

“Female managers and their characteristics in the Trenčín region, Slovakia”

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FEMALE MANAGERS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS IN THE TRENČÍN REGION, SLOVAKIA

Abstract

Gender equality has been a major principle of the European Union since the Treaty of Rome introduced the principle of equal pay for men and women in 1957. Gender equality means the same rights and opportunities for women and men across all sectors of society. The primary objective of the paper is to explore the management style of women, as well as their distinctive characteristics. It is believed that these distinctive features have a major influence upon their career-related behavior. The contribution tries to underscore the fact that women of the 21st century can prove themselves successfully in managerial positions within organizations, even though their career development is still hampered by gender inequality, since the world of management is a male-dominated field. Women in management positions have considerable, yet not fully utilized potential, which could help companies to succeed. In the paper, a questionnaire was used to obtain the relevant data on the management style and characteristics of female managers in the Trenčín region, Slovak Republic. At a later stage, the sepre-research findings will be used to conduct a comparative study in cooperation with the colleagues from the Universidad de Valencia and Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir in the Spanish region of Valencia.

Keywords

females, males, gender equality, equal opportunity,
managerial positions

JEL Classification

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INTRODUCTION

The labor market of today provides many opportunities for companies to thrive in various sectors of economy. Any company that desires to be successful in the labor market must have a strong and flexible management able to predict the future market trends along with skilled and educated manpower. In gaining a competitive advantage, innovations and knowledge play a major role (Dehghani, Kamalzadeh, 2016). Unquestionably, competitive and knowledge societies need well-qualified, inventive and appropriately trained manpower possessing human capital in order to be able to confront and respond with agility to critical challenges within a society. Human capital refers to the "ability of an individual to create new knowledge (innovations)" (Vojtovič, 2009). Thus, it is the new knowledge that makes any society grow in economic and social terms. New knowledge means that "it is something new what distinguishes itself from the old one. It is new not only because knowledge is its driving engine (knowledge economy), neither because it uses innovations (innovative economy), nor because it is network-interconnected (network economy) (Krajňáková, Vojtovič, 2014, p. 144). Since new knowledge can be devised by well-qualified people with sound human capital, we agree that "investing in human capital brings about improvement of performance, flexibility, and productivity, and enhances the ability to innovate, which naturally follows from continuous enhancement of qualification, as well as skills and expertise

of staff” (Grenčíková, Vojtovič, Gullerová, 2013, p. 42). Naturally, enterprises are striving to take on the best people who are considered to be vital in order to gain a competitive advantage. Regarding the positions in management and decision-making, they no longer need to be filled exclusively by men.

The main purpose of the paper is to identify the management style preferred by female managers in the Trenčín region and explore their distinctive characteristics. The paper aims to place emphasis on the fact that women of the 21st century can prove themselves in management functions within companies, even though their career advancement is still hampered by gender inequality (Manzoor, 2015). Women in management positions have considerable, yet not fully utilized potential, which could make companies succeed. Moreover, there is a gender pay gap in managerial positions which makes women disadvantaged in the labor market. The gender-specific wage differential as a wage disadvantage for women has been found in a variety of international studies (Blau et al. 2006; Blau&Kahn, 2006, 2003, 2000, 1997, 1996). When compared to men, women managers excel particularly in situations when team cohesiveness needs to be built. Despite the generalized inherent female characteristics of submissiveness, passivity, and caring, it is maintained that “women can be competitive and assertive, in some cases trying to be more “male” than the males” (Hearn & Parkin, 1986, p. 87). Managers often work under pressure, tackling difficult situations that are challenging to resolve. There are differences in how men and women cope with stressful situations; men cope by withdrawing themselves from the conversation or situation, while women cope by reaching out and talking about the cause of their stress (Gray, 1992). There are also several barriers that women face while pursuing their careers. One of the most common barriers is gender barriers to advancement at upper levels – the so called glass ceiling. Therefore, all democracies strive to have legislative and institutional tools established to oversee the execution of laws related to fundamental human rights. Fundamental human rights also include equality of opportunity which refers to men and women being freely able to develop their abilities and use opportunities, and not being excluded from participating in political, economic or social life on the basis of their sex (Pietruchová, 2007). Over the past few decades, equality of opportunity has been paid increased attention to in all developed countries. Developed countries have been trying to implement the gender equality policies in all spheres of social life. A legislative framework helping to eliminate gender discrimination in applicable laws or propose new ones is required when applying the equality of opportunity. In order to make the process effective, it is necessary to implement the principle of equality across the entire society and not to label it merely as “a women’s problem” (Koubek, 2011). A new and modern approach to equal opportunity concept is characterized by gender mainstreaming. The concept of gender mainstreaming refers to a continuous integration of the needs and priorities of women and men into all spheres of policies and measures. It is one of the latest methods to achieve equality, prevent against discrimination and occurrence of inequalities in practice. The main objective of gender mainstreaming is reaching equality between women and men based on their mutual interests and differences (Pietruchová, 2007). Equality between women and men is one of the European Union’s founding principles. In 2006, the European Council adopted the first European Pact for Gender Equality. The Pact placed emphasis on the significance of employing women’s untapped potential in the labor market, also by promoting women’s empowerment in economic and social life, and on the need to eliminate gender gaps, to fight gender-related stereotypes and to enhance better work-life balance for both men and women. In 2010, the European Commission adopted the Strategy for Equality between women and men (2010–2015). The Strategy says that the participation of women in the labor market rose to 62.5% during the last decade. Bringing more women on to the labor market is instrumental in counterbalancing the consequences of a shrinking working-age population. One of the Europe 2020 objectives, the key policy document for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, is to reach 75% employment rate for women and men. Under the Europe 2020, the Council has committed itself to meet its objectives on gender equality. The main objectives are the following (Úradný vestník, 2011): to eliminate gender pay gaps, including gender inequalities related to social protection and employment, to back up work-life balance for women and men not only in terms of gender equality, but also in terms of higher percentage of women participating in the labor market, and to combat any form of violence against women, so that they can enjoy their human rights and gender equality can be reached. Gender equality is the main feature of a gender-integrated organization. The equality can be achieved in terms of equality of opportunities and equal treatment for women and men. “Equal op-

