

SEX DIFFERENCE AND AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS' SELF-PERCEPTION ON LEADERSHIP ABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Among the vast literature and studies on leadership up to 1970, only few dealt with leadership with female playing the leader's role. Even if this topic was mentioned in some studies, female leaders or female subjects were treated comparatively with their male counterparts. The general conclusion was that females lacked the quality of being successful leaders or were inferior to male leaders.

Recently, more and more studies showed evidence that sex difference may contribute different style of leadership but cannot be viewed as the reason of success or failure of their work as leaders. Evidence also showed that leader's gender was not related either to leader behavior or to subordinates' satisfaction.

After reviewing related studies, my belief that leadership ability is gender-free is reinforced. Nevertheless only few recent studies showed that female leaders were less effective than male leaders. Most of experimental studies and some empirical studies have not provided very convincing evidence to uphold above claim. The conclusion of this study can provide one positive evidence in establishing this theme. Subjects of this study were asked about their perception of their own leadership ability in 1971 as the pretest, then after nine years, a follow-up was conducted. Same questions were put to these subjects.

The research question was stated as: whether there is difference between male and female college freshmen in terms of their own perception of their leadership ability and what factors can be used to explain the change of their perception of

their leadership ability nine years later. Based on our findings and discussion, we found that gender should not have effect on person's development of leadership ability. From simple two way cross tabulation, we found that there is difference between male and female subjects in their perception about their leadership ability. Even though females view their ability lower than males constantly, our study can serve as a reminder that study of leadership between sexes, subjects' personal perception should be the first to be controlled, in order to obtain an objective non-bias result.

As a preliminary study of person's self-perception about their leadership ability, some meaningful results were obtained. However, for better understanding leader's role women have played and would play in the future and to judge the contribution of female leaders, and furthermore, to increase women's self-confidence in their ability, more studies and researches are needed.