Management Practices That Help Women Break Through The Glass Ceiling

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July 29, 2013

CMST 4899: Senior Project
Abstract

The number of women in the workforce has increased over the years. However, they are still unable to advance in management. According to Sherrill (2010) in 2007, forty percent of managers were women compared to thirty-nine percent in 2000. Growth in management has become stagnant for women. This paper addresses research on women in management. Problems that prevent advancement, leadership styles, and conflict resolution styles are looked at by gender. Work discrimination, motherhood, marriage, and lack of inclusion in decisions are roadblocks to advancement. Gender roles are defined. Task and relational leaders, participative leaders, and the leadership styles of Miles and Snow are examined. Rahim’s five conflict resolution styles are also looked at. Gender role, leadership style, and conflict resolution style have a positive affect on organizational commitment and employee satisfaction. Women who work through the barriers and choose the best combination of variables can advance. Successful managers can use both masculine and feminine management styles. They can also address employee needs, and respond to conflict in a timely manner. This increases organizational commitment and employee satisfaction.

Keywords: glass-ceiling, masculine management styles, feminine management styles, participative management, task and relational management, the leadership styles of Miles and Snow, competent communication, job satisfaction, job performance, organizational commitment, conflict, emotional intelligence, and Rahim’s conflict resolutions styles.
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**Introduction**

There are some very prominent roadblocks that prevent women from being promoted into management positions. These roadblocks include: motherhood, work discrimination, marriage, and non-inclusion in decision making. Sherrill (2010) indicates that in 2007, forty-nine percent of non-management employees in today’s workforce were women. In the year 2000, this number was the same. Women make up almost half of today’s workforce. However, there has been very little growth for them in the last decade. Women are still underrepresented in management. The number of women in today’s workforce and management has greatly slowed. This is due to discrimination because of motherhood, a shortage of supportive spouses, and lack of inclusion in decision making and shared knowledge. This paper reviews gender, leadership styles, and conflict resolution styles. Together these variables affect organizational commitment and employee satisfaction positively. This can help women learn how to become better managers.

The question to ask is why has the advancement of women in management stagnated? One reason for this is because women have to choose between a career and motherhood. According to Sherrill (2010), out of the 39% of women working in management, only fourteen percent are mothers. A small amount of women raise children under the age of eighteen in their home. When compared to men in management positions, Sherrill (2010) reveals that in 2007, women managers were less likely to have children.
Women also face discrimination at work and may not receive support from their spouses. Chao and Ha (2008) state that women felt discriminated against when bosses looked down on them for needing to leave work early to pick up their children. According to Chao and Ha (2008) women also still see the field of management as male dominated. The glass ceiling is the idea that men are promoted more often than women (Chao & Ha, 2008). Women can no longer advance bringing their careers to a halt. The women in this study attribute their success to being capable of balancing motherhood and a career along with supportive spouses (Chao & Ha 2008). According to Sherrill (2010) female manages were less likely than their male counterparts to be married. Women are less likely than men to find a supportive spouse to help them manage home life and work life.

A final roadblock women face is the lack of inclusion in decision making and information sharing. According to Findler, Wind, and MorBarak (2007) women feel less included in making decisions and receiving information than men. As a result, they report less organizational commitment. Less organizational commitment reduces the opportunity for advancement. Women can overcome these barriers. They must make difficult choices between their personal life and career.

**Literature Review**

**Gender Roles**

Gender roles are when a man or a woman possesses a high rate of either masculine or feminine characteristics while managing (Brewer, Mitchell, & Webber, 2002). Masculine management traits include aggression, independence, and assertiveness. Feminine management traits are emotional, cooperative, and being sensitive to others (Brewer et al., 2002). Masculine
Managers focus on task performance, giving orders, maintaining control, and obtaining power (Rutherford, 2001). Feminine managers focus on the process, open communication, and employ people skills (Rutherford, 2001). Both masculine and feminine management styles can be used by either men or women. This is an androgynous manager (Brewer et al., 2002). Chan, Monroe, Ng, and Tan (2006) say that gender roles are learned so men and women can use both management styles.

Leadership Styles

**Leadership.** Leadership is the manager’s ability to help his or her team reach shared goals (Madlock, 2008). There are many types of leadership styles. This paper looks at task and relational leaders, participative leaders, and the leadership styles of Miles and Snow. The style of leadership that a manager chooses can have a positive effect on employee satisfaction and organizational performance.

