

A Study on Unconscious Bias And Sexual Harassment of Subordinates Create Negative Impact on the Efficiency of the Leadership of Women Leaders

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Abstract:

The quality of leadership is widely regarded as a factor influencing employee performance. Women's leadership journeys are extremely different from those of males. The discrepancies begin at birth since women are socialised so differently in India. They continue to confront hurdles in achieving workplace equality. Despite confronting hurdles, they have proven themselves at all levels of management. Gender bias, both conscious and unconscious, continues to pose significant impediments to women's leadership. According to studies, great leaders frequently demonstrate attributes that are more commonly associated with masculinity than femininity. Women with the same characteristics are labelled as "bossy," "stubborn," and "aggressive" due to people's inherent bias. When people operate on such bias, there is a lack of cooperation among female leaders. Women executives face ongoing problems at both the top and bottom levels, namely in demonstrating their leadership abilities. However, the purpose of my research is to demonstrate that the quality of leadership is determined by the behaviour of subordinates. Leaders may demonstrate their intelligence and talent only when their followers are prepared to receive it.

Keywords: Women leaders, Unconscious Bias, Gender Bias, Sexual harassment, Leadership traits

Introduction

Women who do not advance to the highest levels of leadership have been described as being stuck metaphorically in the marzipan layer (just below the top executive positions - or icing - of the organisation) or beneath a glass ceiling that prevents them from achieving the greatest levels of leadership. What is preventing women from reaching the greatest levels? One of the most common explanations for why there are so few women at the highest echelons of business is women's relatively recent entry into the workforce. It is thought that women will eventually get to the top levels of organisations. Some women's experiences with gender bias may force them to rethink their perceptions of leadership in the boardroom. Leadership is the process of increasing an individual's ability to achieve organisational goals (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). An competent leader strives and learns regularly to develop his or her leadership skills through self-evaluation (Maxwell 2011). However, women all over the world face gender bias, which impedes their advancement in leadership at the political, social, and organisational levels. (Roberts 2018) discussed how a paradigm shift was employed to evaluate gender bias in terms of women's empowerment to produce good societal change within themselves, as opposed to the old paradigm of correcting men's gender bias

towards women. Women in leadership roles who employ techniques such as mentoring, education, coaching, networking, and self-promotion can overcome or deal with discrimination and gender stereotypes (Kulik & Metz 2015; Rhode & Packer 2014). Women confront a significant challenge in obtaining top leadership positions since it is widely assumed that women are sensitive, loving, and gentle, lacking the active, competitive, independent, and self-confident attributes that males possess. However, being empathetic, loving, and gentle are not often regarded as strong leadership qualities. . According to studies, great leaders frequently demonstrate attributes that are more commonly associated with masculinity than femininity. Women with the same characteristics are labelled as "bossy," "stubborn," and "aggressive" due to people's inherent bias. Such contradictory standards make it difficult for women to demonstrate confidence and express authority. This article attempts to demonstrate that women's leadership characteristics will change based on the behaviour of their subordinates. Before condemning women leaders, it is critical to understand the psychology of their subordinates.

Objectives of the study

- To prove that women leaders are efficient
- To prove that leadership traits will get affected due to subordinates' behavior

Need of the study

Many criticize the leadership traits of the women and want to prove that only men are having good leadership qualities. So the women face the problem of glass ceiling issue. Companies in the top have more women leaders, with 29% and only 23% women leaders in underperforming companies. The data shows that company with more women leaders perform well and less women leaders perform low. Women usually shift their job due to lack of opportunities of growth. Growth of women leaders depends on their skill, hardwork, co-operation of sub-ordinates. Skill, Talent and Hard work are internal factors but co-operation from the sub-ordinates is the external factor. Setting right this external factor creates huge change in the growth of women leaders

Research Methodology

It is the analytical research paper which sees the efficiency of women leadership in different dimension. Samples or statistical data are not collected as the paper is completely conceptual.

The research work is majorly done based on the followership model of Barbara Kellerman (2007). The efficiency of women leadership and the traits they adopted is not only depending on their self experience and skill but majorly depends on the subordinates behaviour too.

