The Gender Gap in Leadership is Shrinking-A Literature Review

Bixia Gong[(✉)]

Gies College of Business, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL 61801, USA
bixiagong2@163.com

Abstract. Numerous studies have revealed that men are more frequently leaders than women. The gender gap appears in organizations of all sizes and types around the world, whether in business, education, NGOs, or other settings and industries. This issue is not exclusive to one culture or one particular nation. In higher-level companies, there are especially noticeable gender inequalities between managers and leaders. As a leader, there is a gender gap, but it is getting less over time, according to this article's summary of some of the literature that examines its causes. In other words, as time acts as a moderator, the gender gap in leadership is gradually closing. In terms of methodology, this current paper mainly uses the year 2000 as the cut-off point for existing research (the reason for selecting this time point will be explained in the main body) and selects some relevant research conclusions for analysis. The article finally puts forward reasonable suggestions for researchers and practitioners to refer to when facing gender differences in the workplace.

Keywords: Sex differences · organizational behavior · women and leadership · gender bias · leadership

1 Introduction

Despite the fact that there are now much more women working than there were a few decades ago, women are still notably underrepresented at the highest organizational levels. Around the world, organizations of various types, including those in politics, business, government, education, non-profits, and other settings and sectors, are affected by this issue. Men tend to be leaders more frequently than women, particularly in the corporate sphere. Although countless studies have proven that having women in senior management and leadership roles in businesses and societies has numerous advantages, it is clear that the diversity of gender is significant to groups in modern society. And the success of the organization is crucial. However, this gender gap still exists [1].

This raises some questions: why are there limited opportunities for women in leadership positions? Why are females so underrepresented in the highest levels of leadership? Researchers have put out a number of explanations over the years. Based on the discussion and to find the answer to the above questions, the author of the current paper

decides that it is necessary to systematically integrate the literature related to leadership and gender and analyze the reasons for this phenomenon. Our core view is an imbalance between men and women in leadership, but that gap is getting smaller in recent decades [2].

2   Literature Review

One of the more prominent theories about the causes of this gender gap in leadership is that discrimination against women. In another word, it is gender bias against females that leads to this gender difference in leaders. This is mainly reflected in the fact that women's qualifications and performance are not assessed fairly, and discrimination leads to women's inability to lead and manage. Even the same leadership behaviors, when performed by women, may be seen as inferior behaviors performed by men. In addition, other research has shown that sometimes leaders in the workplace are chosen not by their actual abilities to get things done by leading group members properly, but by the presence of gender bias. Employees in organizations may have decided, even before they start to evaluate who should be the leaders, that women cannot do it, or that women's characteristics are not suitable to be leaders. In this case, even if a so-called fair election vote is held, it is still not fair at all. Because the person who makes the evaluation has already made the evaluation based on a biased point of view, which favors making leaders. This is also relevant to the theory of the role incongruence between leadership and traditional gender roles.

In addition, other studies have attempted to explain the stereotype process and organizational disorders in women. The road to leadership is challenging, competitive, and experience-driven. Opportunity, pressure, and complexity factors contribute to leadership development, and indeed, women's leadership path has been described as a labyrinth given the many obstacles along the way [3].

On a more granular level, given the demands of leadership, the research shows that women are less likely than men to hold leadership positions in group tasks when gender roles are prominent in the group and the tasks are gender-differentiated. In competitions for more senior leadership positions, the winners are often also men, not to mention that gender differences are especially pronounced in male-dominated organizations [4].

However, things start to change. Women are becoming more prevalent in the workforce and managerial roles. Fortunately, a meta-analysis looked into whether the gender gap in leadership has altered as time goes by given the shifting makeup of the workforce. The Gender Agency/Community Engagement (GAP) model, a thorough theoretical framework was developed through the use of social role theory in this meta-analysis. It comes to the conclusion that while historical gender differences have shrunk, current gaps still exist. This study assumes that although there remains a gender disparity in leadership, it is getting smaller with time.

The current paper will categorize the literature to understand how perceptions of leadership by gender and practitioners' practical experience have shifted since then compared to before 2000, with different samples and conclusions drawn by researchers over time supporting the point of view of this article.

The gap between leader archetypes and women's gender role expectations is closing since a seminal study of the burgeoning research on gender and leadership [5].

3   Research Method

The literature review is a method used to examine the core idea, it divides the gender gap in leadership according to a given year - 2000 and determines whether, over time, the gender disparity has decreased. We examined two categories: older studies (before 2000) and newer studies (2000-present). Previous studies have demonstrated that environmental cues are the primary cause of gender disparities in a variety of leadership outcomes [6]. That is why time is used as the moderator to investigate the shift in the gender gap in leadership.

