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The Consequences of Gender Stereotypes in The Work of Managers

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Abstract

Gender inequality remains a significant factor affecting the status of men and women in society, despite some progress, thanks to the measures that have been introduced in recent years. Normally we look at the men that they are leaders, they are ambitious, rational and logical-thinking. Women managers take care of the family, which reduces their opportunities to succeed in recruiting managerial position. Often stereotyped manager (man) receives rather a person of the same sex as he is. The result of our research is showing effect of gender stereotypes resulting in low representation of women at senior management levels.

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1. Introduction

The notion of gender is related to the sex of the individual. Attributed to gender are various characteristic features, way of life and behaviour, i.e. those which are not born but formed as a result of roles played by men and women in the history of mankind, their socialization as well (Šnýdřová, 2006). On the basis of these different expectations posed to both genders, the society is assigning them certain roles – gender roles, which are considered typical for men or women. From childhood on, human beings are adopting them as a result of their close environment around them – family, school, television. State of gender equality is recovered in the documents of the European Commission (2010), but also in the work of Cviková, Debrecénová & Kobová (2006). Aim of this paper is to analyze the managerial positions in relation to gender stereotypes and demonstrate and higher representation of men in top management Compared to women.

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Prejudices, conventional ideas in our minds regarding the characteristics and social roles of men and women are also termed as gender stereotypes. They represent some models of behaviour. By mistake, we consider them as biologically given ones, as they are being formed already with children in their babyhood. By way of education, typical male or female activities and characteristics are being instilled, which then are influential to their behaviour. The strength of stereotypes is symphonized and quite often related to negative associations, mostly if women are considered as individuals unable to make quick decisions, lacking logical thinking, being overly soft and sensitive. Conversely, men are attributing logical thinking rationality, independence, higher social status. These ideas are suppressing the human potential, generating pressure on the individuals of the opposite gender in terms of their relation to life and status in the future.

Even if societies have gone through substantial changes and recorded certain progress in this field, an imbalance between men and women is enduring. It can be proven e.g. by the inequalities in wages, poor representation of women in top management positions. All that happens despite of the fact that one of the basic principles outlined in the document Strategy for balance between men and women in years 2010 – 2015 issued by the European Commission (2011) is stipulating that men and women are to be given equal opportunities to achieve leading positions.

Managerial functions are still dominated by men. Women have to use more energy as men while building up their careers. Various research studies have produced lists of barriers, which are either the results of stereotypes dominating the society or form the part of the labour market, which, as a rule, generates more suitable working conditions for men than women. High levels of demand on time and proficiency are typical for functions of a manager, posing more restraints for women than men. How is to be perceived? There are lots of companies still lagging behind in establishing equal opportunities for women, who are also simultaneously required to meet the role of a mother taking care of her held, household. Under the weight of the circumstances they are forced decline such professions, which could substantially limit them. Mostly, women have to chose from a typically family, or career-bound, option, or adapt to a typically „male“ way of work. And if, despite of all the facts mentioned earlier, women ultimately manage to take the position, their work is much less appreciated than those of the men and are offered posts in lower levels of management (Gazdagová – Fischlová, 2006).

In most cases, the existence of gender stereotypes results in discrimination, mostly to the detriment of women, a fact that can be seen e.g. by the dividing professions into those typical of men and women-segregation, by different levels of remuneration for men and women, different levels of unemployment, as well as by viewing the two gender either in the private or employment areas differently. Discrimination is prohibited and regulated by law. In relation to gender, we speak of gender-based discrimination. According to the Law on discrimination, we distinguish direct discrimination – an act or negligence to a person less beneficial, or a way as it has been shown, or is being shown to other person in a similar situation. It includes discriminations based on maternity, gravidity, gender or sexual identification (Zákon NR SR č. 365/2004 Z. z.). In case of indirect discrimination, we are concerned with a way of dealing with or negligence, when on the basis of a seemingly neutral provision, criterion or customs. Persons belonging to one gender have been discriminated compared to those of the other gender with the exception if such provision, criterion or customs are objectively justified by a legitimate goal and the means to achieve it are proportionate and inevitable (Český statistický úřad). Another barrier met by women (also related to men, yet being more discriminatory towards women) is horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market. It results from the fact that both men and women are selecting for a direction of study, which is expected of them by the stereotypes and also in the light of their unequal approaches to management functions. Women work mostly in branches with lower social status, with lower remuneration compared to those dominated by men, e.g. jobs in services, education, health etc. Vertical segregation is related to the possibility of vertical rise or promotion to a hierarchically higher position, which in practice is known for the majority dominance of men holding those positions. It is based particularly on the fact that men are more oriented on career development while the role of women consists in family care. Another important notion in this field is the one of old – boy's network. It represents informal relations among men established at workplaces and out of it (sporting activities, company events). Such informal relations and overriding behaviour based on them is one of the causes of low level representation of women in management circles. Of no less importance is attributed to notion of sexual harassment symphonized by unworthy behaviour of a superior, offering, according to Dudová, Křížková, Fischlová (2006), chance for a rise only against providing certain reciprocal service In this regard, we cannot omit the notion of tokenism. In a situation when a man or woman is employed in the field dominated by the other gender. According Křížková (2006) such individuals – tokens – are

turning into symbols attracting more attention than desired. We could go on enumerating further barriers affecting careers of both genders.

