

STEREOTYPES AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP

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Abstract: *Stereotypes are beliefs towards certain groups that are formed based on mental representations. Some researchers have proven that preference for male leaders is associated with a management style that defines management in male terms. We can state that in Romania there is openness for the promotion of women in business and in management positions but the average number is still low compared to men.*

Keywords: *Stereotypes; gender; leadership; management*

The American journalist Walter Lippman was the first one to use the notion stereotype in his work entitled „Public Opinion”, in 1922. He lists several definitions of stereotype in his book. One of them presents stereotypes as being “images that are to be found in our mind” which represent “maps that would guide us through the world”(Nastas, 2004, p. 262).

Later, Allport (1954, p. 191, cited by Yzerbyt & Corneille, 2005) defines the stereotype as being “an exaggerated belief associated with a category”. Hilton & Hoppel (1996, cited by Curşeu & Boroş, 2003, p. 17) sum up several approaches and define stereotypes as “cognitions (beliefs, expectations and commitments) related to characteristics, attributes and behaviours common to members of a certain social category. Ashmore & Del Boca (1981, p.16) consider that stereotypes are “a set of beliefs about personal attributes of a group of individuals”. Hence, people behave in a certain manner towards a person, in certain situations due to stereotype features that guide their judgement and behaviour.

Stereotypes are beliefs towards certain groups that are formed based on mental representations. Their source is the identification of real differences between two groups (Vercellino, 2007, p.11) which means that they reflect the individuals’ reality as they perceive it (Judd & Park, 1993). In this situation, individuals can perceive certain aspects, while others can be ignored. Thus, certain aspects can be overlooked and others, stronger than the previous would be considered as defining for a certain group.

The approach of stereotypes from the perspective of attitudes has been studied by Dorin Nastas. According to his theory “stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination are different facets of intergroup attitudes” (Nastas, 2004, p.262). From this perspective, the stereotype targets the cognitive aspect (we refer cognitively to a group), prejudice relates to affective aspects and discrimination refers to behaviour/behaviours emerging from stereotypes and prejudices (Fiske, 1998, Brewer & Crano, 1994 cited by Nastas, 2004, p. 262).

Stereotypes are not always negative, but if they refer to the attributes of the out-group members, they tend to acquire negative connotations, even when having a positive justification. Most researchers believe that the main effect of negative stereotypes which brings about diminishment of performance is the reduction of working memory of the individuals. This reduction can be explained through the occurrence of anxiety that diminishes cognitive resources, necessary in the task solving process (Croizet et al, 2004; Quin & Spencer, 2001; O’Brien & Crandall, 2003; Schmader & Johns, 2003 cited by Cernat 2005, p. 160). Thus, negative stereotypes diminish creativity, stimulate a careful processing style, an analytical thinking and positive stereotypes stimulate creativity and diminish analytical thinking. It has

been proven that stereotypes can generate good performance when the task is mainly analytical and positive stereotypes have positive effects when tasks involve the identification of creative solutions (Sebt & Forster, 2004 cited by Cernat 2005).

Gender can be a universal dimension developed to create stereotypes which offer the opportunity to divide individuals into two distinctive categories: men and women (Powell & Graves, 2003). Gender stereotypes on characteristics assigned to men and women are well-known in the society and they frequently occur in the field-related literature (Orser, 1994; Heilman, Block, Martell & Simon, 1989).

It is considered that men and women have certain social characteristics (general - “common” and achievement oriented - “agentic”) which differentiate them (Gupta, 2007).

Women have more general, common qualities (expressiveness, ability to relate to the others, kindness, ability to help others, emotion). Men are described as achievement-oriented (independence, competitiveness, determination, courage, autonomy). In reality, these stereotypes tend to place themselves in opposition: characteristics associated positively with men are not considered desirable for women and vice versa (Gupta, 2007).

