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### PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN PRIVATE COMPANIES OF SAUDI ARABIA

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Globally women are gradually exhibiting their presence as leaders in business enterprise, and organization. However, the perspective of women being leaders is still vague in the Middle East countries. Hence, in this work, the perspective of women leadership in private companies of Saudi Arabia was done. This work was conducted using mix method approach based on quantitative and qualitative method. Three Saudi women leaders were interviewed. Based on the interviews output, a questionnaire was designed and used for data collection. The samples of this work comprised of 54 employees from the private companies in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this work have demonstrated that 61.1% of the employees agreed that characteristics of women leaders differ from men leaders. Furthermore, result showed that the preference of leaders based on gender still exists among employees. In addition, 51.8 % of the respondents agreed that women leaders clearly explain work targets. On the other hand, the results have shown that women leaders are compassionate and caring towards their employee's wellbeing. Thus, it is concluded that the perceptive woman leadership in Saudi Arabia is fairly positive.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is a procedure that occurs in a group of people where one individual impact and controls the conduct of different individuals towards achieving a shared objective [1]. Key components for fruitful team execution incorporate the leader's capacity to design, arrange, and control the action of the work group. The methods for accomplishing leadership are very diverse. The team of individuals might name an individual observed with having leadership potential [2]. On the other hand, the leadership role might be

acquired or accepted naturally if nobody else is ready or accessible to accomplish the role's capacity [3].

The continuous advancement of people to viably lead in the worldwide economy is a benefit that contributes to hierarchical achievement. Associations must concentrate on creating both male and female workers to contend in this rapidly developing economic world [4]. During the 1970s, the involvement of women in the workforce was enormous and it has led the way for women in making up the greater part of the administrative workforce [5]. As the years progressed, in spite of significant obstructions, various women have climbed into top authority positions in various fields around the world [6].

Women leaders were observed to be progressively empathic and adaptable, just as more grounded in relational aptitudes than their male partners [7]. These characteristics consolidate to make an authority style that is comprehensive, open, cooperative and synergetic [8]. In particular, advocates of the presence of a women leadership advantage have contended that women might be progressively disposed to lead in manners that are especially successful in abreast association [9].

Several works have been conducted around the world in analyzing the development of women in leadership roles. Gipson et al.[10] investigated the connection of women and leadership in terms of style and execution, and found that women have shown comparative leadership style and execution when contrasted with men leaders. Sidani et al. [11] scrutinized the elements influencing women venture into organization leadership and found that man centric structures, favoring of males over females, and sustaining jobs inside the private circle of the family are the real restricting elements that is obstructing women' climb to administration pinnacle. Sugiyama et al.[12] assessed women' authority improvement projects and found that these advancement program keep on offering noteworthy incentive to supporting women pioneers in their headway towards organizational leadership. Dunn et al. [13] inspected the authority encounters in women advanced education organization and found that the women leaders have performed equally well with their male counterparts in term of administration and execution. Jones et al.[14] evaluated the connection between the women's administration styles and the vocation achievement of women in philanthropic associations, and discovered positive relationship between women's authority styles and profession achievement. Ha et al.[15] inspected managerial initiative among scholarly women pioneers in China and found that all the ladies scholastic pioneers were pleased with their family and profession balance. Vongalis-Macrow et al. [16] examined the significance of ladies administration for associations and found that ladies leadership has shown nature of authority, explicitly management exercises that make adequacy and backing in organizations. Saifuddin et al.[17] investigated the development of ladies leadership in India and found that ladies authority in India is established in network and ladies pioneers' impact change through incorporation. Hurley et al.[18] analyzed the elements impacting accomplishment of authority position for ladies and found that the quantity of representatives in the business assume

critical role in deciding the probability of having a woman CEO. Bullough et al.[19] investigated how universally embraced authority practices influence ladies' inclusion in leadership and found that appealing administration and self-defensive administration are indicators of ladies' administration involvement.

