

EMPLOYEE'S PERCEPTION OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS IN THE SERVICE SECTOR IN JAPAN: CASE STUDY IN SAYCO GROUP

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Abstract

This study is focused on studying the employee perceptions of female leadership effectiveness in the service sector in Japan. Specifically the research objectives are focused on finding out the relationship between leadership skills, demographic factors and leadership effectiveness based on employee perceptions. The results show that the employees strongly believe that female leaders are effective in terms of their communication skills, decision making skills, personal character and the organizational performances. Moreover the study reveals that Gender, Age, specified Education or Service Length is having no impact over the perceived leadership effectiveness of female leaders.

Key Words: Female Leaders, Leadership Effectiveness, Leadership Skills, Demographic factors, Perceptions

1. Introduction

Female Leadership in Japan

Japan's economy is facing challenges due to the demographic changes of the workforce and increased pressure from globalization. Thus women are drawing the attention as a potential driving force for the growth of the economy and the increased participation of women in the labor force is expected to moderate the negative effect of the decline in the working age population of the country (White Paper on Gender Equality, 2013). A new growth strategy established by the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2012 (Department of State: 2014 Investment Climate Statement, June 2014) emphasized the need of increasing the percentage of women in the top management positions in the organizations at least up to 30% by 2020. Economists criticize this as an unreliable or hard to achieve goal by the designated time. In the contemporary Japan, female contribution in leadership positions is considerably low. For instance, in 2012, out of the total workforce in Japan, women represented 42.3% but only 11.1% are engaged with the Administrative and Managerial positions. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), only 3.9% (2013) are represented as the board members of listed Japanese companies. This is a comparatively low percentage with other developed countries and Newly Industrialized Countries. As of the findings of Matsui, K., (2013), if Japan expands the Female workforce up to 80%, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Japan can increase by 14%. So it's clear that, the contribution of females in Japanese working force is a crucial factor of Japanese economy which is in jeopardy due to the above mentioned challenges. As a result of Japanese policy "Womenomics", the demand for increasing the female leadership positions in the organizations has created a background for a need of a study of female Leadership and its effectiveness which can contribute to encourage more female leaders in Japanese organizations. Some studies show that Japanese society has stereotypes against females but there is hardly any study that is focused on their perception of the effectiveness of female leaders. Beside the stereotypes, many other reasons impact to prevent females from leadership positions in Japan. Based on this ground, "female leadership in organizations" has

become one of the debated topics in Japan. So this paper will provide an insight for those who are interested in female leadership effectiveness based on the organizational perspectives and other policy based initiatives. For instance, through the findings of the study organizations can be identified the necessary changes or the improvements in the leadership skills of the females while planning the training programs. Moreover policy makers will be able to understand the actual response of the subordinates towards their female leaders. Thus it has a great impact over the overall effectiveness of the organizations. Furthermore, this will provide a supportive base for the scholars who are interested in Gender Studies, but still missing the literature in “Female leadership effectiveness” in Japan.

2. Literature Review

Findings of the literature are contradictory and showing a mixed result towards female leadership effectiveness. For instance, as of Dobbins & Platz, (1986), Engen, Leeden & Willemsen (2001) and Powell, (1990), gender has no relationship to leadership style and leadership effectiveness. In contrast Book (2000), Helgesen (1990) and Rosener (1995), describes female leadership effectiveness as perceived more effective than males. According to Eagly & Karu (1991), Rudman (1998), Rudman & Glick (2001), Andrews (1992), Fletcher (2001), Bowles & McGinn (2005) and Powell & Graves (2003), the perceived leadership is dependent on the expectations towards the leaders. Based on the literature, the perceived Female Leadership Effectiveness is unable to conclude based on a steady ground. Instead it's dependent on other factors such as leadership skills (Mirza, 2003) and other external factors. Moreover, it cannot find any strong evidence to justify the relationship of the perceived leadership effectiveness and the demographic factors. Thus this study is expected to observe about that missing piece from the literature.