Gender stereotypes describe the way men and women are – descriptive stereotypes – but at the same time, they offer a male, namely female specific type of behaviour – prescriptive stereotypes - (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004; Schein, 2002).

Descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes do not exclude themselves mutually. There are various elements that overlap (Heilman, 2001) because descriptive stereotypes represent the individuals’ beliefs about the characteristics of a social group and reveal the attributes, roles and behaviours that describe that group. Prescriptive stereotypes depict specific rules of behaviour which individuals have to follow in order to avoid disapproval and punishment (Gill, 2004).

Gender stereotypes describe men and women and establish appropriate behaviour rules for the members of these two groups and produce gender stereotypes (Heilman, 1983). Certain qualities in men and women will play an important role in task assignment at the work place. They will determine the type of activity considered proper for them, leading to situations in which qualities required for a specific job are defined in terms of gender. Those occupations are called “men’s work” and “women’s work” (Heilman, 1997). In later research, the only situation when gender stereotype had no longer worked was when the situation of women managers was discussed. They were described as successful (Heilman, Block & Martell, 1995, cited by Heilman, 2001).

Cantor and Benay, in 1992, (cited by Boatwright & Forrest 2000) introduced the hypothesis according to which female leaders would respond to stereotypes by holding back gender specific behaviours, in other words they would act like men in order to be promoted. Oakley (2000) found a similar behaviour style among female leader that minimize their womanhood in favour of a male behaviour that could be associated to success. Even androgen behaviours are perceived as more proper in the characteristics of a leader than female behaviours (Moss & Kent, 1996). Actually, women leaders often face a higher level of stress at work due to discrimination, especially in the industrial environment, which is male dominated (Gardiner & Tiggeman, 1999). The perception that “a successful leader” is male or with male features could also influence promotion and employment practices.

Some researchers have proven that preference for male leaders is associated with a management style that defines management in male terms (Brenner, Tomkiewicz & Schein 1989, Heilman & Block, Martell & Simon 1989, Schein & Mueller, 1992, cited by Carless, 1998). This perception mode (shared both by men and women) can put pressure on women in leadership positions, forcing them to use a male-like management style in their attempt to be viewed as successful leaders (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999).

Morgan (1997) supports these ideas, identifying certain features required by a management position. An incisive, powerful, rational, competitive, compelling and independent

manager (traits attributed usually to men), will have better chances for promotion. Compared to these traits, women are taught to assimilate qualities in opposition with those required from a manager. Male attributed stereotypes are usually opposed to those assigned to women (Morgan, 1997, p. 192).

Table 2. Male and female stereotypes (Morgan, 1997, p. 192)

Male stereotypes	Female stereotypes
Logic	Intuition
Aggression	Sensibility
Dominance	Patience
Strategic thinking	Empathy
Independence	Spontaneity
Competitiveness	Care
Ration	Cooperativeness

Thus, the man has the required characteristics for a leader and makes decisions; the woman is loyal and subordinate – even though these stereotypic roles are changing under the pressure of social movements. Women start with a disadvantage from this point of view. Moreover, - and partly as a consequence – the woman’s attitude, her goals in what concerns her personally or connection to her family, career, position, are in opposition to what a higher level position requires. This statement was strengthened by the consideration that a woman’s profession and abilities have a more limited significance, a lower self-confidence than the responsibility requires. The woman’s activity is attributed to external factors, such as luck or an easy task to fulfil (Fagenson, 1990, p. 268). Field literature stresses the importance of success fear if taken into consideration that women are not too willing to take risks.

The above mentioned facts underline that women acquire traits opposed to those required by a management position. Therefore, women who reach top positions in the organization adopt a male model in their attitude and approach, striving for acknowledgement and success. Their feminine attitude is left aside. There is an opposition between the gender created image of a good and efficient manager and the woman’s identity, while in different socializing processes, gender explanation seems dynamic and in continuous change (Kovalainen, 1990, p. 145).