The role of women in corporate world has been advancing with time. This trend might be advancing in the Middle East countries as well, such as Saudi Arabia. Thus, this work was done to evaluate the aspects of the women leadership in private companies in Saudi Arabia. This work has aimed to address on how have the women become more successful as leaders in private companies in Saudi Arabia

## **METHODOLOGY**

For this work, mixed method was used to carry out the analysis. Mixed method comprised of both quantitative and qualitative method. This method was utilized to have a better overview on the subject of study. Data was collected from difference sources such as questionnaire survey and interviews, which was then put in order of two data tools for this study. An interview guide covering 14 important questions related to Saudi women leadership was prepared. The interviewees were three Saudi women leaders belonging to one of the most important institutions targeting woman empowerment in Saudi Arabia: EFFAT University. This interview was conducted to attain an overview on Saudi women leaders. Thus, based on the outcome of this interview, an questionnaire set was developed to collect required information from the respondents. The Questionnaire was developed based on 5 points scale which was strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. In this work, the total sample number was 54 employees from private sector in Saudi Arabia. The collected data was analyzed in terms of basic statistics. The data was presented in graphical form.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### *Interview Outcome*

Interviewers were asked about the concept of leadership prospective from their own concepts as Saudi women on leadership positions in private campus EFFAT University. The first interviewer, Dr. Samar Khan the dean of Business College in EFFAT University said that women leadership is not about making women to be equal to men, but it is about giving women a chance to achieve their leadership duties in their own special way in both government and private sector. The second interviewer, Dr. Malak Alnory stated that from academic perspective, leadership is about the capacity exhibited by an individual to work in and lead a group. The third interviewer Dr. Malak Abo Nar stated that leadership is something that an individual is born with, thus that person requires motivation to attain growth.

In addition, the interviewees said that each person especially women should have a huge passion to continue without stopping and have a great leader to follow or different successful leaders to collect her own vision. On the other

hand, the first extrinsic motivation the interviewers got for family relationships along their life so it's too important to have more leaders in future. The second extrinsic motivation was from educational life.

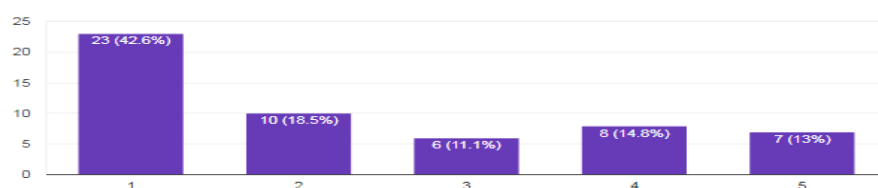
Furthermore, in terms of women leadership challenges, first interviewer Dr. Samar Khan stated that "the only challenge she faced is community acceptance. This was due to the community view on women whereby they do not need to work. However, when the women have embraced career and leadership, women have understood their importance to improve the community. Thus, this has slowly led to the acceptance among the community. Second interviewer Dr. Malak Alnory stated that the challenges were coming with each position of the organization. The third interviewer, Dr. Malak Abunar stated that the challenges that she faced while being in foreign environment was being protective about her own self and achieve work duties alone. As time progress, Dr. Malak Abunar adapted to the challenges and overcame them

### *Questionnaire Outcome*

In this work, the respondents were subjected question related to women leadership in private companies in Saudi Arabia. Thus, the outcomes question statements are discussed in this section. Based on Figure 1, the employees were asked "if the characteristics of women leaders differ from men leaders ". Thus, based on Figure 1, 42.6% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 18.5% of the respondents who agreed, 11% of the respondents chose neutral. This is compared to 14.6% of the respondents who disagreed and 13% of the respondent who strongly disagreed with the question statement. Thus, it is deduced that the characteristic of women leaders differs from men leaders.

