



The Gender-Based Leadership Impact on Library Profession

Dipanwita Ray*

*Librarian, Gushkara Mahavidyalaya, Gushkara, Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, India,
email:dipanwita826@gmail.com

Abstract

The concept of “leadership” has been highlighted. The different styles of leadership like Likert’s Systems of Management, Leadership Grid developed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton and the Transactional/Transformational model of leadership have been discussed. The influence of gender on leadership has been taken into consideration. The reviews of literature on “Gender and Leadership” in Academic Libraries from 1974-2018 have been studied. The status of woman in Library profession and the challenges faced by the female library professionals have also been depicted. It is concluded that the women are proving themselves in the Library profession despite the various challenges faced by them regarding their professional developments.

Keywords: Leadership, Leadership Styles, Leadership Grid, Transformational Leadership, Women Librarianship, Academic Libraries

1. Introduction

The term “leadership” is a concept which involves various styles by which the people influence, guide and inspire others. A leader motivates a group towards achieving the goals. As a consequence, the lukewarm desire for achievement is transformed into burning passion for accomplishment. Leadership is something which one does and not something that one has.

One of the trends of the study of leadership is the study of the ways to determine the style of a leader. The best known of the styles of leadership are – Likert’s Systems of Management, the Leadership Grid developed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton and the Transactional/Transformational model of leadership.

Likert has described four ways in which the managers lead within the organizations. These are:

- I) System 1 management is exploitative-authoritative
- II) System 2 management is benevolent-authoritative
- III) System 3 management is consultative
- IV) System 4 management is participative

© The Author(s) 2025

B. Rautaray et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Marching Beyond the Libraries (ICMBL): Leadership, Creativity, and Innovation (ICMBL 2024)*, Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research 326,

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-712-0_16

In System 1, exploitative-authoritative management, the managers or leaders are autocratic and have no confidence or faith in their subordinates. All the decisions are taken at the top level of the organization. The employees are motivated by fear or punishment. They are subservient to the management.

In System 2 benevolent-authoritative management, the managers or leaders are condescending to their staff-members. The subordinates should be loyal and subservient. But the communication is allowed to move upwards. But the ultimate control is at the hands of the top level leaders or managers.

In System 3 consultative management, the leaders have a considerable confidence in the subordinates but not total faith. Sometimes suggestions are solicited from the subordinates but the ultimate control is with the top level managers. The control process is delegated downwards. Both the upward and downward communications are allowed in the hierarchy.

In System 4 participative management, the leaders or managers have full faith or confidence in their subordinates. All the decisions are taken through the process of group discussion. The communication is allowed towards the top and down in the hierarchy and also horizontally among the peers. The subordinates are highly motivated towards achieving the organization's goals because of their participation in decision-making process.

The assumptions about employees in System 1 are in line with McGregor's Theory X. On the other hand, the assumptions of the System 4 Participative management conform to McGregor's Theory Y. The Systems 3 and 4 management lie between the two extremes.

Likert concluded that the organizations which adopt the System 4 management run most efficiently. The organizations adopting System 1 yield favourable result in terms of productivity with immediate effect but in the long run the results taper off.

2. The Leadership Grid

Another style of Leadership is Leadership Grid (first termed the Management Grid) was developed by Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton. This style has two concerns- concern for production and concern for people. The term "production" means whatever the organization seeks to accomplish by engaging the people. The leaders or managers who are more concerned with productivity aim to accomplish all the tasks. The leaders or managers more concerned with the people focus on the human relations aspect of the organization.

3. Transformational/Transactional Leadership

James McGregor Burns first described two types of leadership styles: the transactional and the transformational. The transactional leaders consider the job performance as a series of transactions with their subordinates. These transactions include rewards for the services rendered and the punishments for the services not accomplished. On the other hand, the transformational

leaders are adept at transforming the self-interests of the subordinates to the interests of the larger groups. They can bring the best out of their subordinates.

4. Objectives

The objectives of the paper are to study:

- The position of women in the context of leadership in the libraries;
- The hindrances faced by the woman while working in the library field;
- Efficiency of women library professional in digital era.

5. Methodology

The methodology applied involves the consultation and the review of the primary sources like periodical articles, both offline and online and secondary sources like books, e-books, etc. A thorough study of different literature review related to the topic of “women in library profession” has also been done.

6. Gender-Based Leadership

To understand the fact whether the leadership styles are gender-based or not, it is necessary to go through the historical backgrounds of the context of leadership. Generally, the traits of decisiveness, assertiveness and competitiveness are associated with the men. On the other hand, the characteristics of empathy, collaboration and nurturing are linked to the characters of women. These traditional beliefs rather stereotypes have an impact on the matter of leadership related to men and women. It has been difficult to arrive at a decisive conclusion from the various research works whether the leadership styles are gender-based or not. But some research works prescribe that leadership styles vary with the men and the women. For example, a meta-analysis published in ‘Psychological Bulletin’ in 2005 that women are transformational leaders insisting on collaboration, empowerment and development of followers while the men believe in transactional leadership emphasizing on clear-cut goals, rewards and punishments.