Male managers` specific characteristics

The average weight of men and women in management positions has undergone though changes throughout the years. If in 1972, in the USA, the percentage of women managers was of 19%, in 1997, it reaches 40% (Neft & Levine, 1997; O’Leary & Ickovis, 1992, cited by Vercellino, p.99, 2007). This percentage refers especially to middle management positions; only 10,2 % women are in top management positions (Catalyst, 1996). Why is there this difference in gender distribution for top management positions? The situation is justified by the concept of „glass – ceiling”, according to whom there is a series of obstacles that women face when they want to reach top management positions (O’Leary & Ickovis, 1992, cited by Vercellino, 2007).

Why are there more men than women in management positions? Researchers have tried to find an answer to this question within a project of the Centre Partnership for Equality (Popescu, 2006), which was carried out in Romania. Here are some causes that could generate differences:

- the existence of certain attitudes at some women towards leadership – the encouragement of women to have a reserved attitude, contrary to the behaviour a leader should have (a leader has to assert and promote the image)
- due to some women’s self-confidence – a “second place” attitude towards her own person leads to lower self-confidence and to the others ‘confidence that a woman is capable

of handling tasks properly as a leader. This is a possible explanation for the fact that some women in similar hierarchical positions with men accept lower wages than they have. This situation brings about the company's lower confidence in the woman's performance and also lower performance.

- due to women's limited professional experience – a consistent corporate experience is essential in building women's credibility for a leadership position and certain women do not have this experience

- the existence of negative influences in the organizational environment – within companies, the most highlighted values are male specific, which leads to reward of such behaviours. Male specific traits (dominance, determination, force, ration, task-oriented) are considered superior to other attributes such as intuition, interpersonal relations.

How are man and women managers perceived?

Stereotypes on women's promotion in top management positions are detrimental to women and are an obstacle in their way. In 1973, Schein used an instrument (SDI – Schein's Descriptive Index) whose aim was to investigate the male managers', the women managers' and the managers' perception without making any reference to their gender. This instrument contains 92 individual adjectives that reveal stereotype descriptors for men and women. The study included 300 male managers whose task was to match the 92 adjectives with the category they fit in the best (men in general, women in general, successful managers). The results show that most similarities can be seen between the descriptors "men in general" and "women in general". The study included also women, which is very relevant for the study because the respondents' gender can influence the association of descriptors (Ezell, Odervahm & Sherman, 1981; Taylor & Ilgen, 1981 cited by Vercellino, 2007).

Messengil & DiMarco (1979) noticed that the association between women and "successful manager" in male perception still has few common elements; this perception underwent changes, when the subjects were women whose answers were alike when referring to men or women managers and their association to success. After 10 years, Schein (1989, cited by Eagly & Karau, 2002), made similar studies to the ones of Messengil and DiMarco, and the results were similar, so basically nothing has changed in the society.

Heilmann, Block, Martell & Simon (1989) made a study that wanted to compare the women managers' and the men managers' perception with the managers' perception, in general, with the gender not mentioned. Results revealed that even in situations when women were characterized as successful managers, men described them as egotistical, arguing and with poor management abilities.

Another tool was used by Powell and Butterfield (1979) – The Bem Sex Role Inventory – by means of which they studied the link between typically male traits and the description of a "good" manager. Students (women and men) taking part in this study were asked to describe a good manager. Descriptions made by both categories were similar and underlined the existence of typically male traits, perception which did not change since then.

Recent studies show us that the situation has not changed. In this respect, Deal and Stevenson's research (1998) show that women and men perceptions on management are still similar with perceptions on the manager's portrait noticed in previous studies. The descriptions made by the subjects differ only in terms of word choice regarding the gender unspecified manager.

The situation of perception on women's management abilities in Romania is characterized as follows: (Curşeu & Boroş, 2003, p.51): 54% of the inquired population states that men are more appropriate for management positions than women, 46% consider that women do not belong in a company's board, 68% claim that domestic responsibilities do not allow women to have management positions. 39% of participants consider that women's families do not permit

their access to management positions, 45% disagree with this statement and 16% do not want to answer.

