

Management & Economic Strengths of Feminine Leadership--Five Insights Frame

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the advantages of the feminine leadership style in regards to Management and Economics, acknowledging that there is no definitive leadership style that applies to every woman. This paper identifies general tendencies about the leadership approach that categorizes the interpersonal style of many women who serve in management and leadership positions. This paper then lists five insights for feminine leadership and management styles.

Keywords: *Female leadership, economic strengths of female managers, female management styles*

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of the “glass ceiling” and “sticky floor” has been a barrier for women for many decades--although for the past two decades, improvements in opportunities for women to serve as in management positions and other leadership roles have been made[1]. Despite the stereotyping of women as “too emotional” or “indecisive,” recent empirical evidence suggests that female leaders have distinct advantages over their male counterparts – particularly under specific conditions when cooperative organizational responses are necessary.

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2. BACKGROUND

Often as much leadership characteristics differences exist among women, than there are leadership characteristics differences between men and women. However, this paper identifies general tendencies in the leadership approach of many women who serve in management and leadership positions.

The specific advantages of the feminine management/leadership style are described in context of the requirements of modern organizations today. The leadership style and significant accomplishments of Mother Teresa, known throughout the world for her compassionate service to others, are described as an example of an outstanding female leader who successfully utilizes key qualities of the feminine leadership/management model.

A contrasting example of a leader who fails to successfully incorporate feminine leadership attributes is also

presented. This paper then suggests five insights about feminine leadership that are of value by modern organization leaders, and concludes with a challenge to leaders/managers to develop and refine the skills that typify the feminine leadership model, and to increase the economic benefits for the organization.

2.1. Feminine Leadership Model

It is well-documented the blatant bias against women as leaders is a widely-acknowledged artefact of many cultures worldwide[2]. Jironet has suggested that women have been excluded from the conversation, been silenced, and not been taken seriously as potential leaders due to stereotype, superstition, and ideological agendas[3]. For whatever reasons, the reality is that the feminine leadership model is often viewed as sub-standard– despite the fact that evidence suggests an entirely different story[4].

Typical of the perspectives of history, the biases about gender and leadership have constantly influenced opportunities for women to demonstrate their unique abilities. Examining the differences in how men and women communicate, as well as other ways in which men and women tend to relate to others interpersonally, within organizations, and as members of society offers powerful evidence regarding the nature of feminine leadership and its important qualities.

Tannen noted that the feminine communication style is more supportive, focused more on suggesting than telling, and centered on helping others rather than directing them[5].

According to a 2014 study of 6,500 respondents worldwide about leadership effectiveness, female leaders are rated superior to their male counterparts “in five out of seven metrics of effective leadership[6].” In four of the metrics, “leading by example,” “communicating in an open and transparent way,” “admitting mistakes,” and “bringing

out the best in others," more than half of the survey respondents felt that women leaders performed better than men and in a fifth metric, "handling controversial issues quietly and calmly," men and women were about equal with women ranking slightly better[7].

Although women often adopt masculine leadership traits in an attempt to compete in today's organizations, the evidence suggests that the feminine leadership style is far more effective[8].

In characterizing the unique style of feminine leadership, Marilyn Loden, author of the book, *Feminine Leadership*, described the feminine leadership style as follows:

"Feminine leaders rely heavily on intuition as well as rational thinking in solving problems. They focus more on long-term goals which are good for the entire organization as opposed to short-term. And they generally prefer a "win-win" approach to conflict resolution instead of the traditional "win-lose" approach[9]."

Loden emphasized that not all women followed these leadership qualities to a far greater degree than men[10]."

Feminine leadership also reflects the Ethic of Care, a feminine moral perspective[11] that differs significantly from Lawrence Kohlberg's traditional, rule-oriented, justice-based, masculine view of moral development[12]. Feminine leadership emphasizes caring about others and treats employees with a commitment to their welfare. Relationships are highly important, and in an age when employee engagement is critical, feminine leadership is far more committed to involving employees than their masculine counterparts[13]. At the same time, feminine leadership is also duty-focused and believes that honoring obligations also honors relationships with others[14].

2.2. Mother Teresa and Compassionate Service

Mother Teresa, a Roman Catholic nun who lived in India for most of her life, was born in Albania. She founded the Missionaries of Charity in 1950 to address free service to the poorest of the poor. This work expanded to over 130 countries, included managing homes for people who were dying, soup kitchens, orphanages and schools. Her charitable work and servant leadership example changed the lives of many of the most vulnerable people in the world[15]. As a servant leader, few individuals match her care and concern for all individuals.

2.3. Ineffective Leadership

A classic example of a woman with an ineffective leadership style is an individual who used a condescending approach to others, relying on her family relationship, being a sister to the president of the university where she worked to dominate and criticize others who worked for her. She was feared by those who worked for her. This "leader" established a reputation for being a "black widow" known throughout the university for destroying the careers of subordinates who worked for her. Because

of her relationship with the university president, her conduct was tolerated – a person to be feared rather than respected. Although she was a female in a leadership role, this individual lacked the caring consideration for others.

The absolute difference between Mother Teresa and her devotion to serving others, and the questionable conduct of this university leader reinforces the fact that feminine leadership and its qualities are not automatically associated with gender. Mother Teresa sought only to do good to others, while her negative counterpart left pain, and devastation in her wake.

2.4. Five Insights for Leaders

Feminine Leadership style has potential to make a great difference in the lives of those whom leaders serve.

Feminine leadership increases commitment by demonstrating greater concern for employees' welfare. The feminine leadership view reflects a more personal commitment to others' welfare.

Feminine leadership's commitment to honoring relationship-based duties and obligations generates greater employee trust. Feminine leadership's commitment to caring relationships is a fundamental element that characterizes those who adopt it. Leaders who adopt the feminine leadership perspective demonstrate they are worthy of employees' trust.

Feminine leadership generates increased employee creativity by a communication style that is more focused on listening rather than telling. By their interactive communication style and willingness to listen to suggestions, leaders who have a feminine leadership perspective will generate greater employee involvement and ownership in the creative process.

Feminine leadership views the work context in a more holistic way and can maintain a clearer perspective about priorities. By recognizing individual's value, feminine leadership perspective incorporates a clearer vision, with commitment to the success of employees and the organization, that benefit both.

Feminine leadership emphasizes teamwork which enables organizations to be more effective in pursuit of organizational goals. The feminine leadership perspective seeks cooperation and recognizes that the achievement of high standards is best accomplished by joint efforts. Cooperation and teamwork enhance employee ownership. Each of these five insights have value in organizations to earn employee trust and to compete in the global marketplace.

3. CONCLUSION

In a world that is challenged by problems demanding cooperation and greater innovation, there is much value in the contributions from the feminine leadership perspective. The feminine leadership and management perspective provides organizations with a means for employing the

creativity and potential that is often overlooked by traditional high control, high compliance leadership perspectives. Incorporating a leadership perspective that demonstrates authentic caring and that empower employees makes it possible for the modern organization to unlock employee potential so often underutilized, and thus improving the economic value of the organization.

As a model of deeply committed and highly effective feminine leadership, Mother Teresa's example of servant leadership and personal dedication is an inspiring model for other leaders to follow – both men and women. By incorporating the strengths of feminine leadership and management styles and recognizing its benefits, those who lead can add value to the best interests of employees as well. As leaders serve others and apply the principles of feminine leadership, they honor their individual callings and fulfill a noble purpose that enriches others' lives.

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