

Gender Stereotype and Its Consequences on Female Managers

Caleb Angus

Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, University of Queensland Australia.

ABSTRACT

The dearth of women in top managerial positions is characterized by a high persistence and insensitivity to changes and differences in institutions and policies. This suggests it could be caused by slowly changing social norms and attitudes in the labor market, such as gender stereotypes and gender identity. There are significant gender differences between managers with regard to gender stereotyping attitudes. Male managers on average tend to have stronger gender stereotype views with respect to the role as a successful manager than their female peers. However, female CEOs' gender stereotypes do not differ from their male peers' and have significantly more pronounced masculine stereotypes than female managers at lower levels. Female managers have stronger beliefs in their own managerial abilities regarding feminine skills and weaker beliefs in their masculine skills, whereas the opposite is observed for male managers. Gender stereotypes and self-stereotypes vary across types of managerial employees and firms. Beliefs in own ability could explain at most ten percent of the observed gender differential in C-level executive positions. Gender stereotypes result in low representation of women at senior management levels and affect the output of female managers. The aim of this paper is to analyze gender stereotypes and how it affect the performance of female managers.

Keywords: Gender stereotype, Gender role, Discrimination, Gender equality, Managerial position.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of gender is related to the sex of the individual. Attributed to gender are various characteristic features, way of life and behaviour, i.e. those which are not born but formed as a result of roles played by men and women in the history of mankind, and their socialization as well [1]. On the basis of these different expectations posed to both genders, the society is assigning them certain roles - gender roles, which are considered typical for men or women. From childhood on, human beings are adopting them as a result of their close environment around them - family, school, television. State of gender equality is recovered in the documents of the European Commission (2010), but also in the work of [2].

Prejudices, conventional ideas in our minds regarding the characteristics and social roles of men and women are also termed as gender stereotypes. They represent some models of behaviour. By mistake, we consider them as biologically given ones, as they are being formed

already with children in their babyhood [3]. By way of education, typical male or female activities and characteristics are being instilled, which then are influential to their behaviour. The strength of stereotypes is symphonized and quite often related to negative associations, mostly if women are considered as individuals unable to make quick decisions, lacking logical thinking, being overly soft and sensitive.

Conversely, men are attributing logical thinking rationality, independence, higher social status [4]. These ideas are suppressing the human potential, generating pressure on the individuals of the opposite gender in terms of their relation to life and status in the future. Even if societies have gone through substantial changes and recorded certain progress in this field, an imbalance between men and women is enduring. It can be proven e.g. by the inequalities in wages, poor representation of women in top management positions. All that

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happens despite of the fact that one of the basic principles outlined in the document Strategy for balance between men and women in years 2010 - 2015 issued by the European Commission (2011) is stipulating that men and women are to be given equal opportunities to achieve leading positions.

Managerial functions are still dominated by men. Women have to use more energy as men while building up their careers [5] [6]. Various research studies have produced lists of barriers, which are either the results of stereotypes dominating the society or form the part of the labour market, which, as a rule, generates more suitable working conditions for men than women. High levels of demand on time and proficiency are typical for functions of a manager, posing more restraints for women than men.

There are lots of companies still lagging behind in establishing equal opportunities for women, who are also simultaneously required to meet the role of a mother taking care of her held, household. Under the weight of the circumstances they are forced decline to such professions, which could substantially limit them. Mostly, women have to chose from a typically family, or career-bound, option, or adapt to a typically "male way of work." And if, despite of all the facts mentioned earlier, women ultimately manage to take the position, their work is much less appreciated than those of the men and are offered posts in lower levels of management [7]. In most cases, the existence of gender stereotypes results in discrimination, mostly to the detriment of women, a fact that can be seen e.g. by the dividing professions into those typical of men and women-segregation, by different levels of remuneration for men and women, different levels of unemployment, as well as by viewing the two gender either in the private or employment areas differently [8] [9].

Discrimination is prohibited and regulated by law. In relation to gender, we speak of gender-based discrimination. According to the Law on discrimination,

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we distinguish direct discrimination - an act or negligence to a person less beneficial, or a way as it has been shown, or is being shown to other person in a similar situation. It includes discriminations based on maternity, gravidity, gender or sexual identification (Zákon NR SR č. 365/2004 Z. z.). In case of indirect discrimination, we are concerned with a way of dealing with or negligence, when on the basis of a seemingly neutral provision, criterion or customs. Persons belonging to one gender have been discriminated compared to those of the other gender with the exception of such provision, criterion or customs are objectively justified by a legitimate goal and the means to achieve it are proportionate and inevitable (Český statistický úřad) [10] [11]. Another barrier met by women (also related to men, yet being more discriminatory towards women) is horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market. It results from the fact that both men and women are selecting for a direction of study, which is expected of them by the stereotypes and also in the light of their unequal approaches to management functions [12].

