

Sociocultural Aspects of Leadership: A Look at Gender Roles

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Abstract

The research aims to examine specifically the gendered aspects of professional and management leadership and evaluate the prospects for overcoming gender inequality in the social sphere. The study involved 350 students comprising of 45% men and 55% women from three different universities of Kazan (Russia): Kazan Federal University, Kazan Federal Agricultural University, and Kazan State Medical University. To accomplish the research objectives, empirical data were gathered using the Bem Sex-Role Inventory and a Sex Typing on Leadership Survey composed by Cann and Siegfried (1990). The findings reveal that only 12% of students were raised in traditional patriarchal families, while the rest was raised in a multicultural environment. The gender-neutral type of leadership is dominant in student groups. This observation suggests a definite trend towards gender equality in management.

Keywords: Gender Equality; Multicultural Environment; Leadership; Russia

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Introduction

Gender equality issues have become the subject of discussions in the field of politics, education, employment and migration in the modern world (Fennell & Arnot, 2007; Inglehart, Norris & Ronald, 2003). These studies define gender markers, methods for gender-balanced budgeting, labour legislation, equal opportunities and the concepts of gender policy (Ryskaliyev, Zhapakov, Apakhayev, Moldakhmetova, Buribayev, & Khamzina, 2019).

Despite positive steps towards gendered equality, in 2017, the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment at the workplace became prominent not only in the social media but thousands of protestors took the movement to the streets, transforming it into a global cross-country movement (Bhattacharyya, 2018; McDonald & White, 2018; Philipose & Kesavan, 2019; Regulska, 2018). Although the movement emerged with a number of accusations by Hollywood stars against Harvey Weinstein, the renowned director, however, way back in 2006, this movement was started by Tarana Burke aimed at helping victims of sexual assaults (Bhattacharyya, 2018; Ryskaliyev, 2019). "In Kazakhstan too, this movement has been gaining ground together with the launch of a similar local movement— #НемолчиKZ hashtag ("don't be silent")" (Ryskaliyev et al., 2019:16). This research aims to probe the socio-cultural aspects of gendered professional and management leadership.

Gender equality can be defined as a "provision of equal rights, opportunities and access to resources regardless of gender [but] taking into account the differences between men and women" (Mukhamadiyeva, Agumbayeva, Alpysbayev, Ramazanova, Abenova, & Duiskenova, 2019: 12). Nevertheless, the #MeToo movement is a demonstration of the fact that the gendered equality at the workplace is far from reality (Bhattacharyya, 2018; McDonald & White, 2018; Philipose & Kesavan, 2019; Regulska, 2018). Applying the notion of self-actualisation, this research aims to study the

attitudes towards gendered professional and management leadership in Russia.

Self-actualisation can be defined as the need concerned with realising one's potential, self-development, and creativity. Therefore, self-actualisers make up only a small percentage of people (about 1%) (Clark, 2008). Such people do not share personal characteristics with neurotic personalities and immature people (Hoffman, 2017). They are independent and creative, with a philosophical outlook, democratic in relations, high-performance, etc. (Abawi, Bauman-Buffone, Pineda-Báez, & Carter, 2018).

The concept of self-realisation correlates with self-actualisation, self-transcendence, self-determination, and self-consciousness. Hence, a self-realised person, a leader, is an actualised individual, sensitive about one's own behaviour and capable of devoting him/herself to someone or something (Tripathy, 2018). It can be considered within personal growth theory understanding a person as an active, devoted individual striving to develop specific mental structures in oneself. However, a person does not have an autonomous pursuit for self-realisation – he/she needs the motivation to reach one's potential.

Being in a motive state means to strive for relaxing tension that arises due to inconsistency between the actual and potential capabilities of a person. At the same time, self-realisation refers to adaptation, which becomes possible when human capabilities are put into action. At this point, individuals are passive-actors not aspiring to achieve their potential – their behaviour rises from unconscious factors and conditions of life that contribute nothing to an active lifestyle. Self-realisation is nothing more than adaptation; the act of satisfying a deficient need. Though adaptation may be followed by self-realisation, it is not oriented towards it at first. From this perspective, leadership can be a result of adaptation (Branson, Franken, & Penney, 2016).