Summarily, let us state that the main source of unequal representation of men and women in managerial positions is the problem of harmonization of labour and family requirements. The fact has been confirmed by the following research: The statement that women have lower level of freedom due to their family responsibilities has been accepted by as much as 2/3 of the Europeans, representing 68% (European Commission, 2012). On average, women spend 26 hours per week taking care of their family, by contrast to 9 hours spent by men doing the same (European Commission, 2014). Consequently, they are to tackling a double load in terms of doing both a paid job and that of non-paid at home. Solution of this situation is in organization of work, establishment of conditions for harmonizing their working and professional lives by way of developing flexible forms of jobs and providing other benefits.

Although gendered perceptions are not the sole arbiters of career choices, processes and outcomes, gendered perceptions play significant roles in career processes and outcomes of individuals. Forms of inequality and segregation based on gendered perceptions are often reported in the extant literature as important economic and social concerns. According Bourne-Özbilgin (2001) combating gender inequities has been taken up as an important challenge of social and economic regulation in the past few decades

2. Aim and Methodology

As it has been mentioned in the previous parts of the contribution, one of the principles of the European Union regarding gender equality is in providing equal opportunities both for men and women in their achieving managerial positions, thus increasing the proportion of women in such places of work. In the majority of member-states, including the Slovak republic, women, compared to men, are represented in a lesser proportion in decision-making positions and particularly at top levels of management. In 2013, the share of women in control functions in publicly-traded Slovak companies was 24%, which is 6% higher than the average for the EU. The highest positions in those Slovak firms were taken by women, giving a 30% ratio, which is 5% higher than the average for the EU (European Commission, 2014). Even despite of the facts as aforesaid, the seemingly low values represent a remarkable progress compared to former times.

Our contribution is aimed to analyze managerial positions in relation to gender stereotypes and documenting higher representation of men in top management compared to women. The research part was focused on the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires. We have also determined the primary and the secondary hypotheses, which have been gradually verified. They are as follows:

Primary hypothesis:

- H1: Top management position are filled in mostly by men, women are at lower levels of management.

Secondary hypotheses:

- H2: Work of women compared to a man in management is not equally appreciated.
- H3: Family poses more limitations to women than to men in their obtaining managerial positions.
- H4: Women have to work more for them to achieve their managerial positions.
- H5: By stereotype, men, when accepting someone into a managerial position, prefer individuals of the same gender.
- H6: Managerial work poses a higher burden onto women than men.

The sample of respondents was represented by managers of Slovak companies active in various branches and was chosen randomly. The number of respondents willing to answer the questions in the questionnaire was 51, of which 22 men represented 43.14% and 29 women making up 56.86% of the group. The questionnaire was divided in three parts. Part one was related to demographical data. Off them, we have selected an interesting part regarding the age of managers. In terms of age groups, the largest share of managerial positions held by women fell between 50 to 59 years of age, working in the middle-management, and for men between 30 to 49 years of age representing both middle and top-management positions. Part two of the questionnaire was oriented on questions regarding information on the issue of research, wherein 15 close-ended questions were asked. Part three involved open-ended questions, to which managers, men and women, were expressing their ideas regarding the positive and negative factors influencing their decision to accept the offer of holding a managerial position. They also expressed views and suggestions for solving the issue of gender stereotypes.

When conducting the research, the following methods have been applied: analysis, synthesis, abstraction, induction, deduction, comparison and off the statistical methods the one of testing hypotheses applying the Chi-square test of independence and finding the rate of dependence by way of the Cramer's contingency coefficient. Calculations were performed at the level of significance of 5%.