Leadership Effectiveness

“Leadership effectiveness” is defined by different scholars in many ways and there is no common single definition to define the term. According to Fenimore & Nirenberg (2012), Stogdill (1974), Bass (1981) and Bass & Stogdil (1990), the concept of “Leadership Effectiveness” is difficult to define hence “it is complicated as it is an assortment of components including multiple organizational contingencies, interpersonal and personal behaviors and others”. However for the operationlization of the study, the following definition by Fenimore and Nirenberg (2012) has been used. “Leadership Effectiveness is the successful exercise of personal influence by one or more people; that results in accomplishing shared objectives in a way that is personally satisfying those involved”

However, as of their further explanation this definition also has some controversies as the situation can be different based on the different settings of different organizations. Thus Fenimore & Nirenberg (2012) suggest that the definition for leadership effectiveness should be defined differently based on the different behaviors and processes in those contexts. Here in this study, four dimensions Decision making, Communication skills, organizational performance and Personal characteristics have been used to measure the leadership effectiveness of the leaders as defined by Mirza (2003) Anyway there are no adequate literature which link these leadership skills with the effectiveness of the female leaders directly. When considering these four dimensions it can be found some interesting facts relating how females or the female leaders are linked with these four leadership skills.

Women and Communication Skills: Different researchers have different findings over the relationship of women and their communication skills. As of Still (2006), women presented a

'cultural dilemma' at senior management level especially in term of communication and management styles opposed to the traditional masculine versions. Oakley (2000) reveals, the less aggressive and assertive forms of communication associated with females may be particularly unacceptable ways to communicate in the upper level of most of the organizations. Robinson & Judge (2007) differentiate men and women based on the way they use talking as a communication media. Men use 'talking' as a way of emphasizing the status whereas women are using it to create connections. However as of the general opinion, Japanese women are known as more polite and sensitive, and shy in their communication. As of Takano (2005), the language use by Japanese women should be more understandable and meaningful regardless the language structure. Moreover he suggests that strategic functions of positive politeness need to be explored more extensively in studies of Japanese interactions in general.

Women and Decision making skills: Most of the people can assume that females are reluctant to make decisions, particularly when it is associated with risks. However, an interesting finding has been found in the research of Syd & Bohhar (2007). As they have mentioned females tend to make more strict decisions and are not be influenced by others. Thus, at the organizational level females who are at the top positions with more educational background and more power can be assumed as more strict, independent and direct while making the decisions. On the other hand according to Bass & Stogdill (1990) & McKinsey (2008) female leaders prefer to make participative decisions where the responsibility of the decisions is delegated. They behave more democratically than the male leaders and sometimes it can be advantageous to the organizations as the decisions can be more effective as it is associated with many people's opinions. However on the other hand individualistic approach in decision making can be more advantageous while considering the consumption of time and other resources in the participative decision making. However, decision making skills is one of the factors that can be decided the effectiveness of a leader. (Mirza, 2003)

Women and Personal Character: According to Banis, L (2010) it can be identified among the top seven personal characteristics of women in successful leadership as Vision, communication, Strength of Character, Emotional Intelligence, Relationship Building, Visibility and Principled Leadership. However the characteristics of the leaders' impact over the way they perceive by the other employees or the subordinates. The society is having its own prejudices over the males and females and they link those characteristics with the leadership positions regardless the gender. For instance female leaders are expected to be more soft and tender than the male leaders and being too manly make female leaders to be perceived as less or ineffective leaders. Basically, the Personality traits, values and virtues of the leaders have an impact over their perceived leadership effectiveness.

Organizational Performance: As of Bass (1990) & McKinsey (2008) Analysis, there are nine leadership behaviors which lead the organizations towards the higher organizational performances. They are; participative decision making, Role model, Inspiration, Expectations and Rewards, People Development, Intellectual Stimulation, Efficient Communication, Individualistic Decision Making and Control & Corrective Actions. However according to Eagly's (2003) studies, female leaders surpass the male leaders by possessing five leadership behaviors of People Development, Expectations & Rewards, Role Model, Inspiration and participative decision making which enhance the organizational performances very often than the male leaders. So based on this fact it can be assumed that the organizational performances of the organizations which are controlled by the female leaders are better than the performances of the organizations controlled by the male leaders. Anyway, Male leaders express the leadership behaviors of Control & Corrective Actions and

Individualistic Decision Making more often than female leaders. However, the organizational performance is not something that's depended only on the leadership effectiveness. However, leadership effectiveness of a certain organization is having a great impact over the performance of that organization.