Literature Review

Literature Review on Women leadership

Ashmore, Del Boca & Wohlers, 1986	The typical male and female behavior is also termed as Communal and Agentic behaviors respectively in the literature. Communal behaviors are characterized as kind, affectionate, helpful, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing and gentle. Agentic behaviors are characterized as
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	aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent and self-confident
Dr. Meenakshi Kowshik, 2020	People expect women to be careful with people, and much of the progress women have made into a formal leadership positions in an organization has been in caring roles such as personnel or public relations. Women are supposed to be too emotional, which is a part of a negative stereotypes about how women behave at work of one gets too psychological this poor judgment on their part as well as being difficult for everyone else.
Putnam & Heinen	a leader is supposed to aggressive, forceful, and competitive. Achievement oriented, self-confident but these traits tend to be more often associated with men than with women. Women are generally depicted as emotional, passive, and dependent and face a paradox that if plays the culturally defined traits of women she is unacceptable as an executive and if acts as a leader, she is called unfeminine
Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani & Longo, 1991; Eagly, A. H., & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Koenig, 2006	These gender stereotypic characters give rise to respective leadership styles: Autocratic or transactional leadership style exhibited by Men and Democratic or transformational leadership style exhibited by Women. Generally all the leadership traits reflect either femininity or masculinity dimensions of gender stereotypes.
Bala Subramanian R, Dr. I.S.F Irudhaya raj, Dr. George S.J, Dr. Munish Thakur,2020	Women though transformational in nature, wherever situation requires, they adopt the masculine characteristics.
Powell & Butterfield 1979	Women adopt traits and behavior typical of male managers in order to succeed in masculine work environment
Eagly et al., 2003; Petty & Miles, 1976; Ridgeway, 2001	In fact, several studies show that coworkers assess male expressions of anger neutrally or even positively, while the same expression from a female executive inspires intense disapproval
Rudman & Glick, 1999	If followers see their boss in the context of traditional (i.e., communal) gender stereotypes, they may expect her to naturally express emotions of that type and may thus be

	especially disconcerted by faked positive emotional expressions, resulting in negative relationships between constructs.
Dr. Meenakshi Kaushik, Women Leadership in Indian Organizations	Women have abstract visualization than men. Psyche of male subordinates has evolved into state of accepting leadership and guidance of qualified women managers.
Powell & Butterfield, 1979	Women adopt traits and behaviours typical of male managers in order to succeed in masculine work environment. Women though transformational in nature, wherever situation requires, they adopt the masculine characteristics.
Eviatiwi Kusumaningtyas Sugyanto, 2020	Leadership is seen from individual character, it is not the result from stereotypes or assumptions of products of human reason.
Ashleigh Shelby Rosette and Leigh Plunkett Tost	Top women leaders score more with their communal and agentic traits which lead their way for success
(Bass, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1995).	Transformational leaders are charismatic; they articulate a vision (inspirational motivation) for their subordinates, model how to realise it (idealised influence), urge followers to challenge the status quo (intellectual stimulation), and offer personal support (individualised consideration)
Knights, J., Grant, D. and Young, G. (2018). Leading Beyond The Ego: How to Become a Transpersonal Leader. Routledge.	Only Transpersonal Leaders who are themselves emotionally intelligent, ethical, caring, authentic and lead beyond their ego can enable and maintain this kind of culture.
D.A.C.Suranga Silva Male vs Female Leaders: Analysis of Transformational, Transactional & Laissez-faire Women Leadership Styles	Women leaders are more transformational, less transactional and less laissez faire than male leaders. Transformational leadership as well as the contingent reward aspect of transactional leadership may provide a particularly appropriate context for highlighting women's competency in leadership

Literature Review on Gender Bias

Business Leadership from a Gender Perspective and Its Impact on the Work Environment and Employee's Well-Being in Companies in the Basque Country Antonia	Male managers help their subordinates and know how to incentivize their employees. Trust on female managers by employees is less compare to male managers.
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Moreno * , Fernando Díez and Luana Ferreira, 2021	
Gender Bias Against Female Leaders: A Review Kim M Elsesser	Because of perceiver biases, female leaders will experience substantially more difficulty in getting subordinates to conceptualize themselves as possessing agentic characteristics. Given the important relationship between agentic characteristics and relevant work behaviors such as perpetual bias may undermine the effectiveness of female leaders
The conversation – Academic Rigour, Journalistic flair	Women and men react more negatively to criticism if it comes from women managers which leads to job dissatisfaction
Heilman and colleagues (2004)	It is found that female leaders whose performance was irrefutably excellent were evaluated equally as competent as their male counterparts. However, these highly-rated women were viewed as less likeable and more interpersonally hostile than men with identical credentials.
(Elsesser and Lever 2011)	Women are not only more likely than men to prefer male management, but are also more likely to evaluate female leaders more negatively than men
(Schieman and McMullen 2008)	Women who report to female managers also experience more distress and negative health symptoms than women with male management
(Cech and Blair-Loy 2010).	Yet another example of the queen bee syndrome comes from a study of women who hold one of the top two positions in their company . These high-level women were found to be more likely than others to attribute gender inequality in professional advancement to female lack of motivation and experience.
Pande and Ford 2011	Backlash against women may result if individuals feel that their choices are being restricted in order to promote women
Rifkin, 2014; Rubner, 1991	For instance, national polls indicate that workers tend to prefer male supervisors to female supervisors