However, there remains a myth that a leader is a man, which is not easy to dismantle, although

women have been actively involved in leadership for generations (Denessen, 2017).

The issue regarding women's leadership in making decisions at the state and administrative levels is particularly acute. Thus, the research on women's political and management leadership and its development is relevant. The research begins with a brief review of the literature on aspects of gendered leadership. It then goes on to discuss the socio-cultural aspects of gendered relationships in Russia. Following this, it discusses the methods deployed to examine the objectives of this research. The final sections critically discuss the findings.

Gender Leadership in Multicultural Environment

A Gallup survey, conducted for "America today" and CNN in 2016, shows that about half of men believe that the gender of the leader does not matter (Branson et al., 2016). In another similar research in 2018, the Roper Centre for Public Opinion surveyed 1019 adults. This survey probed the question: "If you were taking a new job and had your choice of a boss, would you prefer to work for a man or a woman?" In response to this question, 47% of the respondents said it would not matter to them either way. While only 16% of the respondents said they would prefer having a female boss, 35% of the respondents unexpectedly would prefer having a male boss.

Evidence further suggests that 12% of men and 7% of women are employed in the USA in the administrative and managerial spheres. The success of women as administrators and their promotion depend primarily on the presence of their mentor-men, often their husbands. However, when the woman's professional career begins to prevent her from giving the necessary time to her family, mentor-men often refuses to promote her (Byrd, 2009; Berkovich, 2016; Eacott & Evers, 2018). This observation linked to work-life conflict bear resonance to the observation made by Bhattacharyya (2016) and Ratnesh, Ali & Sinha (2019).

Currently, between 37% and 45% of the Parliamentarians are women in Denmark,

Finland, Norway, and Sweden (Liu, Cutcher & Grant, 2015). Sweden occupies the first place. Overall, 45% of women of the world are in the Parliaments, while only 15% is the average percentage of women in the Parliaments of democratic countries (Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation, 2019). Despite the high political mobilisation of women, the policy is still hierarchically structured and stratified according to gender not only in the Nordic countries but across the world. Women are still underrepresented in political power, especially in the political and strategic elite. At the same time, it is interesting to note that women are much better represented in the higher echelons of power than, for example, in business (Perugini, Laura, & Solano, 2015).

Nonetheless, despite women reaching higher positions in the career ladder, roles often prevent women from getting an equal position among men and reduce their opportunities for promotion. Some scholars argue that men make more attempts to dominate other representatives of their gender. In the presence of the opposite gender, women are less active than men who claim to be spontaneous leaders. Many women do not see leadership as a core value (Abawi et al., 2018; Abdullah, 2018). Hence, there is an opinion that female leaders lose out to male leaders in leadership effectiveness because they have less power, influence, and resources (Abawi et al., 2018). However, women became equal with men in leadership effectiveness with time spent in making communication ties (Liu, Cutcher & Grant, 2015; Rocha-Trindade, Luisa & Mendes, 2019). The next section illustrates the gendered leadership development in Russia.

Gender Leadership Development in Russia

Although, Russia is gradually moving towards accruing gendered equality, it continues to bear a stereotypical attitude towards representatives of different genders, which influences the selection of candidates for specific positions, including leadership ones. (Gasman, Abiola & Travers, 2015; Berkovich, 2016; Dugan, 2017; Astashova, Bondyрева & Zhuk, 2019). The tendency of women leaders, inherent in

Western culture, is also observed in Russian society. Every second a person holding a degree in higher and secondary vocational education is a leader. At this point, a question arises: who are the subordinates? Given the equal proportion of men and women in each country, the answer is “one man and two women” (Gasman et al., 2015). There is only 7% of women managers among the graduates. Even in schools with a large number of female teachers, only 39% of school principals are women (Lam, 2002).

