



QUICK GUIDE: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

PROBLEM: Leadership is masculine!? Salwander & Schöl (2019) also confirm the existence of this prejudice and therefore point out that “the image of a typical leader continues to be male-dominated.” However, there is also “reason for hope”: developments in recent years seem to be paving the way for gender-neutral expectations of leaders. This makes it all the more important to have facts at hand that help us counteract this stereotype.

This quick guide is designed to help.

1 CHALLENGES

- **Similar problems in different domains:** Underrepresentation of women in decision-making and leadership positions in business, science, and politics—this does not correspond with the rapid increase in educational qualifications among women (see Schmitt 2015).
- Negative impact of gender-specific stereotypes on women's leadership opportunities: “**Think manager, think male**” and “**think follower, think female**” effect (see Salwander & Schön 2019).
 - Furthermore, these associations result in what is known as the “**backlash**” effect: women find themselves in a situation where they either fail to meet the stereotypical expectations of a successful leadership position or those of a woman (i.e., women are perceived as either incompetent or unsympathetic). This effect is not reserved for women. Men also face this problem when their behavior corresponds more to female stereotypes.
 - Inequality in the perception of male and female leaders: Basically, a leadership style is efficient when it includes both stereotypically male and female soft skills. However, it appears that it is sufficient for men to use a purely stereotypically male leadership style to be perceived as successful. For women, on the other hand, both purely stereotypically male and purely stereotypically female leadership styles are unsuitable due to gender stereotypes and the backlash effect.

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE: WOMEN'S QUOTA (see Schmitt 2015)

Points of Criticism	Study Results on the Impact of the Women's Quota
• Restriction of company performance • Discrimination against men • Restriction of the talent pool • Stigmatization of women through quotas	• Mechanical effect: Increase in the number of women in decision-making and leadership positions. • Increase in women's motivation and performance. • Once women make up 30% of the workforce (= critical mass), the quota system has a positive effect on the performance of diverse teams/management levels. • Opportunities for women in personnel decisions are increased • Women gain the courage they need to prove themselves in male-dominated fields • Fundamentally: Breaking down gender-specific stereotypes in relation to leadership, e.g., through personal experiences and the creation of female role models



2 SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS ON MANAGEMENT STYLES

- Diversity is often perceived as an obstacle due to the supposedly high need for compromise. However, studies show that diversified teams are more successful than homogeneous teams. For example, they are more creative, innovative, flexible, and better at solving problems (see Hockling 2019).
- People in leadership positions are successful when they adapt to the specific individual situation. This requires self-organization and emotional agility. Both are soft skills that women demonstrate more than men (see Burel 2020).
- Transformational leadership, i.e., the combination of stereotypically male and female skills, is characterized by high effectiveness. Studies show that women lead more transformationally than men (see Salwender & Schön 2019).
- Fundamentally, the employment of women in leadership positions is positive for companies and institutions on many levels (see Burel 2020):
 - Combination of “masculine” and “feminine” skills
 - Flexible work arrangements
 - Modern external image

3 FACTS & FIGURES

- There is a statistically significant correlation between diversity and companies' financial performance: with probabilities of 15% and 35% respectively, gender-diverse and ethnically diverse companies are more financially successful (their earnings are above the industry median) (see Hunt, Layton & Prince 2012).
- Ethnically diverse companies are more financially successful (earnings above the industry median) (see Hunt, Layton & Prince 2015).
- An increased proportion of women is associated with reduced risks and more sustainable corporate success (see Riepe & Yang 2019).
- In contrast to the intelligence of individual members, social empathy has a positive effect on team performance — and this is a quality particularly characteristic of women (see Woolley et al. 2010).

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