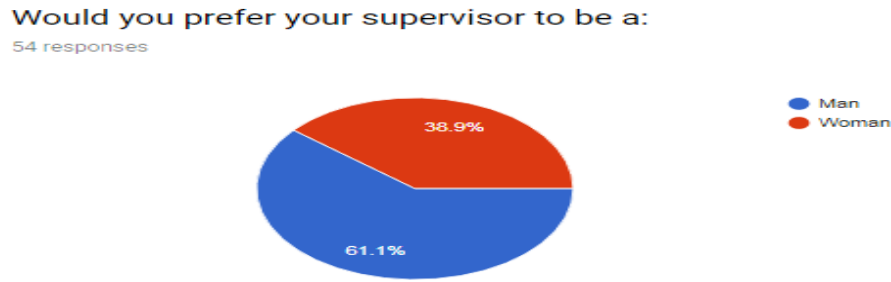
The characteristics of women leaders differ from that of men leaders

54 responses



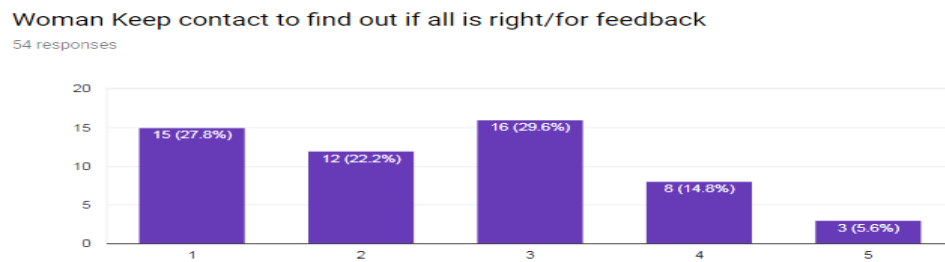
**Figure 1:** Characteristic Of Women Leaders

Based on Figure 2, the employees were asked "if they prefer their supervisor to be a specific gender". Thus, based on Figure 2, 61.1% of respondents stated that they preferred their supervisor in work to be a male. On the other hand, 38.9% of the respondents stated that they prefer woman to be their supervisor. Thus based on this, it is deduced that majority prefer men to be the leaders.



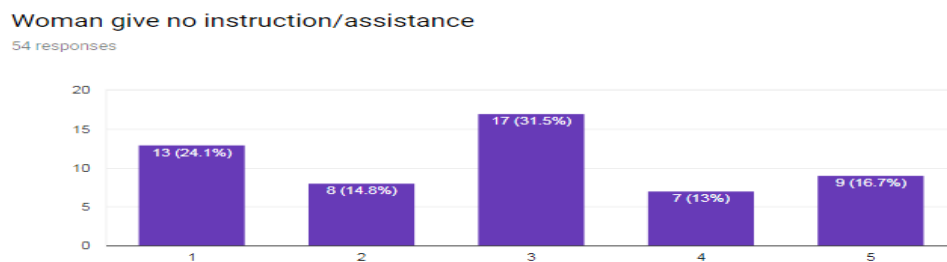
**Figure 2:** Preference Of Supervisor Based On Gender

Based on Figure 3, the employees were asked “if women keep contact to find out if all is right for feedback”. Thus, based on Figure 3, 27.8% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 22.2% of the respondents who agreed, 29.6% of the respondents chose neutral. This is compared to 14.8% of the respondents who disagreed and 5.6% of the respondent who strongly disagreed with the question statement. Thus, based on this, it is deduced that women leaders keep in contact for work feedback.



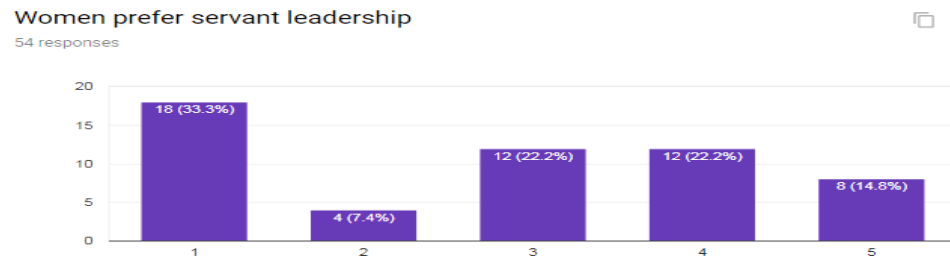
**Figure 3:** Women Keep In Contact For Work Feedback

Based on Figure 4, the employees were asked “if women give number of instruction or assistance for work ”. Thus, based on Figure 4, 24.1% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 14.8% of the respondents who agreed, 31.5 % of the respondents chose neutral. This is compared to 13 % of the respondents who disagreed and 16.7% of the respondent who strongly disagreed with the question statement. Thus, based on this, it is deduced that women leaders give instruction and assistance in work.