Based on the literature the following research objectives are formed for the study.

- Describe the employees' perception of female leadership effectiveness
- Assess the influence of female leadership skills towards the perceived Female leadership effectiveness
- Differentiate the perceived female leadership effectiveness based on the demographic factors

The research questions for the study are;

- What is the Employees' perception of the Female leadership effectiveness?
- What is the influence of the leadership skills towards the perceived Female leadership effectiveness?
- What is the impact of the demographic factors on the perceived Female leadership effectiveness?

3. Methodology

3.1. Population and Sample

For this case study specifically focused on "SAYCO Group", Japan. The population of the study is 348 Blue collar workers who are working with 20 female leaders attached to the cleaning departments of 34 hotels in Oita Prefecture under "SAYCO Group". The questionnaires were distributed among 130 respondents and completed questionnaires were collected from 100 respondents consisted with 50 males and 50 females. The response rate is 73%. And the sample size of 100 represents 28.73% of the total population. For the sampling Stratified Random Sampling method has been used.

Table 3.1. Demographic Classification of the Sample

Age Group (Yrs)	No. of Respondents	Education Level	No. of Respondents	Service Length (Yrs)	No. of Respondents
16-26	7	Junior High School	10	0-2	22
26-36	12	High School	66	2-4	32
36-46	10	University	5	4-6	17
46-56	20	Other (Vocational Schools & etc)	19	More than 6	29
56-66	41				
More than 66	10				
Total	100		100		100

3.2. Data Collection

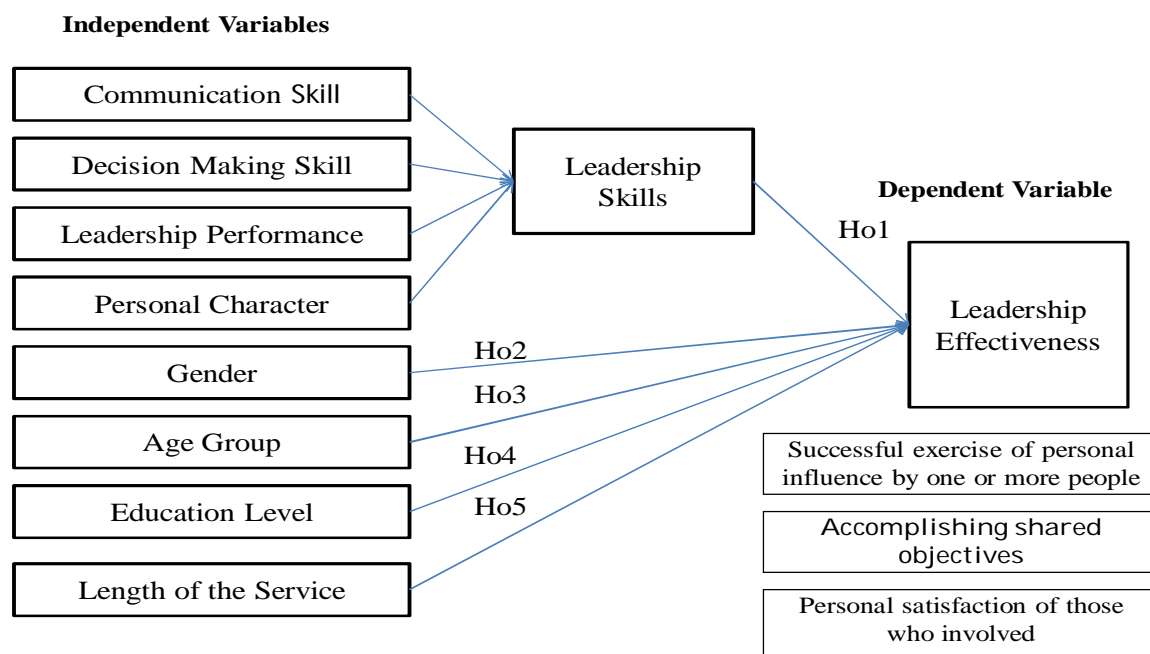
The questionnaire was prepared based on the leadership skills and the effectiveness. It consists of four dimensions of Decision Making Skills, Communication Skills, Organizational / Unit Performance and Personal Character as defined by Mirza (2003) as the dimension to measure the leadership effectiveness. The Questions are formed based on Five Point Likert Scale (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree) to express the level of acceptance between the female leader's skills and the female leadership effectiveness.