**Task/Relational Leaders.** Task leadership is when a manager focuses on production goals (Madlock, 2008). Relational leadership is when a manager focuses on employee needs (Madlock, 2008). The type of leadership style a manager chooses affects employee satisfaction. Employees can be satisfied by how a manager communicates. Communication competence is being able to listen to many points of view, responding on time, and interacting with employees on all levels (Madlock, 2008). Employee communication satisfaction is when an employee’s need for information and inclusion is met by the manager (Madlock, 2008). Employees also experience job satisfaction, which is how content he or she is with the job (Madlock, 2008). A manager who uses both task and relational leadership shows more communication competence (Madlock, 2008). When both leadership styles are used employees experience both
communication satisfaction and job satisfaction (Madlock, 2008). Choosing one type of leadership over another only affected employee communication satisfaction positively (Madlock, 2008). Madlock (2008) also showed that job satisfaction under either type of leadership style decreased. A leader who focuses on the task and employees’ needs helps increase employee satisfaction. This helps management play a role in reducing the turnover rate.

**Transactional/Transformational Leadership.** Transactional leaders are people who monitor and correct employees. They also reward or discipline an employee based on his or her job performance. Transformational leaders instruct and assist employees in their daily activities (Chao et al., 2008). This type of leader works closely with employees to implement the values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals of the company (Chao et al., 2008). Transactional leaders are more concerned with the task and how successfully it gets completed. Transformational leaders focus on sharing information with employees and the process of how to reach the company’s goals. When women executives were interviewed, Chao et al. (2008) found that they all used transformational leadership. These types of leaders put employees’ needs and desires first. They also focused on building positive relationships. These women were executive managers who successfully broke through the glass ceiling. The type of leadership style they use is a good example for other women who want to advance.

**Gender Role and Leadership.** Gender roles are when a man or a woman possesses a high rate of either masculine or feminine characteristics while managing (Brewer, Mitchell, & Webber, 2002). Masculine management traits include aggression, independence, and assertiveness. Feminine management traits are emotional, cooperative, and being sensitive to others (Brewer et al., 2002). Masculine managers focus on task performance, giving orders, maintaining control, and obtaining power (Rutherford, 2001). Feminine managers focus on the
process, open communication, and employ people skills (Rutherford, 2001). Both masculine and feminine management styles can be used by either men or women. This is an androgynous manager (Brewer et al., 2002). Chan, Monroe, Ng, and Tan (2006) say that gender roles are learned so men and women can use both management styles. Masculine gender roles are important because they are similar to task and transactional leaders. All three styles focus on the job and how successful employees are at getting it completed. Feminine gender roles are very similar to relational and transformational leadership. All of these styles focus on employees’ needs, sharing of information, and team work. Androgynous managers have the ability be both masculine and feminine. They use a combination of traits that are similar to both task/relational and transactional/transformational leadership. All of these variables affect employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

**Participative Leadership.** Participative managers include all parties affected by a decision in the decision making process (Rafiq & Chisti, 2011). Rafiq and Chisti (2011) also describe job performance or organizational performance as how capable an employee is at performing a job. Another variable that leadership affects is employee participation. This is how much say a non-managerial employee gets in making decisions (Rafiq & Chisti, 2011). When a manager includes employees in the decision making process, he or she yields positive results. Managers who used a participative leadership style saw an increase in organizational performance (Rafiq & Chisti, 2011). Employee job satisfaction was only moderately affected (Rafiq & Christi, 2011).

**The Four Management Strategies of Miles and Snow.** Johansen (2007) uses these strategies to show how organizational performance is affected. Defenders focus on an organization’s main product and producing it efficiently (Johansen, 2007). Prospectors look for
new products and opportunities to improve the company’s performance (Johansen, 2007).

Analyzers focus on both the main product and new products and opportunities (Johansen, 2007).

Reactors only take action in response to outside pressure or when change is taking place (Johansen, 2007).

Women who use certain management styles can have a positive influence on organizational performance. Johansen (2007) found that women who use the prospector, reactor, and defender leadership styles increase organizational performance. When men use the prospector and reactor leadership style they decrease organizational performance (Johansen, 2007). The only leadership style used by men that increases organizational performance is the defender style. These studies show that women have a variety of tools to choose from that make them successful managers. Knowing which style to use and when increases organizational performance. Being considerate of employee needs and sharing information also increases employee satisfaction and organizational performance.

Both men and women can learn different types of leadership. A transformational or participative leader who can understand the main product and look for new ideas affects employee satisfaction and organizational commitment positively. Women who want to break through the glass ceiling could look for this type of leader to be their mentor to help them become a better manager. Leadership type is a predictor of employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Conflict in the workplace is also a problem that managers face. How these conflicts are resolved also affects employee satisfaction and commitment. This paper will look at gender roles and Rahim and Bonoma’s Theory of Interpersonal Conflict Resolution. These conflict
resolution styles increase employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. Choosing the right style can improve a woman’s position.