Women leaders are perceived less competent; especially if the subordinates are supporters of the traditional rather than egalitarian views on leadership, they associate leadership role with masculine features (Abawi et al., 2018; Eacott & Evers, 2018). This view is shared mostly by men. Prejudices against women exist in Russia as well. 25.3% of male managers prefer men as employees, and only 12.9% of them prefer women. The same situation is with women, who are willing to cooperate and influence women rather than men (Lam, 2002; Ryan et al., 2011; Liu, Cutcher & Grant, 2015).

In Russian society, there are confirmed facts of bias against a woman as a specialist. Thus, women managers are given less time and data to complete job requirements. In some countries, women receive lower wages for the same work as men do (Gasman et al., 2015). Naturally, higher positions are assigned to people with higher competencies, specifically to men. However, in spheres where women are dominant representatives (non-productive consumer services, catering, retail, healthcare, education, culture), the proportion of women leaders is the highest. For example, in Russia, there is no gender segregation in the spheres of teaching and research (Sadovnikova & Mirzaahmedov, 2019). Women run departments, laboratories and even institutes if they have organisational skills and the appropriate level of professionalism. However, only 14% of doctoral degree holders are women in Russia. It means that men are six times more likely to become the head of a department and laboratory than women are (Hartley, 2009; Berkovich, 2016).

Obstacles on women’s path to professional success are:

- Late career interest. For many women, career becomes a priority only after the birth of children and the creation of a family, which is often due to pressure from society and cultural values. While on maternity leave, a woman is not de facto developing as a specialist, at the same time, men use this time to build a career. Certainly, there are cases when a man takes maternity leave. However, these cases are rare, and for some cultures, they are not acceptable at all (Abdullah, 2018).
- Temper. Women are more emotional, provoked by physiological stimuli and therefore not as good as men at self-control. A person who cannot control him/herself cannot control others. This inability to self-control and objective thinking rises from stress, and this stress arises from the attempt to juggle family and business (Thomas, 2017).
- Risk taking. Women are unlikely risk-takers. Doubt, hesitation and fear force them to play safe and postpone essential decisions until better times (Ryan et al., 2011).
- Fear of success. Women dread the consequences of success – the loss of femininity and attractiveness and social estrangement (Rosile, Boje & Claw, 2018).

However, the paradoxical findings destroy these stereotypes and question the psychological incapacity of women to function as leaders at par with men (Ryan et al., 2011).

To lure women in politics, the occupational function should be balanced with external effects. Both a robust civil society with radical feminist movements and women's organisations alongside political structures are needed. There are discussions in society on sexual violence, gender equality, social programmes. The latter stimulates the realisation of these aspects at the political (policy-making) level, which increases women's interest in politics (Perugini et al.,

2015). Under these circumstances, a common political culture and political behaviours change. The increased participation of women in political life indicates that culture adapts to the values of civil society and that society is ready for the qualitative transformations of social life (Hartley, 2009).

What is more saddening is that gendered inequality in leadership is linked to the presence of gender and cultural stereotypes, and therefore higher competency is demanded of a female leader compared to a male leader. In spheres dominated by women, preference is given to men, at times on the grounds of gender only. In a “masculine society”, a woman with masculine characteristics may become doomed to internal conflict making her performance less effective. The woman might strive to lead in an attempt to overcome inferiority. Because society generally accords higher status to men, male leaders are more appreciated (Lam, 2002).

Thus, issues needing disclosure are the formation of a female leader’s personality, settings in which leadership potential is to be achieved, woman’s influence on an organisation’s performance, motives and attitudes of a female leader, struggles associated with a leadership position. Further studies of gender in leadership should be directed to the existing and best models of female leadership behaviour.

Against this backdrop, this study explores the socio-cultural aspects of gender in leadership and management. The research findings demonstrate the high level of stereotypical thinking of the participants. The issues linked to the methods applied are discussed in the following sections.

Methods

Research Design

Men and women tend to follow socially accepted models of behaviour. Hence, this study assumes a connection between gender role behaviour and the level of empathy. Gender roles are identified with a Bem Sex-Role Inventory. The sex-typed qualities on leadership dimension are determined using a survey method, which was

developed and used by Cann and Siegfried (hereafter referred to as Sex Typing on Leadership Survey) (Cann & Siegfried, 1990).