3.3. Validity and Reliability

A reliability test was carried out among 33 respondents to test the reliability or the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The following table shows the respective results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Leadership effectiveness	0.885
Communication Skills	0.888
Organizational / Unit Performance	0.679
Decision Making Skills	0.730
Personal Character	0.891
Overall	0.933

3.4. Conceptual Framework



Reference: Vadelloo, Ngah & Jusoff (2009), Cooper, Fenimore, J., and Nirenberg, J (2004), Mirza, S. (2003)

3.5. Techniques of Data Analysis

The collected data from the study has been analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20. For the data analyzing purposes, descriptive statistics and inferential

statistics has been used. Descriptive statistics has been used to analyze the respondents' demographic background and to measure the differences of perception of respondents towards the effectiveness of the female leadership. Moreover Frequencies and percentages of Respondent's demographic

factors are calculated by using the frequency analysis. Inferential statistics has been used to test the Hypothesis of the study. The techniques; T-test and ANOVA and Pearson Correlation have been used to describe the differences of the perception and to inspect the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

3.6. Hypothesis of the Study

The following Hypothesis are formed for the study based on the findings of Vadeloo, Ngah & Jusoff (2009), linking the research objectives, research questions and the past literature related to the study.

- H₀1: There is no relationship between decision making skill, communication skill, Organizational performance, personal characteristic and female leadership effectiveness
- H₀2: There is no difference between male and female Employees perception on their leaders' leadership effectiveness.
- H₀3: There is no significant difference in Employees' age group perception on their female leaders' leadership effectiveness.
- H₀4: There is no difference in employees' length of the service group in perceiving their female leader's leadership effectiveness.
- H₀5: There is no difference in Employees' different level of education group perception on their leaders' leadership effectiveness.

4. Results and Discussion

The main objectives of this study are, to describe the employees' perception of female leadership effectiveness, to assess the influence of female leadership skills towards the perceived Female leadership effectiveness and to differentiate the perceived female leadership effectiveness based on the demographic factors. To achieve those objectives it was expected to answer the research questions of what is the Employees' perception of the Female leadership effectiveness? What is the influence of the leadership skills towards the perceived Female leadership effectiveness? and What is the impact of the demographic factors on the perceived Female leadership effectiveness?

4.1. Perception Level Analysis of Female Leadership Effectiveness

Perception Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	2	2.00
Disagree	-	-
Neutral	20	20.00
Agree	66	66.00
Strongly Agree	12	12.00
Total	100	100%

According to the above mentioned table, regardless the gender, majority of the respondents (78%) have been agreed or strongly agreed to the statement of "As of my overall opinion, I perceive our leader as an effective leader".