Conflict

Conflict is when one person or a group of people perceives that another person or group of people will negatively affect something the first party cares about (Godse & Thingujam, 2010). When a manager is capable of dealing with his or her emotions as well as the emotions of others it is known as emotional intelligence. Godse and Thingujam (2010) describe emotional intelligence as the ability to identify facial emotions, identify transactions from sadness to anger, using emotion to convey thoughts, and how to manage emotion. Emotional intelligence affects employee satisfaction. A manager who is emotionally intelligent can be successful at choosing the best conflict management style. This style will increase employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Rahim and Bonoma’s Five Conflict Resolution Styles

Two dimensions are considered in this theory. The first dimension is how concerned a person is with satisfying his or her own needs. The second dimension is how concerned a person is with others’ needs (Godse & Thingujam, 2010). These dimensions are known as assertiveness. The five conflict resolution styles are dominating, obliging, integrating, avoiding, and compromising. Dominating is having a high concern for self and low concern for others (Brewer et al., 2002). Godse and Thingujam (2010) describe obliging as having high concern for others but not for oneself. Integrating is when a manger has both high concern for self and others (Brewer et al., 2002). Avoiding is when a manger has low concern for both self and others (Brewer et al., 2002). Compromising is when a manager has equal concern for both self
and others (Godse & Thingujam, 2010). A manager who compromises makes sure all parties give up something to meet the needs and desires of everyone involved (Chao & Ha, 2008). When avoiding conflict no one’s needs or desires are met (Chao & Ha, 2008). Dominating conflict resolution is when confrontational behavior is used and competition between workers is common (Choi, 2013). When a manager is integrating problems are discussed openly among small groups so all members’ thoughts and actions are considered (Choi, 2013).

The type of conflict resolution style chosen depends on the manager and affects job satisfaction. Collaborative or integrating managers affect job satisfaction positively (Choi, 2013). The dominant management style had a negative effect on job satisfaction (Choi, 2013). Female executive leaders chose to use the integrating approach to conflict resolution (Chao & Ha, 2008). Masculine managers use the dominating conflict resolution style the most often (Brewer et al., 2002). Feminine managers use the avoiding conflict style, while androgynous managers used the integrating style most often (Brewer et al., 2002). Masculine and feminine managers respond to conflict using the integrating, obliging, and compromising styles about the same (Chan et al., 2006). Managers with low emotional intelligence also use the avoiding style because they are unable to deal with their own or others’ emotions (Godse & Thingujam, 2010). Managers with high emotional intelligence use the integrating style of conflict resolution because they have a high concern for self and others (Godse & Thingujam, 2010). Dominating and avoiding conflict resolution styles affect employee satisfaction negatively. The dominating style has a negative effect on job satisfaction because this encourages disagreements and more competition (Choi, 2013). It also leads to feelings of being burned out and strain within the work group (Choi, 2013). The avoiding conflict style can leave all parties in the conflict dissatisfied because no one’s needs are met and the conflict is not resolved. The integrating management
style had a positive affect on employee satisfaction because all the thoughts and feelings of the workers involved were considered. The gender of the manager and the conflict resolution style he or she chooses affects employee satisfaction. If employees are satisfied they are more likely to remain committed to the organization. Studying conflict resolution styles can help companies train future managers to help reduce employee turnover.

Summary

In summary, the gender of the manager, leadership style, and conflict resolution style affect organizational commitment and employee satisfaction. A woman needs to know which traits to use and when to use them to be successful in management. While masculine managers are more likely to use the dominating style of conflict resolution they may be less successful at gaining employee satisfaction. Feminine managers tend to use avoiding conflict resolution styles and may also be less successful at gaining employee satisfaction. This is because masculine managers are less likely to use cooperation and feminine managers are likely to be too cooperative (Chan et al., 2006). When men and women both respond to conflict using integrating, obliging, and compromising styles it is because they were learned by both male and female managers to be used according to the circumstances of a particular problem (Chan et al., 2006). Men and women who use both masculine and feminine management styles can be successful in gaining employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