4   Analysis

4.1   Before 2000

There are many articles examining the gender gap in the workplace, some arguing that women are considered inherently more communal than men [7]. Men's agency traits are typically more similar to what people expect of leaders than women's public traits are [8]. Such stereotypes of men are associated with leadership roles. Greater compatibility between them is believed to be the underlying reason why men are favored in gaining leadership positions. Numerous research methods have been used to analyze gender bias, with some researchers claiming that different performance criteria may be the cause of the bias [9].

Some articles, however, contend that the research began with leaders who already displayed this gender disparity, but with various genders' capacities for leadership. It indicates gender bias. In academic research and the media, bias against female leaders has garnered a lot of attention. Many social scientists concur that men and women lead in comparable ways [10]. Or to be more specific, gender variations in leadership styles result from inequalities in rank, power, or other aspects of gender that are typically associated with it rather than from basic differences between men and women. Over time, empirical data supporting both perspectives have accumulated, creating uncertainty.

Some articles also touch on the subject of leadership style. A meta-analysis was used to analyze empirical studies on gender differences in leadership styles that were published in peer-reviewed publications between 1987 and 2000. The data presented inconsistent findings regarding gender variations in leaders' actions, with women being more likely than men to use democratic and transformational leadership styles in comparison to other leadership styles. The workplace surroundings of male and female CEOs have an effect on gender differences in leadership styles because these differences are moderated by the type of organization they work for and the research environment.

This review focuses on studies that were published in peer-reviewed journals between 1987 and 1999. These studies included comparisons of male and female leaders whose leadership styles were not compared or artificially altered by researchers, nor were they assessed using training before style.

The 1990 update on how the styles of leadership vary depending on gender first showed us that gender differences in leadership styles remain a topic of interest to many researchers.

4.2   After 2000

Although research suggests that men might be viewed as more capable and success-ful leaders than women, some popular news publications report the opposite. There are female gender advantages that require "feminine" leadership in modern organiza-tions [11]. Without a question, women make superior managers, according to the New York Times [12]. New research is presented as an article that examines "why female leaders may be superior to male ones. Whether women's leadership philosophies are better adapted to contemporary businesses". The justification for "female domination" in leadership is frequently based on the idea that women are more inclined than men to adopt cooperative leadership philosophies, while males are at a disadvantage due of their preference for assertiveness and command-and-control tactics.

It is crucial to think about how time might reduce the gender gap in how effective a leader is seen. The date of publication will reduce gender disparities in assessments of leadership effectiveness so that older research will show larger gender differences and studies published afterward will show smaller gender differences.

There is also evidence that perceptions of leadership roles and gender may change over time. Gender-related stereotypes typically change slowly [13]. And social role theory puts out the notion that people utilize implicit beliefs about expected job duties to determine whether they are better appropriate as men or women for a given role [14].

These adjustments could have an impact on long-term patterns that influence the gender gap in leader emergence. Many organizations have taken the lead in the fight to remove gender bias against women in the workplace, for instance through mentorship and other programs. The fact that women have held a higher proportion of executive roles over the past few decades suggests that these and other measures have had some effect. According to social role theory, society's perceptions of women should alter in tandem with these shifts in the workforce's distribution. According to research, levels of proxy qualities in women have increased between 1974 and 2012, indicating that perceptions of women are changing to reflect more stereotypically male content [15].

5   Conclusion

According to recent studies, the gender gap in leadership is gradually closing. Both academics and practitioners are motivated by the paper's research perspective. Our study deepens our comprehension of the border circumstances and mechanisms underlying the gender difference in leader emergence.

5.1   Contributions to Related Theories

In conclusion, this paper theoretically evaluates whether the gender gap in leaders has shrunk over time by comparing the size of the gender difference in leaders over time and using a literature review.

5.2 Practical Implications for Practitioners

For individuals, understanding the gender gap in workplace leaders and knowing the reasons for it can help them realize the strengths and weaknesses of jobs with different gender characteristics and better determine their professional growth direction. On the other hand, it is also possible to rationally evaluate and elect leaders suitable for the exact project from a more objective point of view, reduce prejudice, and make decisions that help accomplish the task. For leaders, being aware of the gender gap can help them look at themselves, and at the same time understand the work characteristics of other team members, and better play a coordinating role for the entire team.

At the organizational and structural level, improve the competition and promotion mechanism. It is recommended that businesses conduct many job or promotion interviews with each applicant (to provide assessors enough chances to get to know candidates for leadership roles) and be more reasonable about matching different employees to suitable leadership positions.

5.3 Limitations

The studies are subject to several limitations that can be addressed in further research. First, although this paper summarizes and analyzes the classic widely cited theoretical research of other scholars, there is no specific first-hand experimental data to support the research conclusion. Second, due to the breadth of citations, the scenarios in this article are limited to companies, that is, business settings. It may not necessarily be suitable for all types of organizations.

Moreover, because the research objects of the cited literature are inconsistent, it cannot be determined whether it has reference significance for people from different countries and cultures. Another problem is that time is chosen as a moderator. In fact, in future research, researchers can consider more factors, such as environmental factors or cultural factors.

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