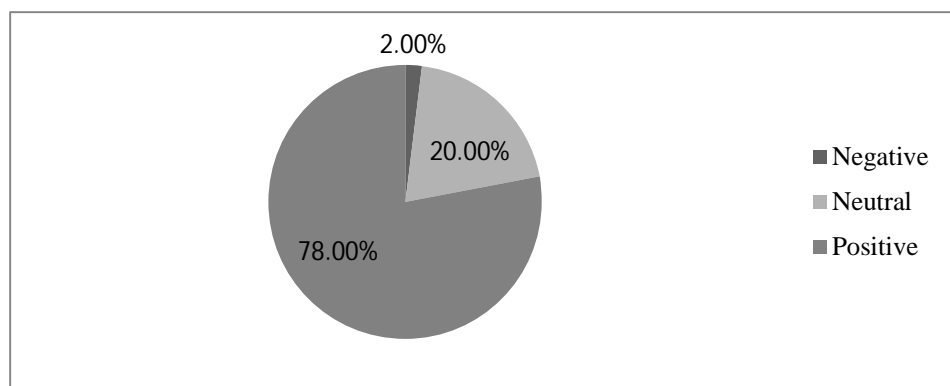
Figure 4.1. Perception Level of the Leadership Effectiveness

Figure 4.1

As of the findings, out of the total sample of 100, 78.05% (Fig. 4.1) of the employees have expressed a positive perception (Agree & Strongly Agree) towards the female leadership effectiveness and only 2% of the respondents have expressed a negative perception towards female leadership effectiveness. According to the findings of Heilman (2001), Carli & Eagly (2001), Maddock (2005) and Eagly (2007), prejudicial Beliefs, stereotypes and assumptions over female leaders, resist them from perceiving as the effective leaders. As of this study it can be assumed that such prejudices and stereotypes have not influenced to the employees perception towards the effectiveness of the female leaders. It's an affirmative sign to see this very strong positive perception towards female leadership effectiveness in Japanese society. Moreover the findings related to the relationship between the leadership skills and the leadership effectiveness came out as very strongly correlated.

Table 4.2. Relationship between Leadership Skills and Leadership Effectiveness

Leadership Skills	Pearson's r	Relationship
Personal Character	0.801	Very Strong Positive
Communication Skills	0.692	Strong Positive
Decision Making Skills	0.652	Strong Positive
Organizational / Unit Performance	0.496	Moderately Positive
Overall Leadership Skills	0.791	Very Strong Positive

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Leadership skills have a very strong relationship with the leadership effectiveness and Personal character and leadership effectiveness is having the strongest positive relationship. That indicates that the employees are most concerned with the personal characteristics of the leaders than any other leadership skill. Moreover the characteristics such as friendliness and firmness, treating the subordinates equally, empathy, determination, trustworthiness, dependability and outgoing personality can be identified as the characteristics which lead the employees to perceive as the effective leaders. As Hoyt & Chemers (2008) mentioned, the expectation over females is taking care. Through this study also it has been proved that the characteristics which are more feminine and friendly lead the female leaders to perceive as the effective leaders. Additionally, communication skills and decision making skills of these leaders express a strong positive relationship with the leadership effectiveness. The leader's nature of having good conversations with the employees, letting subordinates to talk, using respective words and conducting regular

meetings and etc, make the leaders to perceive as more effective leaders. Furthermore, sharing information, making realistic decisions, having the others opinions before making the important decisions, resolving conflicts fairly and consistent encouragements to implement the decisions are some of the characteristics that can be led the female leaders to perceive as the effective leaders. However, when considering the organizational/ unit performance, it is having a moderate positive relationship with the leadership effectiveness. Basically it can be assumed that the employees are more concerned with the skills which are directly related to them as the individuals, rather than to the organization or the units. The findings of the study strongly suggest that the leadership skills and the leadership effectiveness is significantly and strongly related. Thus as of the findings, if the subordinates perceive that their leaders are effective in terms of these four areas of, personal characteristics, decision making skills, communication skills and organizational/unit performances they perceive them as the effective leaders. This finding is similar to the findings of Mirza in his study in 2003. The following table illustrates the results of the hypothesis testing

Table 4.3. Relationship between Demographic Factors and Leadership Effectiveness

	F	Sig.
Age Group	0.928	0.476
Service Length Group	1.646	0.188
Educational Groups	1.001	0.410

In all these cases Sig. value is greater than the alpha value. Thus all three null hypotheses were accepted. That means there is no relationship between the factors such as Age, Service Length and educational levels with the perceived leadership effectiveness. Moreover as of the results of the T-test, Gender is not related with the leadership effectiveness. Thus, either males or females, they have no difference while perceiving the leadership effectiveness of the female leaders. This is similar to the findings of Dobbins & Platz (1986) Engen, Leeden & Willemsen (2001), Powell (1990). They also have been proved that, gender has no relationship to leadership style and effectiveness.

