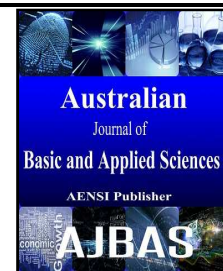




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# Relationship between Leadership Styles and Career Development: The Role of Gender Stereotyping

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### ABSTRACT

leadership is an essential aspect of any organization, leadership determines and outlines how the day-to-day operations will be conducted and goals achieved. Leadership sets the standards, rules, procedures, processes and laws governing any institution thus the prominence of leadership cannot be denied. Philosophers have hence identified that leaders possess different styles in achieving desired goals. This study therefore is an analysis of existing literatures on the relationship between leadership styles and career development of women managers. Literatures reviewed shows that there is little or no difference in leadership styles between men and women although women's career development has been reported to be negatively affected due to gender stereotyping. Autocratic and democratic leadership styles have been identified as effective styles of leadership with an exemption of laissez faire style which has been perceived as a non-effective leadership style.

## INTRODUCTION

Career development is prominent in any organization. The prominence of career development has necessitated organizations and individuals in taking appropriate precautions and strategies with the aim of ensuring that professionals are well grounded and equipped for climbing up the career ladder and developing organizations at large. A report by (Worldat Work., 2013), states that about every employee aspires to be climb up the career ladder. Most employees desire to advance and succeed in their respective fields and divisions. However, there are noticeable factors prohibiting, hindering, interfering, influencing enhancing or leading to career development. Employee's career development can either be progressing as desired or progressing slowly or not progressing at all, either ways, employee's career are influenced whether positively or negatively.

Additionally, managers are confronted with various responsibilities which require them to be the head and superiors that are responsible for influencing people towards achieving certain goals. Managerial responsibilities require certain skills and abilities and therefore managers have been associated with different approaches/styles in ensuring that they successfully achieve desired goals. Leadership styles have been identified to differ in terms of effectiveness. Managers employ different leadership styles in management which means that managers will have different experiences in their chosen styles which can influence other aspect of their career, particularly career development.

However, since leadership styles have differences in effectiveness (Worldat Work., 2013), it can be said that managers with different leadership styles may have different experiences in terms of career development. Autocratic, democratic and laissez faire managers will surely have different approaches in developing their careers and ensuring career success. This paper therefore seeks to critically analyze the reviews of literatures on how leadership styles of manager's influences their career development and the role of gender stereotyping.

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### **Literature Review:**

Leadership has been defined by various, historians and philosophers, although there is no one true definition, leadership can simply be said to be the act of 'influencing followers towards a common goal/vision'. According to (Bhatti, N., *et al.*, 2012), leadership refers to a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary involvement of subordinates in an effort to reach organization goals, a process whereby one person exercises social influence over other members of the group, a process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group of individuals in an effort towards goal achievement in given situations, and an interactive conception involving both the influencing agent and the person being influenced. However, (Katz, D. and R. Kahn, 1978), defined leadership as the attribute of a position, as the characteristics of a person, and as a category of behavior.

Leadership style is the pattern of behaviors engaged in by the leader when dealing with employees. (Lewin, K. and R. Lippitt, 1938) identified three leadership styles which are;

- Autocratic style leadership
- Democratic style leadership
- Laissez Faire style leadership

#### **2.1 Autocratic Leadership:**

An autocratic leader is a leader who is very firm, directive, makes use of his power of influence from his position to control rewards and force the followers to comply with his instruction (Blau, P.M. and W.R. Scott, 1963; Daft, R.L., 2005) and (Jogulu, U.D. and G.J. Wood, 2006). This type of leader dictates and controls all the choices, decisions and activities by giving instruction and direction to the followers on what to do and how to carry out a task whereby restricting follower's creativeness and innovativeness.

#### **2.2 Democratic leadership:**

A democratic leader influences peoples and or take responsibilities of making the final decision, but the leader invites and allow subordinates to contribute to the decision making process (Dahl, R.A., 1989). Democratic leadership styles is more of a conduct that encourages people in a way reliable with and/or satisfactory to basic self-governing standards and practices, such as self-determination, inclusiveness, equal involvement, and discussion (Fishkin, I., 1991; White, R.K and R. Lippitt, 1960).

#### **2.3 Laissez Faire:**

The laissez-faire leadership style involves non-interference approach, this style of leadership licenses comprehensive freedom and autonomy to all employees and has no particular way of attaining goals (Dahl, R.A., 1989). A laissez-faire leader plays a passive, hands-off role (Wilensky, H.L., 1961).