portunities for women and men refer to the lack of barriers regarding the access to economic, political and social spheres. Thus, equal treatment for women and men means the non-existence of direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of sex in the organizational structure and processes” (Křížková, Pavlica, 2004). Concerning the organizations, the proportional representation of women and men in work teams and groups plays an important role. A form of discrimination is considered the low number of women in management positions. Despite the low proportion of women in management positions, the women do have the right potential to enrich the dynamics of management. The main reason why international organizations have recently implemented gender equality initiatives and enhanced social and gender diversity of workers is a broader range of competencies. Due to gender equality initiatives, it is also necessary to stimulate employee development, which will lead to higher productivity and greater satisfaction. Organizational culture can also benefit from gender equality as it is becoming more dynamic and diverse (Křížková, Pavlica, 2004). Women of the 21st century represent the underused source of skills and talents, yet women abound with great potential for the global economy growth. For society, women of today represent the workforce which was named “womenomics” by the Investment Bank Goldman Sachs. There are several other world organizations that deal with the issue of integration of women into economic life, such as OECD, EU, World Bank, etc. Even in these organizations, women are scarce in top management positions (OTS, 2013). Despite all the efforts made, the labor market is still divided into male and female occupations. There have also been apparent gender-related differences, such as pay, career advancement, etc. In 2013, official statistics reported hourly wage gap between men and women. Hourly wage of women in the EU is 17% lower than the average hourly wage of men. In the Slovak labor market, the difference between hourly wage of women and men stood at 25%. In this relation, it has to be noted that more and more college and university educated women enter the labor market (Vargová, 2013). Nevertheless, the status of women in society has been changing over time. Today, women have a completely different status than they used to have before, and their main tasks are no longer limited to household work and child care. Women are capable of doing household activities, caring for children, as well as occupying high positions in management and leadership. In 2011, Forbes selected 100 most influential women from around the world. Chancellor Merkel has made the list ten times over the past twelve years – nine times as No. 1. She is considered the world’s most powerful woman. The list also includes the most powerful businesswomen, top women in finance, such as, for instance, Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen. Merkel and Clinton are followed by Melinda Gates, an entrepreneur and philanthropist (Michanová, 2014). At the EU level, a third (33%) of managers was female in 2013. In 2013, across the EU Member States, women were particularly under-represented among managers in Luxembourg (while accounting for 44% of employed persons, 16% of managers are women), Cyprus (48% vs. 19%), the Netherlands (47% vs. 25%) and Croatia (46% vs. 25%). In contrast, the share of female managers was more representative of the proportion of women in total employment in Hungary (the share of women was 46% among employed persons and 41% among managers), Latvia (51% and 44%) and Poland (45% and 38%). The share of women was 44% among employed persons and 33% among managers in the Slovak Republic (Bourgeois, 2015). The data on the share of employed females on the labor market in the EU versus the share of female managers in 2013 are shown in Table 1.