Elsesser & Lever, 2011	In another recent survey, while a plurality of participants (51%) had no preference, the rest preferred a male to a female boss by a 2–1 margin
An experiment by Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, and Nauts (2012)	There is some evidence suggesting that subordinates might be more likely to enact negative behaviors when led by a woman (vs. a man).
Heilman et al., 2004	female leaders are often stereotyped as conniving, manipulative, and untrustworthy
Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; for a review see Shields, 2013	Female leaders are emotionally unstable “wild cards” that will make irrational decisions

Who are subordinates?

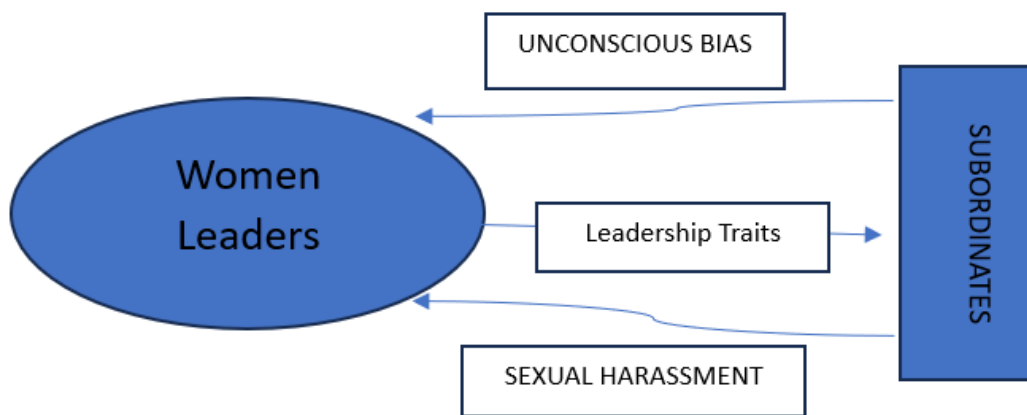
Followers in a team are important cog of the wheel in a team, they must ensure that the confidence is instilled in the leader so that the work assigned will be achieved by the members of the team as planned and expected. As leaders would delegate more of the work and get the followers engaged in decision making the followers should be taking up the challenges in both hands and consider that as an opportunity to call for success rather than simply consider it as a burden itself. The change that a follower could bring to a team is that share the new ideas, become creative and understand the role of the follower within the team. The idea behind this is to contribute to the team by shouldering the responsibility and making sure proper initiatives are being brought in to the table. It is also important that the follower thinks outside box and challenges the status quo, gives new insights to the leader which would boost the confidence of the leader. As more autonomy is provided by the leader it is also important that the followers ensure that they keep on constant communication with the leader and ensure the objectives of the tasks and work is not incorrectly interpreted by the parties involved and the required clarity is obtained. On the other hand followers should be honest and truthful about what is taking place within the team and appraise the leader continuously. These actions would encourage a leader and boost the confidence they have with the members of the team. So the leadership will be successful with the support and co-operation of the subordinates. But if the subordinates do not support the leaders, Leaders could not accomplish their target and goals.

Women leaders and subordinates

Authentic leaders navigate from their core values and convictions. Instead of conforming to historical leadership stereotypes, they lead with self-awareness and transparency, prioritising ethics and integrity. Many prominent female leaders today are pioneering this leadership style and driving change through moral courage, compassion and collaboration. Former New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern’s crisis leadership during the pandemic is a powerful example of authentic, servant-hearted leadership transcending gender barriers. Other trailblazers include General Motors CEO Mary Barra’s authentic, empathetic leadership in crisis management and nonprofit leader Melinda Gates’ values-driven influence. Such women leaders leverage character strengths like integrity, emotional intelligence and commitment to a higher purpose to drive impact, leading through influence rather than command.

