

## Women in leadership

'Women in leadership' is a phenomena that has obtained many attention over the past couple of years. Nowadays more young woman graduate of Universities, yet the amount of female leader seems remarkable low (in 2012 only 16,6%). Many research has been accomplished in order to find out the differences between male and female leadership styles, the challenges women face in organisations, the traits women have to make and the influence of stereotyping on men and women. A significant number of organisations have diverse teams and claim they acknowledge the advantages of female leadership styles and know the positive influence of women in the organisation. Nevertheless, the traditional roles at home, the stereotyping and the 'boys networking clubs' seem to make it difficult for women on their way to the top. Even though organisations state they offer equal chances for men and women, women continue to make more traits and face more obstacles due to gender-based assumptions. Women and female leaders still face discrimination in organisations. This essay discusses reasons why women face discrimination, such as the communication style of women, work/family balance, stereotyping and networking based on academic research, statistical data, examples and expert quotes.

First of all women face discrimination, because organisations find a women's communication style to emotional to be a representative leader. According to von Hippel et al. (2011, 1313) who held research about the stereotyping of women and compared a lot of research reports, state that a women's communication style is focused on emotional, indirect and elaborate components, while a men's communication style is instrumental, direct and compact. Another research report of Groysberg and Bell (2013) argues about the gender gap in the CEO-suite, argues that 8% of the women and 11% of the men state women have more interpersonal skills and show more empathy (Groysberg & Dell 2013, 93). The findings about women their communication style confirm women are seen as less competent than men, because women do not show the male skills such as assertiveness (Eagly & Karau, 2002, Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004, 1313).

However, women's communication style is perceived as 'better' than men's communication style. According to researchers Eberly & Fong (2013, 709) on 'leading via heart and mind' leaders need to have the skills to recognize their emotions and the influence of their emotions on their employees. Leaders who are emotionally intelligent are better in identifying emotional needs of a situation (Humphrey et al., 2008). The ability of emotional intelligence leads to managing the emotions of oneself and their employees, can achieve a positive work surrounding and leads to better employee performance and motivation (Eberly & Fong 2013, 709). Furthermore, one respondent in a report of Vecchio (2003, 835) about the gender advantage states the following quote about female leadership: 'Every study I'm aware of finds that women managers are more effective than men in decision making, analysis, so-called people skills and communications. Women have emotional x-ray vision. And they deliver results.' -a female marketing consultant (Kleiman, 2003). On the other hand, women have a lack of authority and therefore women are perceived as less competent leaders (Hippel et al. 2011, 1313). As a result women seem less qualified for leadership positions (Hippel et al. 2011, 1313). According to Powell, Butterfield & Parent (2002) Schein (1975, 1313) the masculine

characterises such as assertiveness and self-reliance, are seen as indicators for effective leadership style. Although research confirms women's communication style leads to better performance, research indicates women still seem to suffer under the gender-based advantages of men.

Secondly, women face discrimination because organisations and men assume they put family first under all circumstances. According to Ely, Stone, and Ammerman (2014, 103), who surveyed more than 25,000 HBS graduates to collect data about women in leadership, conclude women and men think women develop more slowly due to the assumption that women find family more important than their career. 77 % of the HBS graduates state choosing family over work is holding women back to make a career (Ely, Stone, Ammerman 2014, 104). Also, more than 75% of the men expects their wife to take care of the children instead of having a career (Ely, Stone, Ammerman 2014, 106). Men still expect women to adjust their career to the traditional roles. Furthermore, more than half of the men finds their career more important than their wives career and think their career deserves more priority (Ely, Stone, Ammerman 2014, 106). Another notable assumption is that women are most of the time not considered for international opportunities (Gorysberg & Dell 2013, 91). For example, directors still assume women find it more difficult than men to leave their family for travelling or relocating due to work(Gorysberg & Dell 2013, 91). This leads to unequal chance for international functions.