3. Results and discussion

In view of the limited extent of the contribution, off the wide spectrum of our study, we are offering only the results (the interested readers are encouraged to contact the authors for further discussions). As assumed, the research has proven that women are holders of positions at lower levels of managements. In the middle-management they are represented by as high as 65.52%, whereas top-level management is dominated mostly by men – in our case 40.91% men against 10.34 % of women. The question is why is it so? Why do women hold lower-level positions? Compared to men, they have the same ambitions to be in higher positions, in the top-management (such was the conclusion of the research conducted by McKinsae & Company in 2013). Why do women hold lower-level positions, when in view of the 45.10% of respondents (39.25% of them declare: I do not know) ideas of women could be contributively for the economy? And, thirdly, why do women hold lower-level managerial positions? As much as 96% of the respondents agreed that women have the necessary qualities and capabilities for achieving managerial positions. The majority of the respondents presuppose that the reason for inequality is in the traditional role of women – as mothers – and the consequent responsibilities regarding their families and households. As confirmed by 80.39% of managers, family is neglected to larger extent when a managerial post is held by women than by a man. For example, a maternity leave resulting in a loss of experiences during the given period of time makes it more difficult for a woman to resume her previous working routines. Apart from it, women themselves become less interested in such positions, for similar reasons. On a global scale, many research findings share almost the same point of view regarding the issue of a harmonization work with family, i.e. women loaded by the traditional role of mother.

Our research has further pointed out that in case when women are raised to a managerial position, they have to take into account the fact of having less time for their private lives. Significantly less women takes their time for hobbies 68.97% compared to 36.36% of men. Of no less importance is the fact that the labour market shows substantial inequality between men and women in wages both in terms of branches and their hierarchical position held in the society. Almost 86% of women feel that their work is not appreciated to the same level as those of the men, while as much as 69.57% of men hold the opposite opinion, namely there is now difference in the remuneration. The reason behind this differing results consist in the fact that the question was mostly focused to women, who are more intensively aware of the lower rewarding compared to men, who pay no attention to it. The fact that 72.55% respondents feel equal opportunities for posts and working positions made available by their companies both for men and women can be regarded positively. As much as 80.39% of the respondents work in companies taking measures for harmonization of work with family. They, the respondents, have put forward suggestions for introducing flexible business hours or working at home and works with no over-times. The suggestions also included organizing various activities to be initiated made by companies, such as family activities, trips, which could help workers in spending more time with their families.

By gradually removing the gender „non-differences“ both on the part of the state in the form of adopting legislative and other measures and the employers by creating equal conditions of work and promotion both men and women, thereby reducing the discrimination and resulting in balancing the differences between men and women. Chances can be seen in the forms of family leaves, as experienced in the Northern models to be taken exclusively by men. For example in Norway 14 weeks of the total 49 weeks (or 59 weeks) are mandatorily assigned to fathers within the families. In Sweden 60 days of 480 days of family leaves are reserved for fathers. At that, when having a newborn baby or adopting a child, he is entitled to further 10 days, also receiving allowances for the extra period of time.

An excellent chance for Slovak companies how to attract public awareness is taking part in the competition organized by the Slovak Ministry of Labour, Social affairs and Family titled as an Employer helpful towards to families, gender equality and equal opportunity, the price of which might motivate them to take steps in the field of gender equality. Other important factors on the labour market are cultural differences of a specific country. For example, position of women in Arabic countries, compared to the developed European or American continent, is substantially different. In case of employing applicants from different cultural backgrounds, it is important to take

into account the cultural differences and to find proper ways of integrating them into the working environment. On the part of the employer, all these and further factors must be taken into consideration and take optimum actions for the elimination of the negatively perceived factors of gender stereotypes.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that all the hypotheses have been confirmed by the research. It then follows that the existence of stereotypes is still of substantial influence within a society. Consequently, they can negatively affect not only the lives of women but the economy as a whole. Women compared to men have experienced a much larger number of unpaid amounts of work i.e. that performed in the household. They are also restrained by their families to which both their private and working lives have to be adapted. They act in a manner as expected by the society. For this reason, women remain „dominant“ in family matters taking care of it, and conversely, in the labour market is „dominated „ by men they are often mispriced or underappreciated.

The stereotypes give rise to several barriers women have to overcome after having been appointed into a top-management position. Many a time, based on the barriers mentioned, women are often underestimated, and often they fail to put out extra effort to achieve the highly appreciated goal. Family turned out to be the most obvious barrier for women plus the majority of men in those positions as the labour market set more likely for men than women, not to mention the already cited barriers of other kinds.

Managerial theories as well as managerial practices consider the labour price as one of important kind of reward and a significant factor of motivation. When an employee is sure that his or her efforts lead to fair wages, he or she proves to be more effective. The belief of justice in rewarding increases the employee's effort and ultimately their productivity. But if an individual feels that his/her efforts are not rewarded equally, he or she is apt to display less effort. Therefore, the problem of effort-reward commensurability becomes very important for the human resources to be utilized more effectively thereby achieving higher productivity.

Gender equality problem is not only the issue of social fairness or tribute to modern scientific tendencies but it is one of major economic problems. The gender disproportions in the sphere of employment (as well as in the other walks of life) – is a widely held problem present in all countries of the world. In the economic literature, there is neither common opinion to the reasons of the gender differences in the employment nor clear statement what has caused those differences. Therefore it is necessary that this issue be subjected to further problem solving/**research**.

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