Women leaders continue to face significant barriers from conscious and unconscious gender bias. Studies reveal that successful leaders often exhibit traits commonly associated with masculinity rather than those associated with femininity. Women exhibiting the same traits face labels like “bossy”, “stubborn” and “aggressive” due to people’s inherent bias. Such double standards make it harder for women to exhibit confidence and assert authority.

Bias also exists in talent evaluation, as reflected in lower promotion rates. In research conducted, it was seen that women consistently rated their test performance lower than men despite both groups achieving the same average score. Structural barriers around talent development processes and lack of mentorship opportunities also impact career progress for women. This study wants to prove that leadership traits adopted by women leaders majorly decided based on the sub-ordinates psychology and behaviour



Majorly Women leaders are experiencing Unconscious Bias and sexual harassment which are the major hurdles for the advancement in their career.

Unconscious bias

The first big hurdle many female leaders face is unconscious bias. This can be anything from a belief in gender stereotypes to subconscious attitudes about female capabilities. Bias can also manifest as preferences for women that act, speak, and dress in certain ways.

Unconscious biases about female employees are especially detrimental in management and leadership spheres. Research shows such biases can make it far more difficult (and slower) for women to climb to executive positions than men.

Explicit bias and discrimination are illegal and frowned upon by today’s society. Still, many female leaders struggle with subconscious judgment from peers, subordinates and higher-ups. Therefore, they are often less likely to get the promotion or be assigned “leadership” tasks than their male counterparts.

Tackling unconscious biases in the workplace isn’t easy. These biases are born from a variety of factors. Addressing them requires taking a hard look at how a workplace functions, then implementing anti-discrimination training and better equity practices.

Sexual harassment

Women leaders in these sectors may trigger more hostile behavior from subordinates by being viewed, more or less consciously, as a threat to male identity. Sexual harassment may even become a way of gaining or equalizing power with those women. Some women leaders are experiencing sexual harassment

due to jealousy (Olle Folke, Johanna Rickne, Seiki Tanaka, Yasuka Tateishi 2020). Sexual harassment is sometimes about sexual desire, but other times may be about status equalization. Consciously or subconsciously, the harasser may want to “put women in their place.” For example, laboratory studies have shown that men are more likely to harass feminist than feminine women. Such negative treatment of women supervisors could be linked to a distaste for female supervision. This distaste could also grow out of unconscious bias about appropriate behaviors and social roles for women and men. Leadership is generally considered a male activity, making a man the prototypical manager and a woman manager a deviation from the norm. Negative reactions that stem precisely from this type of norm deviation are a fundamental part of theory in sociology and economics about how social norms are maintained. Retaliation against people who break norms, such as women leaders, helps strengthen the perpetrator's sense of self and creates a cost for breaking social norms.

Types of Subordinates

Barbara Kellerman Has classified the followers/subordinates into following categories

- Isolates
- Bystanders
- Participants
- Activists
- Diehards.

Let us see about them in detail

Isolates

Isolates are completely detached. These followers are scarcely aware of what’s going on around them. Moreover, they do not care about their leaders, know anything about them, or respond to them in any obvious way. Their alienation is, nevertheless, of consequence. By knowing and doing nothing, these types of followers passively support the status quo and further strengthen leaders who already have the upper hand. As a result, isolates can drag down their groups or organizations.

Isolates are most likely to be found in large companies, where they can easily disappear in the maze of cubicles, offices, departments, and divisions. Their attitudes and behaviors attract little or no notice from those at the top levels of the organization as long as they do their jobs, even if only marginally well and with zero enthusiasm.

To mitigate the isolates’ negative effect on companies, leaders and managers first need to ask themselves the following questions: Do we have any isolates among us, and, if so, how many? Where are they? Why are they so detached? Answering these questions won’t be easy given that isolates by their very nature are invisible to the top team. Senior management will need to acquire information from those at other levels of the organization by having informal and formal conversations about managers and employees who seem lethargic or indifferent about their work, the group, or both.

Bystanders

Bystanders observe but do not participate. These free riders deliberately stand aside and disengage, both from their leaders and from their groups or organizations. They may go along passively when it is in their self-interest to do so, but they are not internally motivated to engage in an active way. Their withdrawal also amounts to tacit support for whoever and whatever constitutes the status quo. Like isolates,

bystanders can drag down the rest of the group or organization. But unlike isolates, they are perfectly aware of what is going on around them; they just choose not to take the time, the trouble, or, to be fair, sometimes the risk to get involved.

