the necessary flexibility, key to surviving within an increasingly competitive and diverse environment (Appelbaum and Shapiro, 1993).

In this context, females are expected to possess masculine characteristics to emerge as effective androgynous leaders. Further, previous studies specified that females are good in transformational leadership styles and they also stressed that the transformational leaders may employ a more androgynous styles. Therefore it could be said that females have the potential to become androgynous leaders. However, the traditional stereotypical perceptions and the expectations of the subordinates or followers challenge the female leaders to openly show the masculine qualities. In order to effectively run the organizations with a proper leadership, these stereotypical and cultural barriers have to be reduced or eliminated, though it is not that easy.

Taking these issues into consideration this research is taken further to analyse the contribution of leadership styles that are typically adopted by females in the context of construction industry. This research will focus on how the leadership styles naturally adopted by women would help to address certain problems pertaining in the construction industry. It will also try to find out that apart from the traditional stereotypes whether women confront any other construction specific barriers to come to top leading positions. This study will finally endeavor to give recommendations to increase the number of women leaders in construction.

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