Women work mostly in branches with lower social status, with lower remuneration compared to those dominated by men, e.g. jobs in services, education, health etc. Vertical segregation is related to the possibility of vertical rise or promotion to a hierarchically higher position, which in practice is known for the majority dominance of men holding those positions. It is based particularly on the fact that men are more oriented on career development while the role of women consists in family care. Another important notion in this field is the one of old - boy's network [13]. It represents informal relations among men established at workplaces and out of it (sporting activities, company events). Such informal relations and overriding behaviour based on them is one of the causes of low level representation of women in management circles.

Although gendered perceptions are not the sole arbiters of career choices,

processes and outcomes, gendered perceptions play significant roles in career processes and outcomes of individuals. Forms of inequality and segregation based on gendered perceptions are often reported in the extant literature as important economic and social concerns. According [14] combating gender inequities has been taken up as an important challenge of social and economic regulation in the past few decades

The Perception of Gender Stereotypes

Human beings reside in the world of cultural stereotypes, superstitions and naturalized attitudes; those cannot be eliminated under any legal acts currently. According to [15] point of view, there are especially many attitudes like those, related to women and men, their roles in family and society. Since the very childhood, human beings are brought up and educated in the surroundings of versatile stereotypes, e.g. 'a woman's job is in the family', 'a man has to support family and a woman has to look after children and educate them', 'men do not cry as they are powerful', 'a man is a defender, a courageous and fearless fighter, and a woman is dependent on a man, passive and full of fear'.

Gender stereotypes are cultural and social attitudes towards what is traditionally considered 'male' or 'female' roles and functions (European Commission, 2009). According to [16], gender role stereotypes are 'internal attitudes related to women's and men's favourable places in the society in terms of their functions and social assignments. Such stereotypes are obstacles those are overcome in a most difficult way through the creation of basically new relationship in society and qualitatively new society; precisely stiff stereotypes are an origin of women's discrimination'.

There is predominantly a belief among ordinary members of the society that gender role differences, naturalized in the society, are necessary and constant as they are determined biologically. It is considered that natural gender differences are much deeper than evident physiological ones and they involve the

entire spectrum of psychical characteristics those are different for men and women [17] [18]. A gender stereotype consists of beliefs about the psychological traits and characteristics of, as well as the activities appropriate to, men or women.

Gender roles are defined by behaviours, but gender stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity. The concepts of gender role and gender stereotype tend to be related. Gender stereotypes are very influential; they affect conceptualizations of women and men and establish social categories for gender. These categories represent what people think, and even when beliefs vary from reality, the beliefs can be very powerful forces [19]. Stereotypes are ubiquitous and continue to influence behaviour, but it is not easy to pinpoint how far they stand for genuine preferences, how far they express social norms or how far they are used to surrogate information [20].

Gender stereotypes may influence women's and men's choices of studies and jobs, and may lead to a gender-segregated labour market. These stereotypes influence the unequal sharing between women and men of working time, income and family responsibilities; they also constitute barriers to women's career advancement and appointment to decision-making positions (European Commission, 2009). According to [21], in the labour market there exists a vivid principal of asymmetry for evaluation of men's and women's possibilities, and traditionally there is settled a stereotype of a man - businessman.

[22] claims that since an old time there is extant stereotypical thinking concerning woman's career. According to her assertion, a career concept has been reserved for men for a long time. If a woman performed a payable job, it was thought that it was her extra activities, i.e. work but not career as a consistent orientation towards achievements in the hierarchy of professional career. Working in a public sector, women have historically held and are still holding positions of a lower level and status;

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those are not highly valued and acknowledged. Besides, some women decline professional performance and choose a housewife's role [23]. Therefore a traditional approach towards a woman's role in the family determines not only poorer woman's possibilities in labour market, but it also creates presumptions for poorer women's economical activeness.

Stereotypical approach towards a woman's role in the family that prevents women from the integration into labour market, has remained heretofore [24]. Men and women are spread in different professional groups (horizontal segregation), men and women are spread differently even in the same activity groups: for women there are delegated less responsible and lower qualification work (vertical segregation) [25]. Thus persisting gender stereotypes restrict women's and men's study and career choices, leading to a gender-segregated labour market.

Gender segregation is referring to the tendency of women and men to work in different sectors and occupations. The situation on the labour market is such as one of the genders is dominating a given professional category. Two types of segregation can be distinguished [26]: horizontal segregation and vertical segregation. Horizontal segregation is understood as under (over) representation of a certain group in occupations or sectors not ordered by any criterion [27]; [28]. Horizontal segregation refers to the concentration of women and men in professions or sectors of economic activity. According to [3] horizontal segregation is a nearly immutable and universal characteristic of contemporary socio-economic systems. Vertical segregation referred to the under (over) representation of a clearly identifiable group of workers in occupations or sectors at the top of an ordering based on 'desirable' attributes - income, prestige, job stability etc., independently of the sector of activity.