Participants

The study was conducted at three universities from November-February in 2018-2019. The establishments involved are the Kazan Federal University, Kazan Federal Agricultural University, and Kazan State Medical University. The study involved 350 students consisting of 45% men and 55% women.

Experiment

This study uses:

- Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) to measure masculinity and femininity. The original BSRI includes 60 dichotomous items quantifying gender characteristics. The scoring treats masculine and feminine items as measures of two independent scales.
- Sex Typing on Leadership (STL) survey to assess the relationship between leadership styles and sex-typed behavioural styles. There are two versions of this survey (one per considered style).

The first version involves ten behavioural descriptors that are included in the Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) originally designed to assess these styles. Participants rated each of the 36 sex-typed traits on a 5-point scale ranging from “more like consideration” (1) to “more like structuring” (5).

The second version contains three sets of traits (masculine, feminine, and neutral), which are often used to describe someone who acts in a masculine, feminine, or neither masculine nor feminine manner. The participants rated each of the 20 LBDQ leader behaviours on a 5-point scale ranging from masculine (1) to feminine (5).

The Research

In gender psychology, masculinity and femininity describe male and female dominant behaviours. Later, Sandra Bem introduced androgyny, a combination of both male and female characteristics. Her scale (BSRI) measures an

individual's identification (in scores) with masculine, feminine, or androgynous characteristics.

The information it gathers is reasonable, which makes this tool very useful. It has become very common and indispensable in almost all gender studies. BSRI may be applied to those whose gender identity has formed. This tool allows identifying causes of gender-role behaviours forming under different socio-cultural conditions.

BSRI summarises the perception of the real self, ideal self and expectations about appropriate behaviour for each sex. The construct of androgyny is the possession of both masculinity and femininity traits at an equally high level.

BSRI rates each item and ratings are transferred to the inventory score sheet. Masculinity and femininity scores are medians of these ratings for each domain. The score of androgyny is not calculated, through androgynous traits are classified when scores on both the masculinity and femininity scales are above 4.9.

Mathematical analysis of BSRI data uses Fisher's angular transformation ϕ^* , as it produces two samples of interested effect frequencies (Branson et al., 2016).

STL survey provides a profile of gender-typical (masculine for men, feminine for women), gender-atypical (masculine for women, feminine for men) or gender-neutral (characteristics of both genders) characteristics for each respondent.

This survey is designed to assess the relationship between leadership styles and sex-typed behavioural styles. In Bendas' modification, leadership requires consideration (a friendly and approachable leader) and structuring (aims at reaching a goal) behaviours. Consideration behaviours are more feminine and structuring behaviours are more masculine.

This self-reported survey form includes 36 sex-typed traits and 20 leader behaviours to be rated on a five-point scale (1 – never or almost true; 5 – always or almost true). The total score shows the dominant sex-typed behaviour style of a

leader. The masculine style of behaviour characterises the leader as a brave, strong-willed, active, and goal-oriented person. The feminine style of behaviour characterises the leader as a submissive, compliant, timid and sensitive person. The gender-neutral style of behaviour combines traditional male and female traits.

Mathematical analysis of survey results is carried out using the Mann-Whitney U-test, which found significant differences between the categories of leadership styles (Hartley, 2009). Before going into the results section, it is important to discuss the dimensions of sex-role orientation, which are as follows:

- Feminine – having the qualities attributed to females.
- Masculine – having the qualities attributed to males.
- Androgynous – combination (not necessarily equal) of masculine and feminine traits; can score high on both masculine and feminine.
- Undifferentiated – low on both masculinity and femininity.

The Results

The survey, which was conducted to examine ways to strengthen the role of women in public life, provided interesting results on the prospects of women leaders. The vast majority of respondents emphasised that women can easily become leaders in public and private sectors of the economy, authorities at regional and state levels, and in public organisations. The responses are illustrated in Table 1.

Among the objective factors constraining the formation of good leadership traits in women, the respondents mentioned the forced necessity of coordinating maternal duties and household chores with being a leader. This finding is similar to the findings as put forward by scholars elsewhere (Bhattacharyya, 2016 and Ratnesh et al., 2019). Then, follow the archetypes of consciousness, that is, the traditional opinion that a woman cannot be a good economic manager and politician.

