



A Gender-Based Approach to Understanding and Evaluating the Impact of Implementing a Leadership Development Program

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Abstract: With women ascending to leadership positions in traditionally male-dominated fields, it's imperative to study the impact of gender on leadership styles and vocational college management. Gender-based challenges persist in education, affecting learners, educators, and the system at large. This study aims to identify and address gender-specific barriers in educational institutions, revealing biases and inequalities that hinder inclusive learning environments. Despite China's advancements, gender disparities still exist in professional leadership. This research contributes to our understanding of gender and leadership in vocational education, offering fresh perspectives that can guide educational policies and leadership practices. Using a descriptive methodology and positivist approach, the study collected data via questionnaire.

Keywords: leadership style; leadership questionnaire; leadership behaviors; institutional performance indicators

1. Introduction

The study aims to assess the influence of gender on leadership styles in vocational college management in China, where gender disparities are evident, especially in STEM fields. Understanding how gender shapes leadership practices and organizational outcomes is crucial for addressing gender disparities and promoting effective leadership in vocational education. Data collected from the research participants in relation to the distributed questionnaire, which had questions derived from the research objectives. The study had a total of 397 participants who agreed to participate in the study by answering the questions in the questionnaire. By analysing the data collected from the research participants in relation to the questions in the research questionnaire, final conclusions were drawn about the key issues of the research, recommendations were made and possible future research was looked forward to.

2. The necessity and significance of the impact of a gender-based approach on understanding leadership styles

2.1 Era background and practical needs

Vocational education and training have been prioritized by the Chinese government ever since 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established [1]. China's education policy aims to promote equality and gender balance, ensuring inclusive and high-quality education for all. Despite increasing female representation in traditionally male-dominated fields like vocational education, women's participation in this area remains low due to societal constraints. It's essential to investigate how gender shapes understandings of leadership and its impact on vocational college management. Current policies aim to address these issues, promoting gender balance and educational quality in vocational education and training. There is not much data on the relationship between leadership and gender in countries such as vocational universities, so it would be interesting to study the impact of gender on leadership style and effectiveness in China.

2.2 The importance of addressing gender disparities and promoting effective leadership in vocational education

In Shandong, China's vocational education sector, there's a lack of scholarly research exploring the gender-leadership correlation. This gap is significant as vocational institutions play a crucial role in equipping students with skills for their chosen careers. Addressing this disparity can contribute to vocational education's progress and inform policymakers in Shandong on fostering inclusive leadership environments. However, most research has been conducted in western societies, leaving a knowledge gap in countries like China. Conducting a study on the impact of gender on leadership styles and effectiveness in Chinese vocational colleges could provide valuable insights.

2.3 The importance of promoting gender parity and diversity in leadership positions

Policymakers can design and implement leadership development programmes tailored to address the unique challenges

and barriers faced by leaders in career colleges, particularly gender biases and stereotypes that hinder women's advancement. These programmes aim to cultivate diverse leadership styles and talents, while equipping leaders with knowledge and skills to foster inclusive and supportive work environments for all employees. Promoting gender parity and diversity in leadership is fundamental to fostering a balanced and inclusive leadership pipeline.

3. The exploration of the influence of gender on leadership styles

3.1 Gender based leadership styles and leadership behaviours

In this study, we focus on two indicators of transformational leadership transactional leadership gender-based leadership style. Transformational and transactional leadership styles lays the foundation for comprehending gender's intricate role in leadership behaviour. Gendered leadership behaviours refer to the unique approach leaders adopt, often unconsciously influenced by gender identity, socialisation, and societal expectations. While both genders can express these leadership styles, they may manifest differently based on the leader's gender. For instance, female leaders naturally lean towards transformational leadership, emphasizing collaboration, mentorship, and emotional intelligence, while male leaders may prefer transactional leadership, focusing on structure, order, and task completion. Understanding gendered dimensions in leadership behaviour is crucial for fostering inclusive and effective organisations that nurture diverse leadership styles. Gendered leadership behaviours are unique approaches that leaders may take, which are often unknowingly influenced by their gender identity, socialisation and societal expectations. Therefore, it is important to recognise that while transformational and transactional leadership styles can be expressed in both genders, they may manifest differently depending on the gender of the leader. For example, female leaders may naturally gravitate toward transformational leadership that focuses on collaboration, mentoring, and emotional intelligence, while male leaders may gravitate toward transactional leadership that focuses on structure, order, and task completion. Understanding the gender dimensions of leadership behaviour is essential to creating inclusive, effective organisations where diverse leadership styles can flourish.