Official statistics

Research on international level reveal a growth of women's presence within organizations even in management positions. (Hayes, 1999, p. 113). However, international studies (Frey, 1993; Rueschmeyer, 1994) show that the number of employed women is still lower than men's.

On national level, the National Institute of Statistics (INS) shows that also in Romania, the number of employed men is higher than that of women (Table 3). On reduced stretches of time (Table 3 reflects the situation in Romania over a stretch of five year), the number of employed people is quite constant – both overall and analysed on genders. The same reality is shown by Table 4: the employment rate in Romania over a stretch of five years (both on general level and presented separately, according to the employed person's gender). Between 2002 and 2007, we can notice that almost 64% of men are professionally active while only 52% of women are employed. A difference of more than 10% in the occupancy rate is not to be neglected.

Table 3. Employed population of Romania between 2002 and 2007 (Data reported by the National Institute of Statistics) (INS) (2008)³

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total	9.234.000	9.223.000	9.158.000	9.147.000	9.313.000	9.353.000
Men	5.031.000	5.057.000	4.980.000	5.011.000	5.074.000	5.116.000
Women	4.203.000	4.166.000	4.178.000	4.136.000	4.239.000	4.237.000

Table 4. The occupancy rate of the population in Romania between 2002 and 2007 (Data reported by INS (2008)⁴

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total	58,0%	57,8%	57,9%	57,7%	58,8%	58,8%
Men	64,1%	64,1%	63,6%	63,9%	64,7%	64,8%
Women	52,0%	51,5%	52,1%	51,5%	53,0%	52,8%

In this context, we think it is worth highlighting that gender distribution of professionally active persons is not balanced within occupations groups (Table 5). On national level, we can notice a male predominance in legislation and executive board but also in top positions in the public administration and craftsman for 2007. Women predominance is observed especially in public administration and trade services. Unfortunately, INS statistics do not provide information on the average weight of woman in top positions of organizations previously mentioned in this paper.

Table 5 The number of professionally active persons reported to the occupancy groups (year 2007) (Data reported by INS (2008)⁵

³ Statistical yearbook 2008, <http://www.insse.ro/cms/rw/pages/anuarstatistic2008.ro.do>, accessed in 11.10.2010

⁴ Statistical yearbook 2008, <http://www.insse.ro/cms/rw/pages/anuarstatistic2008.ro.do>, accessed in 11.10.2010

⁵ Statistical yearbook 2008, <http://www.insse.ro/cms/rw/pages/anuarstatistic2008.ro.do>, accessed in 11.10.2010

		Members of the legislative and executive board, leaders in the public administration	Specialists with intellectual and scientific occupations	Technicians, foremen	Administrative clerk	Worker in services and trade	Agriculturalist	Craftsmen	Other occupations
Total	9.353.000	253000	876000	857000	411000	946000	2343000	1524000	2143000
Men	5.116.000	182000	428000	332000	115000	335000	1185000	1142000	1397000
Women	4.237.000	71000	448000	525000	296000	611000	1158000	382000	746000

The situation in the Western region is pretty similar to the one found on national level. Table 6 reveals the same occupancy rate, higher for men than for women.

Table 6 The occupancy rate of population in Western Region: 2002-2007 (INS (2008)⁶)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total	57,6%	57,1%	56,9%	56,6%	58,7%	59,6%
Men	64,9%	64,8%	63,4%	63,9%	66,5%	66,9%
Women	50,5%	49,7%	50,5%	49,5%	51,1%	52,5%

Unfortunately, INS does not provide data that would allow us to identify the distribution of men and women in management positions in various fields of activity – neither on national nor on regional or county level.

After studying the documents of the National Institute of Statistics, though, related to the demographical distribution of Arad county's population and also the distribution of managers in various fields of activity (public and private) we could extract some relevant data for our study.