The leadership style chosen by the manager also positively affects employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. A manager who focuses on both the task and the employees’ needs increases employee satisfaction. Transformational leaders share information with employees and help them to reach the company’s goals regularly. Employees feel like a part of
the decision making process and are satisfied. Feminine managers focus on the process not the task, group work and relationships. Masculine managers are in charge, dominant, task-oriented, and confrontational. Being able to focus on the task and process, remain in charge, and address the needs of all parties involved is a good way to manage successfully. The best type of manager is androgynous because he or she can be both masculine and feminine. This manager can gain respect by being firm and in charge. This manager is also able to help his or her team get the job done by sharing information and giving guidance along the way. Employees respond to leaders who are transformational or participative positively. Employees want to be informed, help make decisions, and have their needs met by managers. Employees who are satisfied will work for an organization longer. Transformational and participative managers have traits that are similar to feminine managers. Sharing information, emotions, and relationships are the focus. Transactional leaders are more like masculine managers. They focus on the task and promotion due to completion of the task. They solve problems by using what has worked in the past. Employee input is not considered. This type of management is successful in a male dominated workplace. This is the norm for many males. New ideas and change are not fostered which can slow the growth of the company. Females who manage using too much masculinity are looked down upon because they are seen as acting out of a woman’s role. The best manager again is one who can use both masculine and feminine management strategies.

Managers who are competent communicators also increase employee satisfaction (Madlock, 2008). Knowing how to listen and respond to employees is an important skill in a manager. Competent communicators also have traits that are similar to a feminine management style. Feminine managers consider employees’ emotions and build relationships. Employees who can communicate with their manager are more satisfied and committed to the organization.
Female managers can use a combination of management styles. Although women are more team oriented, they are able to adapt their style to fit the team they work in (Rutherford, 2001). Women who lead using the defender, prospector, and reactor styles are positively affective. They are able to focus on the current product, find new products, and react to change that is already in progress. Men are only effective when using the defender leadership style. Women are able to learn more than one leadership style and apply it as needed in order to be effective managers.

Managers who are emotionally intelligent are able to deal with conflict well. They choose to manage by listening to employees’ and responding to their needs in an appropriate time frame. They choose the integrating style of conflict resolution. This is because they consider the thoughts and feelings of others. Emotionally intelligent managers are also similar to those who manage femininely. Once again all parties involved are taken into consideration. Many feminine management traits are used in leadership and conflict resolution to ensure positive employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. Men use the dominating style of conflict resolution the most. Women use the avoiding conflict management style the most. Men and women use all the conflict resolution styles that have high concern for self and others (obliging, compromising, and accommodating) equally. This is similar again to feminine management where others’ needs are put first. Men and women can learn to use many styles of management. A focus on the task and process, being in command, concern for others, and responding to concerns makes a successful manager. This is a manager who can be masculine and feminine, be a transformational leader, and who can resolve conflict in a manner that integrates all parties’ concerns. This creates a win-win situation that fosters organizational commitment by increasing employee satisfaction.
H1: Men and women who use a combination of both masculine and feminine management styles have a positive effect on employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

H2: Transformational leaders have a positive affect on employee satisfaction.

H3: Emotionally competent and intelligent managers have a positive effect on employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

H4: Men are more likely to use the dominating conflict resolution style

H5: Women are more likely to use the avoidant conflict resolution style

H6: Androgynous managers are more likely to use the integrating conflict resolution style.

**Limitations and Future Research**

These articles were successful in looking at gender in leadership and conflict resolution styles. However, many of the studies had either more male or more female participants. Future studies need to be conducted with an equal amount of men and women in management to see if the results would be the same. The article written by Chan et al., (2006) was the only one that looked at both gender and sex. Future research may want to combine the variables of both sex and gender to see if sex does in fact play a larger role in which leadership and conflict resolution styles are chosen. Some studies also suggested that the division of a company a manager works in may be seen as more masculine or feminine (Rutherford, 2001). This can affect how a man or woman manages. Masculine management styles were used in marketing. This is because no
direct dealing with customers occurred or providing of services to people and no emotions were revealed (Rutherford, 2001). In human resources the management style was feminine because good communication and listening were emphasized (Rutherford, 2001). One last variable that may need to be explored is whether or not the manager works in upper or lower management. Brewer et al., (2002) found that upper management used integrating not dominating conflict resolution styles which contradicted their predictions. Chao and Ha (2008) also found that the executive managers used the integrating approach to conflict resolution. This suggests that managers who are on lower levels may be more likely to use avoidance or accommodating management styles because they may be not be trained as well as managers who are in higher positions.

RQ1: Does job division determine whether management style will be masculine or feminine?

RQ2: Does being in upper or lower management affect which type of conflict resolution style managers use?

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper reviewed the reasons women are limited in advancement in management. It also reviewed how gender, leadership styles, and conflict resolution styles positively affect employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. Knowing the barriers and best ways to manage can help women break through the glass-ceiling. Women do not receive enough information, face discrimination, and have a hard time finding supportive significant others. Women can learn to be both masculine and feminine while managing. This
allows them to gain respect from male co-workers and focus on the task. It also allows for more employee satisfaction because the focus is also on relationships, employee needs, and the process. Further research is needed because department and management division may affect the gender and conflict resolution style a manager uses.
References