There are bystanders everywhere—and, like isolates, they tend to go unnoticed, especially in large organizations, because they consciously choose to fly under the radar. In the workplace, silent but productive bystander followers can be useful to managers who just want people to do as they are told—but they will inevitably disappoint those bosses who want people to actually care about the organization's mission. There are ways to bring bystanders along, however. As with isolates, the key is to determine the root causes of their alienation and offer appropriate intrinsic or extrinsic rewards that may increase their levels of engagement, and, ultimately, their productivity. Bystanders, perhaps much more than isolates, may be swayed by such incentives

Participants

Participants are engaged in some way. Regardless of whether these followers clearly support their leaders and organizations or clearly oppose them, they care enough to invest some of what they have (time or money, for example) to try to make an impact.

When participants support their leaders and managers, they are highly coveted. They are the fuel that drives the engine. In the workplace, for instance, they can make effective junior partners. When they disapprove of their leaders and managers, however, or when they act as independent agents, the situation gets more complicated.

Activists

Activists feel strongly one way or another about their leaders and organizations, and they act accordingly. These followers are eager, energetic, and engaged. They are heavily invested in people and processes, so they work hard either on behalf of their leaders or to undermine and even unseat them.

Activists who strongly support their leaders and managers can be important allies, whether they are direct or indirect reports. Activists are not necessarily high in number, though, if only because their level of commitment demands an expense of time and energy that most people find difficult to sustain. Of course, this same passion also means they can and often do have a considerable impact on a group or organization. Those activists who are as loyal as they are competent and committed are frequently in the leader or manager's inner circle—simply because they can be counted on to dedicate their (usually long) working hours to the mission as their superiors see it.

Some activist followers are effectively encouraged by their superiors to take matters into their own hands.

Diehards

Diehards are prepared to go down for their cause—whether it's an individual, an idea, or both.

These followers may be deeply devoted to their leaders, or they may be strongly motivated to oust their leaders by any means necessary. They exhibit an all-consuming dedication to someone or something they deem worthy.

Diehard followers are rare; their all-encompassing commitment means they emerge only in those situations that are dire or close to it. They can be either a strong asset to their leaders or managers or a dangerous liability.

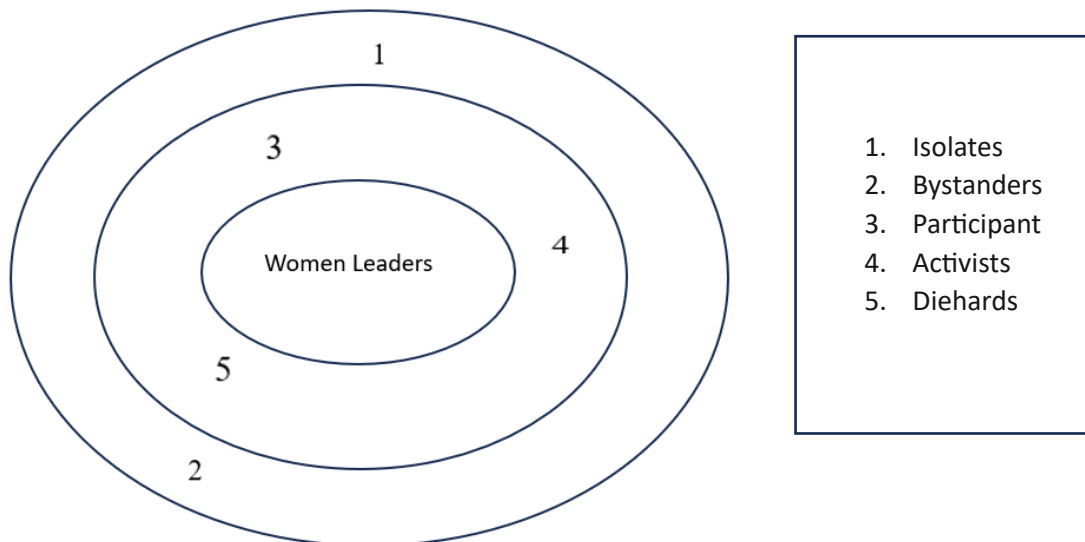
Of course, not all diehard followers are so extreme in their devotion. But they are willing, by definition,

to endanger their own health and welfare in the service of their cause. Soldiers the world over, for instance, risk life and limb in their commitment to protect and defend. They are trained and willing to follow nearly blindly the orders of their superiors, who depend on them absolutely to get the job done.

Sometimes diehards can be found in more ordinary circumstances, even in traditional organizations in which they are motivated to act in ways judged by others to be extreme.