Another phenomenon related to gender and leadership is the “glass-cliff”. In this phenomenon, the women are posed as leaders when the organization is facing a challenging situation. This is because it is believed that the women have more interpersonal skills and can better handle the situations that necessitate empathy and collaboration. This “glass-cliff” phenomenon is like a double-edged sword for women in leadership. On the one hand, it gives them the opportunity to prove themselves as efficient leaders while on the other hand, it pushes them towards the risks of failure. If they are unable to bring out the organization from the difficult situation, they are criticized and backlashed emphasizing the stereotype that the women are less efficient leaders. The influence of gender on leadership is a complicated topic. There may be differences in leadership styles between men and women but the difference is not entirely because of the

impact of gender. There are other factors involved like the personality and the experience of the individual and also the organizational culture.

7. Gender and Leadership in Academic Libraries, 1974-2018

Anita R. Schillar's study "women in Librarianship" published in 1974 was the first ever systematic review of gender parity in American Librarianship (Moran, Leonard & Zellars, 2009). Analyzing data from national surveys for the past twenty five years, Schillar (1974) found that librarianship also faced the same plights as the other professions- the women were paid less than men even if their educational and professional qualifications were the same. The men enjoyed the higher and better paid positions. Schillar identified several patterns that reflected the women's low professional status. "Female underrepresentation or the disproportionate number of men in top decision and policy-making positions, the stratification of the position hierarchy by sex or the tendency of men to dominate jobs with high prestige and rank; dual career structure or the deeply gendered paths of advancement, all resulted in female librarians' faring worse than their male counterparts" (Schillar, 1974, pp.112-115). Schillar (1974) summed up her findings as "The higher the status of a library field, the less likely that women occupy important administrative jobs in it." (116).

Ayman and Korabik's (2010) review of major models and theories of leadership shows that "gender and culture do make a difference" (p.157). Ayman and Korabik (2010) state the factors that shape leadership both as a concept and as a role within an organization-"gender-role socialization, gender-role beliefs, attitudes and expectations; gender stereotypes; gender-based status differentials; group gender composition; and the gendered nature of tasks" (160).

Kark and Eagly (2010) mentioned that "women have less access to leadership, especially, to role that confer high levels of power and authority" (p.443). According to Kark and Eagly 2010, the key factors that make it difficult for women to enter the leadership rank are – women's domestic and caretaking responsibilities negatively impact their possibilities of employment outside the home. Their work/life balancing also impedes the women's career advancement opportunities. 'longstanding leadership models that are strongly infused with cultural masculinity and value, ambition, confidence, dominance and other agentic qualities ascribed to men further reinforce prejudice and bias against women as leaders" (Kark & Eagly, 2010, p.448) "No less important are structural and cultural barriers within organizations including traditions that fit men's lifestyles and preferences, expectations of availability to work long hours as well as willingness to prioritize career over personal life." (Kark & Eagly, 2010, p.452)

8. Women in Library Profession

The "librarianship" like other professions of teaching, nursing and socialwork s traditionally a female profession but are underrepresented in top positions.

Prior to the American Civil War, it was usual for the men to work in libraries as they were normally engaged with the professions of teaching and nursing. As a result of the aftermath of the War, men began to move to other professions like farming and mining which posed as more attractive ways of earning one's livelihood. Consequently, the white middle-class women started to fill up the vacancies in the libraries whose employment opportunities were limited so far. In addition to, the emergence of "research movement" transformed the American universities and their libraries and the public libraries were developed. This resulted in the increase in the number of libraries and created a demand of new librarians. As Christine Williams (1995) points out, "Teaching, nursing, social work and librarianship were all tied to institutions that were funded by private donations or government support." "The ensuing feminization of librarianship was swift. When the American Library Association was founded in 1876 by 90 men and 13 women, most librarians were men." (Biggs, 1982). By 1910, librarianship had already become a female profession. (Schillar, 1974). In 1920, women made up 90 percent of all librarians. (Biggs, 1982). The 1920s was a decade when the women were well represented as library administrators but the number of women library directors "diminished dramatically in the ensuing decades". (Hildenbrand, 1985, p.191). As the women attained the majority status within the librarianship, "the principle of unequal reward for equal work was put into practice almost universally" and the women's salaries "ranged from less than one half to about two-thirds that of men in comparable positions" (Biggs, 1982, p.413). The Great Depression did not much affect the gender composition of librarianship but after World War II, the profession became attractive to married women with children. (Hildenbrand, 2000). The flexibility of the part-time jobs and the federal support for the expansion of libraries led to the joining of the profession by a large number of women. (Hildenbrand, 2000). This trend continued in the 1960s and resulted in a "dual career" pattern characterized by women occupying lower-level positions and receiving lower pay than men (Hildenbrand, 2000, p.52).

