A study of Gender differences on Leadership style and Prejudice among college students

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate gender differences on leadership style and prejudice among college students, 160 college students comprises of 80 males and 80 females were selected from different colleges of Gurgaon. The socio- demographic profiles including age, family type, monthly income, etc was utilized to control confounding variables. The Leadership Preference Scale by L.I. Bhushan and Prejudice Scale by R.L. Bharadwaj was used on the selected population.The results highlighted that there is significant gender difference on leadership style and prejudice. Males showed preference for authoritarian leadership style however, females showed preference for democratic leadership style. There is also significant difference between males and females on prejudice scale. The detailed results have been discussed in light of the existing theories and literature. Limitations have been stated and Recommendations provided in the discussion part.

Key Words: Leadership style, prejudice, gender etc.

Gender differences are ubiquitous in the social psychological literature as there is an intense belief that men and women differ in most behaviour. The assumption is that the difference is either essential (biological differences) or learned (social differences). However, even with researchers' interest in revealing gender differences, studies have been conducted rather a theoretically and sometimes produce inconsistent results.

Leadership - Leadership can be defined as the process through which an individual guides and motivates a group towards the achievement of a common goal/s. Gender differences in leadership style has been of great interest to researchers in the fields of psychology, management, and sociology, especially in recent years, as women have begun to assume more leadership positions. This study presents an overview of the research on gender differences in leadership, examines the impact of sex stereotyping, looks at the organizational effects of various types of leadership, and argues for the acceptance of a diversity of non-gender linked leadership style.

Research has examined whether or not there are sex differences in leadership, and these differences can be seen from a relationship based or task based perspective. Until recently, leadership positions have predominantly been held by men and men were therefore stereotyped to be more effective leaders. Women were rarely seen in senior leadership positions leading to a lack of data on how they behave in such positions. However, current research has found a change in trend and women have become more prevalent in the workforce over the past two decades, especially in management and leadership positions. The gender gap is decreasing and these stereotypes are changing as more women enter leadership roles. The data from the primary literature on this topic is inconclusive as the two main lines of research contradict one another, the first being that there are small, but nevertheless

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significant sex differences in leadership and the second being that gender does not have an effect on leadership.

Prejudice means a premature judgment formation before due consideration of the facts. It is also known as a preconceived opinion or bias against a person or a thing (Oxford Concize Dictionary) and as an unfavorable attitude, (Dictionary of Social Sciences).

It is evident that all forms of prejudices are learned, (Bonner, 1953) and they are influenced by a variety of factors. Sociological correlates of prejudice lay emphasis on factors like-education, gender, occupation, income, parental influence, religion, frequencies of completion and social mobility.

The development of prejudices is based on cultural values, (Young, 1963; Bonner, 1953) norms and attitudes, (O. KLineberg 1954), reflection of folkways, personal experiences or without personal experinces (Bilgray, 1934; Bogardus, 1928) and is transmitted from person to person and from group to group, (Bonner, 1953).

The functions of prejudice is to predispose a person to think, act (English and English, 1958), perceive and feel in ways that are congruent. Results in gain of status, self-confidence and feeling of importance (O. Klineberg, 1954).

Thus, prejudice refers to any judgment which happens to be a prejudgment or preconceived opinion, or bias against, or unfavour, or a predetermined attitude, or idea, or sentiment made without adequate evidences which are usually emotionally coloured towards some person, things, actions, objects, certain kinds and loyalty to one's or other group. Even it is also apparent that amount of prejudice varies from individual to individual and group to group in complex societies.

At first glance, there appears to be consistent evidence of gender differences. For example, women have reported more favorable attitudes than men on social issues such as desegregated neighborhoods and funding for public schools (Hughes &Tuch, 2003). In comparison, surveys have found that men reported higher levels of xenophobia, endorsement of White superiority, and racism compared to women (Ekehammar&Sidanius, 1982; Sidanius, Ekehammar, & Ross, 1979). However, meta-analyses have demonstrated that gender effects can vary across different operational definitions of prejudice (Hughes &Tuch, 2003) and that overall there is more evidence for gender similarities than differences (Hyde, 1984).

Objective of the study

In fact, many historical developments in psychology lacked any attention to gender. But the topic of gender has been ignored in relation to leadership and prejudice. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the gender differences on leadership style and prejudice among college students.

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Method

Participants:

The present sample consisted of 160 participants which were 80 males and 80 females of different colleges in Gurgaon. The age group ranged from 18-21. All the participants were students of colleges.

Tools:

Leadership Preference Scale by L.I. Bhushan (1971). It includes 30 items in which 16 are positive statements and 14 are negative statements.

Prejudice Scale (Pr- Scale) by Dr. R.L. Bharadwaj and Dr. H. Sharma (1990). It contains 36 items relating to different areas of prejudices and possess the capacity to evoke the response correctly.