As mentioned earlier, attitudes and opinions do not matter much when we are talking about isolates and bystanders, if only because they do little or even nothing. They matter a great deal, however, when we are talking about participants, activists, and diehards. Do these followers support their leader? Or, rank notwithstanding, are they using their available resources to resist people in positions of power, authority, and influence? Barbara Kellerman suggests that good leaders should pay special attention to those who demonstrate their strong support or their vehement opposition. It's not difficult to see the signs—participants and especially activists and diehards wear their hearts on their sleeves.

Analysis and Interpretation



Isolates and Bystanders with Unconscious Bias

If you see the above diagram Isolates and By standers are outside the working environment with their anonymous behaviour. They don't contribute anything to the organisation under any one's leadership irrespective of the gender. Depending on the reasons for alienation, there may be ways to engage isolates and bystanders in the workplace. Unless they bring down the interest of other people, they produce no harm to their leaders. But if they spoil the spirit of their team members, women leaders may take agentic leadership traits in hand.

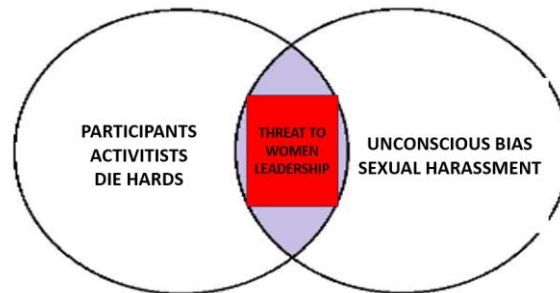
Participants, Activists and Diehards with unconscious bias & Sexual harassment

Participants, Activists and Diehards are closely associated with the working environment. Leaders are depending on these type of subordinates to execute their plan. If these three categories of subordinates are carrying any explicit and implicit bias towards their women leaders, chances of co-operation is very less from them. As women leader depends on these people, their non co-operative moment may harm and women leaders may undergo pressure and stress to complete their task. They may try different types of

leadership traits to get the work done by the subordinates. They may try with communal traits and extend to agentic traits. This may create the scenario that the women leadership is inefficient and instable.

Sexual harassment by subordinates, peers and superiors

It is also possible that male subordinates are particularly sensitive to women's leadership. In free-text responses in our Japanese survey, several respondents volunteered that women managers could be expected to experience sexual harassment out of jealousy. For example, one woman wrote that she “cannot escape from sexual harassment because male workers feel jealous about her supervisory position.” This mechanism of jealousy from employees toward women supervisors was also mentioned during the interviews at the Japanese firm.(olle folke, Rohanna Rickne, Seiki Tanaka, Yasuka Tateishi 2020). Many women employees expressed the reason for job dissatisfaction and quitting the job is due to sexual harassment (olle folk and johanna rickne 2020). Some women change their body language to the most masculine with their team members, subordinates and superiors to prevent the sexual harassment. Individuals who have agentic traits (eg, assertive, confident, competent) that are more commonly associated with men are often selected for leadership roles. For women, this poses a potential barrier to entry into the higher ranks (Grad med educ 2019)



Conclusion

Gender bias and sexual harassment of subordinates are the primary variables influencing female executives to adopt specific leadership attributes. When subordinates possess one or both of the aforementioned criteria, female leaders may pick masculine leadership traits. Consider the attributes you identify with leaders: ambition, assertiveness, competitiveness, and confidence, to name a few. These are the attributes that everyone must possess, regardless of gender. What's the problem? Because these characteristics are the antithesis of stereotyped feminine behaviour, women who exhibit them (either naturally or in an attempt to advance) frequently face a 'likeability penalty'. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we expect women to be kind, nurturing, and subservient. As a result, those who exhibit behaviour that deviates from gender norms are routinely viewed as less likeable by their colleagues, both male and female, which might have ramifications when it comes to obtaining a promotion or pay rise. To add to the irritation, women who are seen 'too feminine' are also perceived as less capable in typical managerial contexts. In a nutshell, female leaders face the dilemma of whether or not to do something. As a result, encouraging capable female leaders who are disliked by everyone due to psychological issues with their subordinates is not advisable. It is the duty of the organisation to create the working environment favouring the women leaders and educating the employees about the severity of unconscious bias and sexual harassment which are subject to severe penalty. This article gives the clarity that women’s efficiency in leadership are decided based on the subordinates psychology and behaviour. If the

subordinates are supportive, women will glow like a star in leadership and her efficiency is enhanced but if the subordinates are not supportive carrying the unconscious bias and do harassment sexually, her leadership quality is getting diluted.

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