Subjective constrainers include the insufficient level of relevant skills and team management abilities; the lack of initiative to make a career; the lack of motivation for success

and up to 96% among women (Table 3). In these groups, femininity level was below average (40%). The father has a dominant role in only 12% of the families. Based on the results set

Table 1: Can a Woman be a Leader: Survey Results

Structure	Responses (in percentages)		
	Yes	No	Not sure
1. Private company	97.00	2.00	1.00
2. Public organisation	91.00	7.00	9.00
3. Public institution	84.00	2.02	6.00
4. Local authorities	73.00	11,00	21.00
5. Defence complex	68.00	14,00	22.00
6. Council	64.00	8.00	19.00

Sources:

BSRI results showed dominant androgyny in both gender groups: 60% among men (Table 2)

forth in Tables 2 and 3, students with purely masculine or feminine traits were not identified.

Table 2: Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) Results in Male Group

Code*	IS
1m25	0.23
2m24	0.46
3m24	0.69
4m45	0.46
5m21	-0.69
6m21	-0.34
7m28	-0.46
8m23	0.92
9m22	-0.11
10m20	-0.46
11m21	-0.34
12m43	-0.11
13m25	-0.34
14m22	0
15m30	-0.81
16m24	-0.34
17m21	0
18m22	-1.04
19m30	-0.23
20m21	0.23

Note: * – first variable in the code refers to the number of a respondent, and the second – to his age

Source:

The findings of the dimensions of sex-role orientation demonstrate that 30% of respondents are feminine, 20% are masculine, 20% are androgynous, and 30% are

undifferentiated. In the male group, only one respondent (18.22) had masculine over feminine traits (-1.04), while others were mostly

androgynous, with masculine characteristics dominating.

Respondents with extremely high masculinity or femininity score were not found. These results allow a conclusion about an uneven distribution of masculine, feminine types and a high

(according to testing) prevalence of androgynous individuals. Feminine women dominate masculine men in number due to gender norms in society that impose restrictions on aggressiveness, impulsiveness, and dominance, which are traditionally masculine characteristics.

Table 3: Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) Results in Female Group

Code*	IS
1f37	0.58
2f25	0
3f23	-0.69
4f22	0.34
5f28	0.92
6f29	1.62
7f18	0.58
8f20	0.34
9f35	0.69
10f21	1.39
11f21	-0.23
12f27	-0.69
13f31	0.34
14f27	1.16
15f42	-0.34
16f23	-0.46
17f22	0.46
18f21	1.16
19f25	-0.23
20f20	0.92

Note: * – first variable in the code refers to the number of a respondent, and the second – to her age.
Source:

The empirical value ϕ^* turned out to be significant for both gender role behaviours. This means that individual's level of masculinity and femininity depends on the family and cultural traditions. Thus, these data suggest that the majority of the respondents are not feminine in the way necessary to achieve gender balance in leadership.

Using Excel 2003, Pearson's R was calculated to determine the relationship between gender role characteristics and self-actualisation. This allows us to conclude about the strength of the connection between two studied phenomena (name them) and the direction of this connection. BSRI score from 1 to 2.025 falls

within range on a feminine scale, while the score from -1 to -2.025 – on a masculine scale. The direct correlation between self-actualisation and gender role characteristics is considered a connection between the femininity score and the self-actualisation level. The reverse correlation is considered as a connection between the masculinity score and the self-actualisation level, respectively.

The STL survey showed a dominant gender-neutral style of leadership behaviour in both gender groups, 35.52 points in the first group and 35.36 in the second one.

The average scores on masculine, feminine and neutral scales are 50%, 63.3%, and 76.6%,

respectively. 13.3% of the respondents have high femininity and masculinity scores. 36.6 % of the respondents have low level of masculinity and 23.3% have low level of femininity. 20% of the respondents are gender-neutral. 3.3% of the respondents have a low level of gender-neutrality.