#### **2.4 Career development:**

An individual career is a sequence of professions, occupations, jobs, or positions engaged in, or occupied throughout the lifetime of an individual. (Baer, R.B., *et al.*, 2008), has defined career as a evolution of connected jobs, organized in a hierarchy through which people move in an orderly sequence.

Therefore, career development refers to an individual's career progression is a lifetime process that integrates the development, adjustment, transformation and alteration process from childhood to the official career education at school, and the traditional progressions that continue throughout a person's working adulthood and into retirement (Smith, P.B. and M.F. Peterson, 1988).

### **Leadership and Gender Stereotyping:**

Leadership styles by (Lewin, K. and R. Lippitt, 1938), unveiled the autocratic, democratic and laissez faire styles possess by leaders, the study revealed that the democratic leadership style was the most effective and that the employees who have worked under the leadership of an autocratic leader although achieve high performance, but appeared to experience unpleasant and uncomfortable feeling of working compared to the democratic leader where the employees achieved the same result of performance but felt more comfortable in carrying out a task assigned without the presence and of the leader. Although (Lewin, K. and R. Lippitt, 1938), established that democratic style of leadership is the most effective, but (Hayers, N., 2000), pointed that the effectiveness of leaders is dependent on the standard which was being used to measure leadership. However, (Mester *et al.*, 2003), established that employees who fell under pressure were under autocratic leaders. The leaders hardly ever permitted them to contribute in the decision making. Laissez faire style is however the less effective form of leadership, the leader plays a passive role and does nothing to motives the subordinates in achieving results, this form of leadership has been indicated to an absence of leadership (Eagly, A.H., *et al.*, 2003). Laissez faire style of leadership was found in a study by (Fagenson, E. and J. Jackson, 1993) to be a style although seldomly practiced, but practiced, mostly by men leaders.

Gender difference has segregated the perception between male and female leaders; studies and conclusion have been made and drawn arguing that women and male managers' possess different styles in leadership and further studies have reported the effectiveness of the leadership styles of men and women. (Steven, H., 2003), revealed that women possess slightly more of democratic leadership styles and possess less traits of autocratic leadership; the study further analyzed that men leaders are more autocratic in nature compare to their female counterparts. Women leaders are more likely to give rewards to their subordinate which is a democratic traits while male leaders are more likely to enforce punishment in rewarding subordinate which displace autocratic traits (Fagenson, E. and J. Jackson, 1993).

Furthermore, women are not as hierarchical as men, women are more accommodating and supportive, and are more enthusiastic to develop the self-esteem of others (McKinsey and Company, 2009). Thus, women leadership style can be defined as people-based, role modeling and clear expectations and rewards (Zenger Folkman, 2012). However, (Butterfield, D.A and J.P Grinnell, 1998), revealed that the differences in leadership styles and capacity between genders is not really present and that women are regarded more competent in taking inventiveness, are keen to self-development, integrity and honesty and driving for results. (Amy, J.C., *et al.*, 2004), confirmed that women are rated lower as leaders when they implement authoritative seemingly masculine styles, particularly when the role is one typically occupied by men. Studies by (Rhode, D. and B. Kellerman, 2006), showed that individuals with masculine styles are more likely to emerge as leaders than those with feminine styles, which negatively impact women to experience tradeoffs that men do not. The study also found that female leaders can be liked but not respected, or respected but not liked, in settings that may require individuals to be both in order to succeed. Though women have emerged in leadership positions, but they are still widely underrepresented at the top and overrepresented at the bottom of the most prominent leadership hierarchies (Kraut, A.J., *et al.*, 1989).

However, some studies suggest the effectiveness of leadership is not dependent on the leadership style or gender but rather on the individual leader. (Worldat Work., 2013), list some characteristics that determine an effective leader as employee experience, task complexity, the risk associated with the task, resources available; it further elaborates that leaders effectiveness is widely dependent on the leaders ability to pull from a wide range of styles and to match the needs of some particular situations to particular styles rather than relying on one style to deal with in all situations. This means that an effective leader should be able to adapt more leadership styles and apply them in various scenarios to achieve success. This is consistent with findings revealed by Hay Group suggesting that effective leaders use an all-encompassing range of styles and are always prepared to adapt the right styles to fit the need for a particular situation. According to (Mooney, S. and I. Ryan, 2009), managers must have a mutual understanding of the abilities, capacities, skills and accountabilities essential for managers.