It was the Treaty of Rome that introduced the fundamental principle of equal pay for men and women and the gender equality has been the key principle of the EU ever since. In 1945, Czechoslovakia proclaimed equality of pay between men and women, although the former gender-based distinction persisted until later. According to a sexual division of labor, there is a tendency to gender all tasks within a society that can be identified as either women’s or men’s work and remunerated accordingly. The male performance is often overestimated compared to female performance. This is so due to the traditional gender role ideology that approves of maintaining inequality. Gender pay gap is defined as the average difference between men’s and women’s aggregate hourly earnings. Across the EU economy, women earn on average 16.4% less than men. It is worth noting that the gender pay gap exists even though women do better at school and university than men. On average, in 2012, 83% of women completed upper secondary education, compared to 77.6% of men. Women represent 60% of university graduates in the EU (Bourgeois, 2015) There are several causes behind the gender pay gap, such as, for instance, direct discrimination, the undervaluing of women’s skills and work, labor market segregation, balancing work and private lives, etc. (Európskacomisia, 2014). The data on gender pay gap in the EU member states in 2013 are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Share of employed females on the labor market in the EU vs. share of female managers, 2013 aged (20 to 64 years)

Source: elaborated by authors according to Eurostat (2013).

Country	Share of women in total employment	Share of women managers
EU	46%	33%
Belgium	46%	31%
Bulgaria	47%	37%
Czech Republic	43%	27%
Denmark	48%	28%
Germany	47%	29%
Estonia	49%	33%
Ireland	46%	33%
Greece	41%	29%
Spain	46%	31%
France	48%	36%
Croatia	46%	25%
Italy	42%	28%
Cyprus	48%	19%
Latvia	51%	44%
Lithuania	51%	40%
Luxembourg	44%	16%
Hungary	46%	41%
Malta	38%	28%
Netherlands	47%	25%
Austria	47%	29%
Poland	45%	38%
Portugal	49%	34%
Romania	44%	32%
Slovenia	46%	37%
Slovakia	44%	33%
Finland	49%	30%
Sweden	48%	36%
United Kingdom	47%	34%
Iceland	48%	38%
Norway	47%	33%
Switzerland	46%	33%

Table 2. Gender pay gap in the EU member states in 2013 (in %)

Source: elaborated by authors according to Európskakomisia (2014).

Country	Gender pay gap	Country	Gender pay gap
Estonia	29.9	France	15.2
Austria	23.0	Sweden	15.2
Czech Republic	22.1	Latvia	14.4
Germany	21.6	Bulgaria	13.5
Slovakia	19.8	Lithuania	13.3
UK	19.7	Portugal	13.0
Spain	19.3	Belgium	9.8
Finland	18.7	Romania	9.1
Hungary	18.4	Luxembourg	8.6
Eurozone	16.6	Croatia	7.5
EU / 28	16.4	Italy	7.3
Denmark	16.4	Poland	6.4
Netherlands	16.0	Malta	5.1
Cyprus	15.8	Slovenia	3.2

1. METHOD

The main purpose of the paper was to identify the key characteristics of female managers working in companies based in the Trenčín region, Slovak Republic and find what their preferred style of management is. In addition, two hypotheses and research questions were formulated:

H1: It is assumed that more than 50% of respondents think that demonstrating empathy towards employees is one of the key social strengths of female managers.

H2: It is assumed that more than 50% of respondents think that female managers are less respected and recognized than their male counterparts.

RQ1: What are the positive workplace characteristics of women in managerial positions?

RQ2: What are the negative attributions of women in managerial positions?

In the paper, several methods of research were utilized, such as literature research method, closed-ended questionnaire, comparative analysis, and synthesis. The results were obtained through our own questionnaire survey. The survey was elec-

tronic and anonymous, and included 148 respondents having previous or current experience with working under male and female managers at any level of management.

2. RESULTS

The responses by respondents indicate and confirm the theory detailed in the theoretical framework that women are under-represented in managerial positions be they low, middle or top senior positions. It was found that 108 respondents are currently working under male managers (73%) and 40 respondents are supervised by female managers (27%).

The first research question was to find the positive workplace characteristics of women in managerial positions. The research findings indicate that female managers excel in promoting teamwork (58%), have good and effective coaching and mentoring skills (42%), are good at conflict management (39%), demonstrate empathy towards their employees (38%) and last but not least, are inspiring leaders (33%). The findings are summarized in Table 3.

The next question was to identify what the negative attributions of women in managerial positions are. 56% of respondents think that female manag-

Table 3. Positive attributions of women in managerial positions

Source: elaborated by authors based on research results.