3.2 Cultural influence on leadership

The impact of culture on leadership is profound and multifaceted, shaping the way leaders interact with their followers, make decisions and respond to challenges. Gender roles are the accepted or predicted behaviours of males and females in a society's culture, implying that males and females are generally considered appropriate roles in each culture [2]. One of the most important cultural dimensions influencing leadership is collectivism, which emphasises the importance of team harmony, unity and cooperation. The shift from a broader understanding of the influence of culture on leadership to a more focussed examination of collectivism highlights the unique role that this cultural value plays in shaping leadership styles and practices. In contrast to individualism, collectivism emphasises the group over the individual. In a collectivist culture, people are expected to prioritise the needs and goals of the group, sacrificing individual interests for the good of the group when necessary. Another of the most important cultural dimensions affecting leadership is hierarchy, which is a significant aspect of organizational dynamics and plays a pivotal role in shaping the work environment and employee relationships. There is a focus on following established procedures, policies, and protocols. Decision-making processes often involve seeking approval from higher-level managers, and changes to established systems or processes require proper authorization. Communication in a hierarchy culture typically follows a top-down approach, where information and instructions flow from higher-level managers to lower-level employees. Important decisions and strategic directions are communicated by senior leaders, while feedback and ideas from lower levels may be less prevalent.

The influence of Confucian values cannot be overemphasised. These ancient philosophical principles, which originated in China thousands of years ago, have shaped the cultural landscape and continue to resonate in modern leadership practices around the globe. Confucianism emphasises benevolence, righteousness, courtesy and wisdom as essential virtues for leaders. Humanism encourages empathy and compassion for others and focuses on collective well-being rather than individual interests. Righteousness represents moral rectitude and adherence to ethical standards, while propriety governs social interactions and the maintenance of harmonious relationships. Wisdom, meanwhile, is the ability to discern truth, understand complexity and make informed decisions. These values promote a style that is relational, ethical and focused on long-term sustainability. Leaders are expected to demonstrate high moral character and foster trust and respect from their followers. By integrating these principles into leadership development and practice, organisations can foster more effective, ethical and sustainable leadership outcomes.

3.3 Organisational performance and culture

Organisational performance and culture are intertwined, influencing not only the internal dynamics of an institution, but also its external impact, particularly in the field of education. As we delve into the intersection of student achievement,

financial sustainability and organisational culture, it is clear that each of these pillars supports and complements the other in fostering a vibrant and effective learning environment.

Student achievement is a key indicator of the performance of educational organisations, reflecting the quality of education and the effectiveness of teaching methods. High student achievement not only ensures stakeholder satisfaction but also contributes to organisational reputation and development. Leadership has been highlighted as a key catalyst for encouraging employee learning and performance and developing a culture of HRD support for key organisational outcomes. Therefore, based on the indicators of Organisational performance and culture research, student achievement has a profound impact on this study.

Financial sustainability is the cornerstone of any successful organisation, underpinning its operational efficiency, strategic growth, and overall competitiveness. It encompasses the ability to generate sufficient revenue to meet current and future financial obligations while maintaining the financial health of the organisation. A financially sustainable organisation is not only resilient in the face of economic downturns or market fluctuations but also has the flexibility to adapt to changing market conditions and seize new opportunities. Therefore, to achieve financial sustainability, organisations must have a clear understanding of their financial position, including assets, liabilities and cash flows. This requires effective financial management practices for informed decision-making and strategic planning. In addition, strong governance structures and transparent reporting mechanisms are essential for building trust with stakeholders and maintaining a good reputation.

Organisational culture is the values and beliefs of an organisation that shape its culture and influence the way its members interact and make decisions. A strong organisational culture is built on shared values that guide employee behaviour and decision-making. Effective communication and collaboration among employees creates a positive work environment and improves team performance. Organisations that foster a culture of openness, trust and respect promote better communication and collaboration. Leadership styles within organisations have a significant impact on culture. As a result, transformational leaders who focus on motivating and inspiring employees tend to be associated with positive organisational cultures that promote innovation, creativity and employee engagement.

4. Conclusion

This article explores the dominant leadership styles in colleges and universities in Shandong Province and their impact on the day-to-day functioning of the colleges. The results show that transformational leadership is the dominant style and is very effective in motivating followers, creating a positive learning environment and facilitating the achievement of organisational goals. Meanwhile, transactional leadership was also present but focused more on reward management and maintaining order. Despite the positive impact of leadership, there is still room for improvement. Vocational colleges should explore different leadership models and theories to determine the most appropriate approach, and provide leadership training and development programmes for leaders to improve their influence and decision-making skills.

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Conflicts of interests

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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