Study by (Worldat Work., 2013) discovered that a high percentage of leaders in the supervisory position quit and leave the organizations due to lack of promotional opportunities, lack of empowerment, and work life balance issues. Career development is associated to be more difficult for women managers than their male counterparts. Although leadership styles have their consequences in terms of effectiveness, women of different, same or similar leadership styles still experience difficulties in climbing up the career ladder. A study by (Broadbridge, A., 2008), shows that gender stereotyping has created barriers and challenges for women managers to climb up the corporate ladder and that Malaysian corporate leaders are facing challenges in training and development. According to (Kolb, J., 1999), women managers are faced with not just managerial responsibilities with also with the challenges of balancing work and personal life. (2012 Career), states that women manager's experience significant challenges in achieving work life balance and especially in managing children and which affects their career progressions. (Moey, Y.C., 2008), reveals that good managers with great leadership credentials still experience difficulties in climbing up the career ladder and causes them to make drastic career choices. In a study by the Center for Work-Life Policy of some 3000 high-achieving American women and men, virtually four in ten women testified quitting their jobs willingly at some point due to careers issues. As of 2004, the Catalyst Women 2004 reported that in management, women account for about a third of M.B.A. programs, but only 2 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs, 8 percent of top leadership positions, and 16 percent of board directors and corporate officers.

From these studies, it is evident that men and women experiences difference in climbing up the corporate ladder and advancing their careers. Men leaders seem to have it easy than women leaders. Studies have reported that there is little or no differences in terms of the effectiveness of leadership styles in men and women; (Garric, L., 2006; Berger and M. Zelditch (Eds.)) proved in their study that there are far more similarities than differences in the leadership styles of men and women, and showed that they are equally effective. Philosophers have outlined that both men and women possesses either of autocratic, democratic or laissez faire style of leadership and both autocratic and democratic have been collectively agreed upon as effective styles of leadership either by men or women although it highly depends on the individual. Therefore, since there is little or no difference in leadership styles, it is then evident that gender stereotyping is the real origin of the obstruction of women leaders to advance professional. Women have the same career aspirations and are more

willing to see themselves as having qualities associated with authority (Dennis, M.R. and A.D. Kunkel, 2004), but despite their career aspirations, traditional gender stereotypes still leave women with a double standard and a double dilemma while men carry on to be valued greater than women on most of the qualities associated with leadership (Catalyst. Women and Men in U.S. 2004).

Despite the facts that women have been found to be similar to men in many qualities, stereotypes about their belief and perceptions showed that they have been rated less influential than men (Foshee, M., 1996). Stereotyping women have highly led to the belief that women commonly possess lesser level of capability and know-how than men do, and as such, women are perceived to be less influential than men in regards to leadership. According to (Burke, R.J., *et al.*, 1995), women have to put in extra efforts and outperform men to be considered competent leaders. These findings are consistent with findings by (Meeker, B.F. and P.A. Weitzel- O'Neil, 1985), which show that women in leadership positions who seem to be self-confident are regarded as violating expectations about suitable conduct for women. This in fact means that women are supposed to be less confident and seemingly reserved as the traditional norms expect women to behave. Thus, a female manager that practices autocratic leadership which is considered more masculine in nature will be rated even more poorly than their male managers in terms of effectiveness because they have violated the gender role stereotype traditional and society has placed them as the inferior gender. (Abu-Bakar, A., S. Marican, 2014), revealed that women leaders who employ and practice autocratic leadership are rated poorly while men who practice autocratic leadership are good rated instead.

### **Discussion And Conclusion:**

Conclusions can be drawn from this review that both autocratic and democratic styles of leadership are equally effective. Although studies have collectively concurs that laissez faire style is the less effective form of leadership and as such, it's seldom used. (Eagly, A.H., *et al.*, 2003; Fagenson, E. and J. Jackson, 1993), states that even though laissez faire style is ineffective, this style of leadership if used, is commonly used by men leaders. The effectiveness of leadership styles has however been associated with gender; men and women are classified to be more suitable for certain styles of leadership, men more associated with autocratic while women with democratic styles. Moreover, women who practice autocratic style are regarded poorly than men who use autocratic style of leadership. Gender stereotyping has been evident to impact on leadership of women; women leaders are poorly perceived and are highly underrated compare to their male counterparts. Gender stereotyping has also proven to affect women leaders career progression and development. Women leaders although possess the skills and competences needed to attain higher leadership positions are under-estimated and are overlooked for career development opportunities (Broadbridge, A., 2008).

Lastly, appropriate leadership styles can and should be adopted for suitable situations. This is consistent with Hay Group 2008 study which revealed that there's no one best style but that the effectiveness of styles is highly dependent on the individual leader and the situation. Thus, managers can adopt more than one style of leadership and apply appropriate styles to suit appropriate scenarios.

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