In the context of India, the library profession was considered to be for the scholars and men of letters till the early part of the 20th century. The first Indian woman to hold a key position in the library profession was Ms. Anandibai Prabhudesai who was the superintendent at the children's library in Baroda in the 1930s. The professions like teaching, social work and librarianship were considered as service professions suited to women. It was regarded that the women by their nature and upbringing can serve the service professions better. Various surveys have depicted that more than 80% of the library profession is occupied by the women in more developed countries. There is a dual career pattern in these countries with women receiving lower pay for lower positions while the men occupy the higher level prestigious positions receiving higher salary. But in India, the situation is bit different. The women were admitted to the professional course during the 1st half of the 20th century. In 1940, the first batch of women was admitted to a training course conducted by the Bengal Library Association, Kolkata and in 1942, the first trained female librarian secured a job in Bengal Legislative Assembly. Till 1975, the number of women library professionals was not significant though it was considered that the women can

serve the profession better than men. This is because the qualities required for the profession like patience, sympathy and perseverance are all bestowed in the woman by nature.

The Library System in India can be divided into five major types:

- 1) National Library System
- 2) Academic Library System
- 3) Special Library System
- 4) Public Library System
- 5) Informatics

The age-old stereotype of regarding women as child-bearers and rearers, teachers, nurse is reflected in the staff pattern of the above mentioned library systems. Like the developed countries, women are found in large numbers in children's libraries, school libraries and to a certain extent in college libraries. The women librarians are in great demand in girls' schools and colleges which are many in number. But in government library sector, the women are very few in decision-making level. Most of them belong to the professional staff category level. The women mostly occupy only the sectional head level in the three most important Government Libraries- National Library, Central Secretariat Library and the Delhi Public Library. The top-level positions are mostly held by the males.

9. Challenges of Women Library Professionals

The women librarians must participate in the career development programmes. But women librarians' equal participation with that of the males, especially, in decision-making remains a challenge. The position of women in the society needs to be examined for assessing the status of women in librarianship. The position of the women in an organization can be assessed from the respect and the privileges enjoyed by them. The awareness of gender bias is essential for the selection of top-level positions. "An organization should organize suitable training facilities relevant to women's special needs at the local level so they can handle the new environment in Libraries." (Patton, 2016)

It is observed from the study of Dhanshree and Devi (2019) that the professional factors and the ICT affect the women librarians' professional development activities. Gender discrimination is the main hindrance in the career advancement of the women library professionals.

The study by DeLong (2012) reveals that the number of women in managerial positions is increasing gradually. From 1930s to 1950s, the male professionals headed the academic and the research libraries. From 1960s to 1980s, the women librarians could identify their personal and professional characteristics. The number of librarians in academic libraries has increased in United States and Canada but they are still underrepresented. The conclusion of the study depicts that the professional life of the women librarians, their professional contributions as well as their librarian leadership are underestimated.

Rutledge (2020) studied about the female academic librarians as well as their career advancement. This study helped the women librarians identify the obstacles in their career advancement in managerial positions. This study has revealed the barriers that the women librarians face in their leadership positions and the success factors that make them successful. This study helps the human resource personnel to identify interventions to encourage the women in managerial positions. The human resource experts are also helped to limit the negative impacts of gender behavioural expectations from this study.

10. Conclusion

The women are gradually entering the library field in greater numbers. They are occupying more and more the library leadership positions. They are getting the professional opportunities as a consequence of women empowerment in the society. The qualities required for the library service such as humbleness, patience, cooperative attitude, perseverance are all bestowed in the females by nature. They have developed the ICT skills to cope up with the technological advancements in the field. But still, they face various challenges regarding the career advancement and other professional matters due to the different stigmas of the society.

References

- Hutton, J. (2024). Exploring female leadership styles: A comparative look at gender in leadership. Retrieved 25 September 2024 from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/exploring-female-leadership-styles-comparative-look-gender-hutton-7j72c>
- Mhaprolkar, P. & Bhabal, J. (2020). Professional development and challenges faced by academic women librarians in 21 century (2010-2022): A literature review. *International Journal of Innovative science and Research Technology*, 7(7). Retrieved 22 September 2024 from www.ijisrt.com
- S, Devaraju (2017). Women librarian empowerment in the digital era. *IP Indian Journal of Library Science and Information Technology*, 2(2), 80-83. Retrieved 22 September 2024 from www.ijisrt.com
- Sex differences in leadership. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex-differences-in-leadership>
- Stueart, R.D. & Moran, B.B. (2004). *Library and information center management*. (6th ed.). Libraries Unlimited.
- The influence of gender on leadership styles: Exploring research and theories. Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/c-suite/the-influence-of-gender-on-leadership-styles-exploring-research-and-theories/printable/10485>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

