FEMALE LEADERS IN THE CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT IN RUSSIA AND BRITAIN

Research Aim:
The overall aim of this study is critically analyse the career paths of female leaders in the corporate environment of Britain and Russia and explain any differences, including cultural factors.

Abstract: The number of women in top management positions is growing across the globe. Nevertheless, it remains low (HLS, 2017). This research endeavours to better comprehend the barriers to female leaders’ career success. Three central themes of this study, i.e. Female Studies, Leadership Studies and Cultural Studies explore their relation to gender equality. Gender is recognised as being a social construction. The argument is built around the impact of gender role stereotypes, which form prejudice towards female leaders, creating bias against them (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This research attempts to better understand the process of ‘un-learning’ stereotypes by comparing and contrasting experiences of female leaders in the two countries.

The Research objectives:
• Compare and contrast differences of female leaders’ career paths in the UK and Russia and explore cultural aspects that may influence these differences.
• Examine the attitude of female leadership in the corporate environment in the UK and Russia and the barriers to career progression.
• Critically analyse leadership styles of women in the UK and Russia and investigate the foundation for any differences or similarities

Societal Role theory of gender differences in social behaviour (Eagly, 1987):
The processes in society, including the formation of peoples’ beliefs, strengthen established gender roles. Gender stereotypes influence people’s attitude to work, therefore women and men tend to hold jobs in accordance to stereotypical beliefs.

The Role Congruity theory of Prejudice Towards Female Leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002):
In the eyes of society the successful female leaders are perceived as less feminine because leadership role is not congruent with the role of women. At the same time those women who behave according to societies’ expectations for gender roles, are seen less as a leader. These prejudices reinforce the public attitude that women are less capable than men in leadership positions, creating bias against female leaders.

Gender role-stereotypes and variations in gender standards by different clusters in society (Eagly & Wood, 2012):
Societal practices in different clusters of society determine gender roles by forming societal members' expectations. Therefore men and women in these clusters are inclined to adjust their performances according to these societal expectations, strengthening societal stereotypes. There might be deviations across nations in the spectrum of conventional pattern of occupational arrangements by gender, impacting on female leaders experiences.

Method:
This comparative study employs qualitative methods, looking into experiences of female leadership from the female leaders’ own point of view. In depth face-to-face interviews will be conducted with selected senior female managers in the UK and Russia.

Conclusion:
This empirical investigation highlights opportunities for the analysis of differences and similarities of British and Russian female leadership. The literature review suggests that cross-national characteristics might influence the extent to which prejudice towards female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012) limit female leaders’ choices and obstruct their path towards professional recognition.

Reference List:
Eagly A (1987) Sex differences in social behaviour: A social Role Interpretation, Lawrence Hillsdale New Jersey

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