Men demonstrate a smooth distribution between categories (33.3% – masculine, 30% – feminine, 33.3% – neutral). In the male group, 13.3 % of gender-neutral respondents have higher levels of gender-neutrality. Women with a middle level of gender-neutrality dominate other women in number (43.4%), while the portion of women with a high level of femininity is the smallest (3.3%).

The variance analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in masculinity score between sex-typed traits and leadership style ($F = 4.821$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.034$). Women leaders have the lowest masculinity score compared to men. The score composes items, such as being stern, ambitious, independent, confident, aggressive, assertive, dominant, forceful, autocratic, tough, analytical and competitive. Thus, a strictly masculine style of leadership is not popular under current conditions of local councils. The level of masculinity is as high for women as for men. It may also be noted that a larger portion of men demonstrates a middle level of femininity (33.3%) compared to women who have only 16.6% of masculine traits.

Considering that the respondents belong to different cultures (including masculinity-femininity according to Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions), such results are within the normal range for a balanced leader education.

Discussion

Currently, there is a positive trend in the issue of gender equality. 39.4% of male respondents and 46% of female respondents believe they would "never become a leader" or "become a leader in some cases". Seemingly, a Russian study conducted in January 1995 reported that 61.5% of men and 63.3% of women were of the same opinion (Richardson & Loubier, 2008; Rosile et al., 2018). Globalisation has impacted almost

every society. Gender roles are minimised, and thus women and men are not very different in the assessments of their leadership abilities. The findings unveil that 28.4% of men and 24.9% of women were sure that representatives of their gender always or often become leaders (for comparison, please see, the Russian study of January 1995, which reported that 10.2% of men and 9.5% of women with same opinion).

It is essential to understand that for many people the concept of leadership is associated with self-realisation and self-actualisation. Self-realisation is traditionally understood as the achievement of social success, better psychological characteristics, and self-perception strategies. Self-actualisation may include social (interaction with society) and psychological characteristics (immediacy, democratic personality); leadership and professional characteristics (desire for power), creativity; intelligence; self-perception, etc. (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Ryan et al., 2011; Abdullah, 2018). Thus, in modern global society, a gender gap has reduced when it comes to self-realisation and self-actualisation of any person.

Researchers of gender issues note that there are "reference points" for men and women, which have entailed the formation of male and female scales (Berkovich, 2016; Denessen, 2017). Women may assess one's own performance on the female scale and men may perform the assessment on the male scale. In this case, women compare themselves with other women and men compare themselves with men. It is important to understand that for many studies, this paradox may serve as a limitation in the interpretation of the results.

Differences between women and men in leadership opportunities indeed exist in many societies, often due to their cultural traditions and religious dogmas. They are not factors that completely close the opportunity as lost for women to lead in business or politics. They only confirm the need for women to search for those models of leadership that, on the one hand, break gender stereotypes and, on the other, ensure personal success in self-realisation and self-actualisation.

Conclusion

Even though students belong to different cultures, the results of the study show a high level of stereotypical thinking amongst the respondents on gender issues signalling that these respondents bear androgynous type of behaviour; however, such behaviour is significantly higher amongst the respondents who are aged 35 and above. At the same time, the results of the study demonstrate a higher level of femininity among the respondents compared to a similar study in 2016. It can be assumed that this is a consequence of positive changes in the position of women as leaders and the perception of women leaders in society. Among the respondents, pronounced masculinity or femininity was not detected for the reason of high demand for adaptability to values of modern global society, which continually transforms and demands compliance with several new behavioural norms.

The study found that the respondents from multicultural societies tend to have more gender-neutral assessments on leadership issues, while the representatives of monocultural societies are more categorical in terms of the impact of gender on leadership. This observation confirms that the attitude to the gender factor in social roles is primarily due to the values of society and family (micro-community). As a family is an environment where the personality was formed.

This study has proven aspirations among youth for gender equality values. The social effect of these aspirations requires further study. Such a study should be based on active implementation of gender equality policy in public life. A series of socio-cultural experiments should be implemented with representatives of different cultures to evaluate dynamics of society's de-stereotyping.

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