Table 4.3. Summary of the Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Results
Ho1 : There is no relationship between decision making skill, communication skill, leadership performance, personal characteristic and female leadership effectiveness	Rejected
Ho2: There is no difference between male and female Employees perception on their leaders' leadership effectiveness.	Accepted
Ho3: There is no significant difference in Employees' age group perception on their female leaders' leadership effectiveness.	Accepted
Ho4: There is no difference in employees' length of the service group in perceiving their female leader's leadership effectiveness.	Accepted
Ho5: There is no difference in Employees' different level of education group perception on their leaders' leadership effectiveness.	Accepted

The findings of the study have been answered to all the research questions. Thus, this study has been fulfilled all the research objectives successfully.

5. Conclusion

This research is focused on the employees' perception of female leadership effectiveness in the service sector in Japan. Specifically the research objectives focused on finding out the relationship between leadership skills, demographic factors and leadership effectiveness based on the employees' perception. Leadership is one of the popular topics in the academia which is discussed progressively about the leadership behaviors, leadership traits and the other leadership theories. But the presence of gender based leadership studies are comparatively rare and hard to find. Though the basic research questions of the study may look general, the findings of the study can significantly contribute to the increasing demand for the female leadership studies in the world.

Despite the gender differences, the qualified females are needed to be given the opportunities to work as the leaders. Most of the organizations and governments around the world have been realized that and the less representation of the females in the leadership positions has become one of the blistering topics in the contemporary world. However, is this less contribution of females in the leadership positions a matter of the perception of the society against the female leaders? or is that a matter of their own limitations? Therefore the ground of this study was the assumption of; "the employees perceive the effectiveness of female leadership negatively". Thus this negative feedback can resist them from being the leaders.

Through this study it has been focused on Japanese employees to examine their perception over female leadership effectiveness. Interestingly it is revealed that the employees strongly believe that female leaders are effective based on the given four leadership skills: communication skills, decision making skills, personal character and the organizational performances. Thus the findings of this study clear out the misunderstanding of 'prejudices and stereotypes resist, perceiving female leaders as the effective leaders'. Furthermore the personal character of the leader is having the greatest impact over the perceived leadership effectiveness of the subordinates. Therefore female leaders must pay a great attention towards their personal characteristics. Their friendly and caring nature will lead the employees to perceive them as the effective leaders. Decision making skills and communication skills also express a strong relationship with the leadership effectiveness. In both of the cases democratic way of making decisions and communicating will lead female leaders to perceive as the effective leaders. However, the impact of the organizational or unit performance is relatively less. It indicates that the employees value the skills related to the interactions or interrelations which are having direct impacts to them rather than the organizational or unit performances. Moreover this study reveals that Gender, Age, Education or Service Length is having no impact over the perceived leadership effectiveness of female leaders. It indicates that, the findings of the study is giving the green light towards female leadership in the service sector in Japan. Thus the organizations and other authorities must find the solutions to recruit and to retain more qualified and skillful female leaders in the organizations. Moreover the organizations can pay their attention on developing female leadership skills through training and development programs. At this point they can be mainly focused on building up the personal characters and other specified skills through the adequate leadership training programs and capacity building programs and others. That will lead females leaders to be perceived as the effective leaders and that favorable condition will impact to increase the number of the females in the leadership positions.

However as this study was limited to the specific group of employees (Blue Collar Workers) related to the service sector in Japan, it is hard to generalize the findings to the entire service sector in Japan. Thus a further study on the perception of white collar workers and an extension of study

towards the perceptions of the employees of manufacturing sector will be giving an added insight to the respective area of study.

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