Arad County is 455.953 people, out of which 257.147 (56%) are the stable population aged between 25 and 64. As seen in Chart 2, the stable population is mainly female.

The active civilian population of Arad County⁷ aged between 25 and 64 is 214.700, out of which 119.200 (56%) are men and 95.500 (44%) women. The civilian population employed in traditional activities of national economy sums up 208.200 people, out of which 115.800 (56%) men and 92.400 (44%) women. The criterion for choosing the population is their employment. We notice that although the number of women is higher than that of men, more men are employed than women.

Starting from this reality, we have identified the number of women and men aged over 25 that are placed in management positions for business operators and educational institutions of education in Arad County. After consulting the data of different institutions (Public Finances of Arad), we have observed that gender distribution at business operator managers is as follows: 20.761, out of which 13.024 are men and 7.737 are women.

⁶ Statistical yearbook 2008, <http://www.insse.ro/cms/rw/pages/anuarstatistic2008.ro.do>, accessed in 11.10.2010

⁷ County Statistics, <http://www.arad.insse.ro/main.php?lang=fr&pageid=491>, accessed in 9.10.2010

In certain field of activity such as education, women are predominant in management positions. The study of documents at School Inspectorate of Arad County revealed the following for the gender distribution of managers: out of 185 educational institutions with legal personality, 74 are managed by men and 114 by women.

Based on the previously discussed data, we can say that there is a gender difference in the managers' distribution in fields of activity. Therefore, in fields with more men employees, the number of men managers is higher, while in other fields (such as education) with more women employees, the number of women managers is superior to men.

The problematic of female management, presented in economic publications

In our country the presence of women in business publications is lower than that of men as far as the visibility and promotion (in business publications) of women in top management positions is concerned.

The analysis was performed on the main business publications in Romania, with the mention that it was conducted online. The most accessible was the weekly publication "Business magazine"⁸, whose archive is very well structured. We have consulted the archive for the year 2010, and the number of articles related to "woman manager", "woman leader", "female management" is below 1%. The maximum number of articles on this topic – 4 of 100 articles with economic profile – was reached in number 19/2010. Examples of articles "A Romanian woman aged 36 coordinates the activity of six Kraft factories in Central Europe" – article published in no 41/2010; "What do Mariana Gheorghe and Liliana Solomon think of entrepreneurship" – no 40/2010; "Mariana Gheorghe – Petrom: For us, renewable energy is not a *fashionable adjustment*" – no 18/2010. This weekly magazine has published also TOP 100 MOST ADMIRERD CEO FROM ROMANIA where we find 9 women (9%).

The research continued with the „Financiarul"⁹, daily publication, which between January and May 2010 dealt with the subject of woman leader/entrepreneur with a rate of 1 to 8 articles a month. The percentage remains low, if compared to the total number of business articles. Examples of articles: Mihaela Nicola: "In our business, investment is made in the people's minds" (20 January 2010); Rodica Sfaca, general manager Ronex: "Furniture producers seek salvation on national market" (1 February 2010)

The daily publication „Ziarul Financiar"¹⁰ and the weekly publication „Capital"¹¹ do not have a filtered archive so that one could extract only articles on a certain topic. No articles were found in „Ziarul Financiar" or in „Capital", after a refined search with the key words "woman leader", "woman manager", "female management", "female entrepreneurship"

We can state that in Romania there is openness for the promotion of women in business and in management positions but the average number is still low compared to men.

We could estimate a positive evolution, from a numerical perspective, if we consider the ascending trend of women in various fields of activity. Changes within a society where not too long ago certain positions were exclusively male oriented would occur slowly, as revealed by studies in the field, so that the society gets accustomed to women in these professional areas.

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⁸ Archive Business magazin - <http://www.businessmagazin.ro/arhiva.html>

⁹ <http://www.financiarul.com/>

¹⁰ <http://www.zf.ro/>

¹¹ <http://www.capital.ro/index.html>

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