Procedure:

Two colleges of Gurgaon were selected to administer the tests. Participants were requested to participate in the study. A brief explanation about the purpose of the study was given to them. Rapport was established with the participants and they were assured about the confidentiality of results. The participants were given the standard set of instructions and were requested to fill in the personal details. Participants were requested to respond the questions on booklets. Meanings to difficult words were provided separately on the booklets. Subjects were encouraged to ask doubts. The test was administered in batches of 40 students at a one time in formal settings of classroom. The duration of the entire administration of the tests in each session lasted for 40-45 minutes approximately.

Results and Discussion:

Table 1.   Mean, SD. t value of girls and boys in Leadership

Variable	N	Leadership		
		M	SD	t value
Gender				
Girls	80	106.41	23.46	-1.68
Boys	80	111.84	16.81	

Results (Table 1) indicated that, the mean score of girls on leadership scale is 106.41 and the mean score of boys is 111.84. Girls are found to be greater mean score than boys mean score however difference is very slightly. Therefore, on the bases of mean scores it can be stated that girls have Democratic Leadership Style and boys have Authoritarian Leadership Style. A democratic leader seeks to evoke the maximum involvement and participation of every member in the group activities and in the determination of group objectives but Authoritarian Leadership- As opposed to the democratic leader, he himself determines policies of the group, makes major plans and dictates the activities of the members. He serves as the ultimate agent, judge and as purveyor of rewards and punishments for the members.He believes in his own ability and power in formulating politics and does not appreciate criticism.

But when t test was applied to find out the gender difference found to be non-significant. It means there is no significant gender differences on leadership style. However, analysis of trends revealed that girls have higher degree of leadership qualities than boys. There are many possible ways that this can be observed. Women tend to be occupied in more nurturing or domestic roles, including teaching, nursing, and secretarial work (U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). In comparison, men maintain occupations that foster assertive and task-oriented behaviours including managerial and business work (Wood &Eagly, 2010). The observation of men in higher status roles and women in lower status roles also contributes to this bias (Eagly& Steffen, 1984). Media portrayals and folklore also perpetuate a gender stereotype that, given repeated observation, becomes effortlessly merged with gender (Wood &Eagly, 2010)**.**

Table 2.   Mean, SD. t value of girls and boys on Prejudice

Variable	N	Prejudice		
		M	SD	t value
Gender				
Girls	80	75.79	23.16	9.71 **
Boys	80	106.16	9.71	

**p<.o1

Results (Table 2) indicated that, the mean score of girls on Prejudice scale is 75.79 and the mean score of boys is 106.16. Higher score means more prejudiced and in this study boys have higher mean score as

compared to girls which indicates that boys are more prejudiced than girls. There is a significant gender difference observed on prejudice. It means the genders differ in prejudice. It can be concluded that men and women differ in their expression of prejudice, but our understanding of the underlying motivations or alternate explanations is lacking. It would also be erroneous to conclude that men are simply more prejudiced than women, as I have shown that this effect is dependent on target factors and motivations surrounding prejudice. Specifically, this study has provided a stepping stone for understanding gender differences in prejudice.

Women demonstrate greater positive traits, such as agreeableness, warmth, and openness to feelings (Costa Jr, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001), and they are more likely to provide informal care for others (Arber &Ginn, 1995).In contrast, men appear to exhibit more negative traits, such as need for competition and dominance (Maccoby&Jacklin, 1974, 1980), as well as more aggression in the forms of both costly physical aggression (Archer, 2004) and being convicted of homicide (Chan & Payne, 2010; Cooper & Smith, 2011). Given these gender differences, it is perhaps not surprising that the correspondence of gender to positive and negative behaviours has been extended to the study of prejudice. For example, (White) women have been shown to demonstrate more favorable attitudes than men on racial policies including segregated neighborhoods and increased spending to improve the standard of living, and to provide funding for poorer schools (Hughes &Tuch, 2003). Alternatively, in surveys of Swedish high school students, (White) men reported higher levels of xenophobia, endorsement of White superiority, and racism compared to females(Ekehammar&Sidanius, 1982; Sidanius, Ekehammar, & Ross, 1979).

Table 3 Co-efficient correlation of Leadership and Prejudice

Variable	Prejudice
Leadership	.065

Results (Table 3) indicated that Co-efficient correlation between Leadership and Prejudice found no significant relationship. So it is inferred that there exists no relationship between Leadership and Prejudice. It may be because a good leader would not be prejudiced and a prejudiced person would not be a good leader.

Implications and Conclusion
It remains unclear, however, why men and women differ in their attitudes toward different groups. The findings presented in this study raise important concerns when considering research on prejudice and,

perhaps more importantly, prejudice reduction. Findings in relation to motivations to express and respond without prejudice have implications for theories of contact, social identity theory, and intergroup empathy. If individuals have different reasons for expressing prejudice, then it is logical to conclude that they would have different responses to prejudice reduction.

Thus, it can be said conclusively that prejudices and leadership are of certain inevitable features of human society and play an important role in the undaunted expression of behavior, when two groups come into face to face relation.

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