Managerial positions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Demonstrating empathy	38%	25%	15%	10%	12%
Coaching/mentoring skills	42%	35%	10%	7%	6%
Conflict management	39%	28%	18%	10%	5%
Inspirational leadership	33%	29%	26%	9%	3%
Flexibility	44%	27%	16%	8%	5%
Teamwork	58%	32%	6%	4%	0%

Table 4. Negative attributions of women in managerial positions

Source: elaborated by authors based on research results.

Managerial positions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Longer problem resolution	49%	19%	17%	13%	2%
Less recognition and respect	19%	21%	11%	28%	23%
Working on multiple tasks simultaneously	53%	32%	9%	6%	0%
Lower level of concentration	13%	11%	20%	24%	32%
Indecisiveness	25%	18%	11%	24%	22%
Emotion-driven	56%	29%	5%	6%	4%

Table 5. Typical characteristics of male and female managers according to Morgan

Source: elaborated by authors based on research results.

Typical characteristics	Active, communicative	Active, just	Just	Stubborn	Impatient, imbalanced
Men	8%	26%	14%	19%	14%
Women	11%	5%	1%	1%	1%

Table 6. Task assignment by male and female managers

Source: elaborated by authors based on research results.

Typical characteristics	Consensus	Directive style	Empowerment
Male managers	30%	24%	20%
Female managers	21%	4%	1%

ers are driven by emotion, work on multiple tasks simultaneously (53%) and 49% of respondents think that it takes female managers long to resolve problems and issues. Last but not least, 32% of respondents strongly disagree and 24% disagree with the statement that female managers are less recognized and respected than their male counterparts. The detailed findings are listed in Table 4.

Next, typical characteristics of males and females according to Morgan were identified (see Table 5). It was found that female managers (11%) outperform men (8%) in being active and communicative, whereas men were found to be active and just (26%) compared to women (5%).

The fourth question was to find how tasks are assigned by female and male managers. The data in Table 6 indicate that men in managerial positions prefer assigning tasks after a consensus of all concerned parties (30% of male managers vs. 21% of female managers), directive style is used by 24% of male managers vs. 4% of female managers and 20% of male managers vs 1% of female managers empower their subordinates.

The last question was to identify the whether or not women prefer people-oriented style of leadership. 75% of respondents think that women in managerial positions tend to be people-oriented.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Generally, women are under-represented in management and leadership positions due to persistent gender stereotypes. Women who want to be successful managers face many barriers that they need to overcome while integrating their work and family roles. The main purpose of the paper was to identify the key characteristics of female managers working in companies based in the Trenčín region, Slovak Republic and their preferred management style. It was found that one of the greatest assets of female managers is their preference to working in teams. Teamwork can bring various benefits to a workplace, as teamwork fosters creativity, establishes strong relationships with co-workers, helps team members learn conflict resolution skills, encourages reasonable risk-taking, etc. It can be concluded that female managers stress caring behaviors among their people, and are rather people-oriented than task-oriented. Conflict management skills, coaching/mentoring skills and flexibility were found to be further social skills that female managers are good at. In the first hypothesis, it was assumed that more than 50% of respondents think that demonstrating empathy towards employees is one of the strengths of female managers. The hypothesis was not confirmed as 38% of respondents strongly agree and 25% agree with the statement that the key social strength of female managers is their ability to show empathy towards employees.

Regarding their negative attributions, respondents think that female managers respond with stronger emotional power and feelings to the environment. Emotions, however, are perceived as negative only when emotional situations are not dealt with and managed properly. Women in management are not

expected to be emotionless or cold, yet they need to be able to differentiate between emotions, facts and professional behavior. Only then, emotions can be turned into strengths in the workplace. Compassion and empathy are the prerequisites for better working and dealing with people. Being people-oriented, women are seen as relationship builders, which is definitely a positive feature. Handling multiple tasks and things concurrently is seen as a negative trait of female managers by a large percentage of respondents. The way female managers view time can be associated with the polychronic perception of time. Polychronic people are, among others, known for doing many things at once, getting distracted easily and managing interruptions well, commitment to people and human relationships, and for changing plans often and easily. Under the second hypothesis, it was assumed that more than 50% of respondents think that female managers are less respected and recognized than their male counterparts. The hypothesis was rejected as 32% of respondents strongly disagree and 24% disagree with the statement that female managers are less recognized and respected than their male counterparts. The results obtained in this pre-research will serve as a basis for a follow-up comprehensive and comparative research to be made in cooperation with colleagues from the Universidad de Valencia and Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir in Spain.

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