On the contrary, women do leave the company due to child care and they start working part-time. According to Ely, Stone & Ammerman (2014, 104) women do leave the company to take care of the children. According to Sheryl Sandberg (CEO Facebook) women give up their career ambitions to have a family. Pip Jamieson, a business consultant and leadership coach, interviewed more than twenty senior female and male leaders about the differences of men and women in business. One of her respondents stated the following about working mothers (Jamieson, 2010, 36): 'To be quite honest I could never do what I am doing if I had children.' However, only 11% leaves the company due to fulltime childcare, the rest of the women are simply seeking for other jobs because their current jobs are not fulfilling enough (Ely, Stone & Ammerman 2014, 105). Many women do start working part-time and then never climb up the ladder. This might be true, but that has a reasonable explanation. Organisations still do not offer challenging and professional part-time jobs for working mothers (Ely, Stone & Ammerman 2014, 105). As a result, women have a lack in professional experience and that is why they cannot make it to the top (Ely, Stone & Ammerman 2014, 105). Also according to Sheryl Sandberg and Pip Jamieson, a work-life balance is hard for women. Many women are comparing themselves with fulltime mothers or fulltime workers (Sandberg, 2013). Women are self-critics and are eager to fulfil every role perfectly (Jamieson, 2010, 36). Sandberg states that the responsibilities at home should be balanced, however according to Ely, Stone & Ammerman (2014, 105) men are still traditional about the child care responsibilities. Also, organisations need to offer more family-friends benefits such as flexible working hours and child care for both men and women (Eagly & Carli, 2007, 69-70). The services organisations offer seem not to be sufficient enough to let mothers work.

Thirdly, women face discrimination because they are often shut out in networking events or meetings. According to Gloyberg & Connolly (2013, 71) who interviewed 24 CEO's about diverse and inclusive organisations, state that seven of the CEOs

said that being shut out from networks and conversations leads to less development and promotion of an employee. Men seem to shut out women. For example, Woods Staten (CEO Arcos Dorados, largest operator of McDonald's), confirms that men ignore women and bond with other men by drinking together and meet up after meetings (Gloysberg & Connolly 2013, 71). According to Barry Salzberg (CEO Deloitte) women have to deal with the 'old boys' network': a typical masculine environment when they do fun activities like play golf and where it is difficult for women to fit in meetings (Gloysberg & Connolly 2013, 71).

Women may have the feeling they are excluded, but women do not participate in networking meetings. According to Gregory-Mina (2012, 66) who provided a literature review about gender issues, debates that women are less likely to take part of networking events due to family-work balance. Also women have less success in networking, because they want to use networking for social support and men want to use it for career growth (Gregory-Mina 2012, 69). However, organisations still do not offer enough mentoring opportunities for women. When organisations offer mentoring opportunities and they provide a male mentor, access to networks for women becomes easier (Gregory-Mina 2012, 69). According to Gloysberg & Connolly (2013, 75) organisations can offer sponsoring resource groups or mentoring in order to let women network. Also Sheryl Sandberg (2013, 87) states women should get a mentor in order to motivate women to climb up the ladder and become successful.

In summary, women and female leaders still face discrimination in organisations due to their communication skills, gender-based assumptions and exclusion of networks. A female communication style is the opposite of male communication style and the male communication style tends to be more effective. Another reason why women face discrimination is because of the assumption organisations and men seem to have that women chose family above all. Thirdly, women are excluded of networking opportunities. Yet, the opposites states that the emotional intelligence of women has positive impacts on employees and their productivity. However, women still suffer a lack of authority due to the male communication style. Furthermore women do leave the company to take care of the children. Nevertheless, they want to come back and work on their career, but organisations still do not offer enough family-friends benefits. At last, women leave after networking events which may indicate women do not want to network. On the contrary, they would like to network but they need a mentor that supports them and gives them advice.

It is obvious that the prejudices of female behaviour still rule the organisations and the society. Companies should provide mentors to increase the access to networks, directors should embrace the female communication style and organisations should offer family-friend benefits. In that way the gender barriers will overcome and women will get more chances to climb up the ladder.