Culture might be perceived as a symbolic structure, and it consists of meanings that a human being applies during

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communication with other people [13]. [26] state that culture unites characteristically mastered norms, beliefs and values, developed in every country. [9] defined culture as programming of collective mind that distinguishes one group members from another. Collective programming of mind is described as a process that starts from the family, its attitudes, education, etc. Cultural fundamentals consist of values that describe what people are striving for and what they consider as being probable. According to [12], culture is a whole of unnatural, but obtained values that is general for a group of people and impacts the lifestyle and behaviour of the following group and under which one group differs from others.

Regional, ethnic, and religious cultures account for differences within countries. Regional, ethnic, and religious cultures can be described in the same terms as national cultures. Gender differences are not usually described in terms of cultures. If we recognize that within each society there is a men's culture which differs from a women's culture, this helps to explain why it is so difficult to change traditional gender roles [23]. Consequently it can be stated that social gender roles reflect social expectations: how women and men have to behave and think, what employment division has to be among genders considering social, economic and cultural traditions.

The acknowledgement and takeover of social gender differences and peculiarities form stereotypes in the society. Entrenched stereotypes of woman's role in the employment field, independently on the woman's qualification and readiness for labour market often determine a poorer women's condition in labour market. Negative stereotypes - naming a woman as a 'weaker' gender prevent from a successful women's professional performance - induce a phenomenon of 'glass ceiling' and entrench a lower woman's social status.

The Consequences of Gender Stereotypes for Women's Performance and Self-Related Cognitions

A wealth of research has demonstrated that being aware of negative stereotypes about our in-group can negatively affect performance in the relevant domain, a phenomenon known as stereotype threat [18]; [19]. Stereotype threat is a situational factor and it can be activated in three different ways (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008): blatant (explicitly stating the target group's inferiority, for example that women are not as good at math as men), moderately explicit (stating that a math test, for example, produces gender differences without specifying which group tends to perform better), and implicit (making gender salient, through emphasizing test diagnosticity, exposing women to gender stereotypic commercials, or manipulating the gender composition of the group).

In terms of outcomes, across several studies, women who were primed with negative gender stereotypes showed decreased performance on math tests [23] [24] as well as decreased interest in quantitative domains such as mathematics, engineering and computer science [21]. Overall, stereotype threat has an important, negative effect on women's performance and self-related cognitions in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The idea is that women's concerns about confirming negative stereotypes about their gender group (e.g. the stereotype that women are not good at math) can interfere with their performance and self-related cognitions, possibly because of unsuccessful attempts to suppress self-relevant stereotypes [27] and subsequent decreased working memory capacity [11] or increased arousal [3].

Although the evidence is sparser, stereotype threat seems to also affect women's self-related cognitions in leadership domains. Women exposed to TV commercials depicting women in gender stereotypical roles (e.g. homecoming queen) were less interested in choosing a leadership role in a subsequent task [25]. Similarly, gender

stereotype threat activation decreased women's entrepreneurial intentions [2] and women's confidence in their likelihood of reaching their career aspirations [8]. It also had more profound implications on women's identities, such that female leaders who experienced stereotype threat were more likely to separate their female identity from their work-related identity [3].

Overall, these damaging effects on women's leadership self-related cognitions are dangerous for women in male-dominated domains because they can lead women to withdraw from leadership and business domains that evoke such stereotype threat. Negative stereotypes not only affect women's self-related cognitions, but also their actual performance on several leadership tasks.

In a hypothetical managerial decision-making task [15], participants played the role of a manager whose role was to make decisions for six memos dealing with complex organizational issues, such as granting maternity leave, recruiting, sexual harassment, permitting a job training course, hiring a manager, selecting a research firm. Each of these memos had a correct answer, against which participants' decisions were coded by two independent coders. Women who performed this managerial task under stereotype threat showed a decrease in both the quantity and the quality of their managerial decisions.

Similarly, women under stereotype threat activation adopted a more masculine communication style, which in turn led to more negative evaluations and less managerial effectiveness [4]. In a leadership task such as influencing and motivating employees, stereotype threat led to decreased leadership performance for those female participants low in self-efficacy [5].

Finally, negotiation skills have also been affected by stereotype threat. When negative leadership-gender stereotypes were activated (i.e. when stereotypically feminine traits were linked to poor negotiation outcomes), women performed less well than men [15]; [16]. Overall, not only women feel threatened and

discouraged when negative leadership stereotypes are activated, but their

performance actually suffers.

CONCLUSION

Gender stereotypes are cultural and social attitudes towards what is traditionally considered 'masculine' or 'feminine' roles and functions. Persisting gender stereotypes may influence women's and men's choices of studies and jobs and may lead to a gender-segregated labour market. The stereotypes give rise to several barriers women have to overcome after having been appointed into a top

management position. Many a time, based on the barriers mentioned, women are often underestimated, and often they fail to put out extra effort to achieve the highly appreciated goal. Negative stereotypes of women in leadership are alive and well and are likely to affect the performance and self-related cognitions of women with leadership aspirations.

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