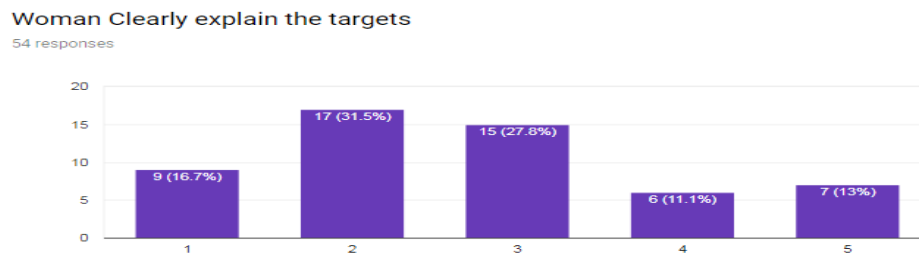
**Figure 4:** Women Give Instruction Or Assistance For Work

Based on Figure 5, the employees were asked “if women prefer servant leadership”. Thus, based on Figure 5, 33.3% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 7.4 % of the respondents who agreed, 22.2 % of the respondents chose neutral. This is compared to 22.2 % of the respondents who disagreed and 14.8 % of the respondent who strongly disagree with the question statement. Thus, based on this, it is deduced that women prefer servant style leadership.



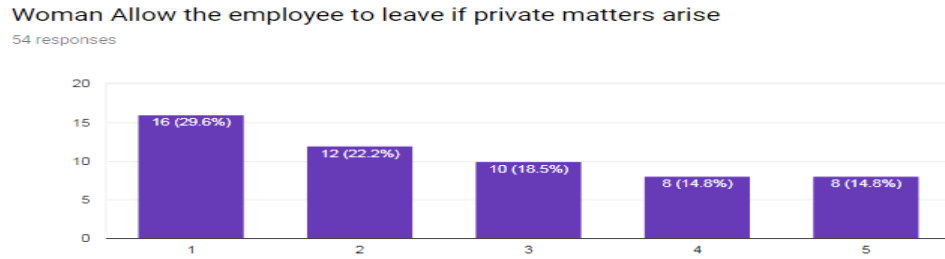
**Figure 5:** Women Give Instruction Or Assistance For Work

Based on Figure 6, the employees were asked “if women clearly explain the targets”. Thus, based on Figure 6, 16.7% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 31.5 % of the respondents who agreed, 27.8 % of the respondents chose neutral. This is compared to 11.1 % of the respondents who disagreed and 13 % of the respondent who strongly disagree with the question statement. Thus, based on this, it is deduced that women clearly explain the targets.



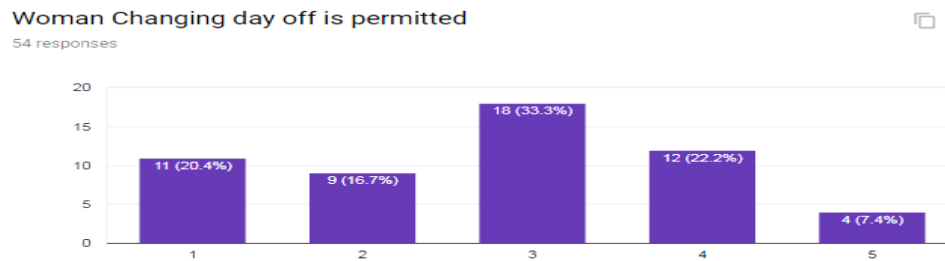
**Figure 6:** Women Clearly Explain Targets

Based on Figure 7, the employees were asked “if women allow the employees to leave if private matter arise”. Thus, based on Figure 7, 29.6% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 22.2 % of the respondents who agreed, 18.5% of the respondents chose neutral. This is compared to 14.8% of the respondents who disagreed and 14.8% of the respondent who strongly disagree with the question statement. Thus, based on this, it is deduced that that women allow the employees to leave if private matter arises.



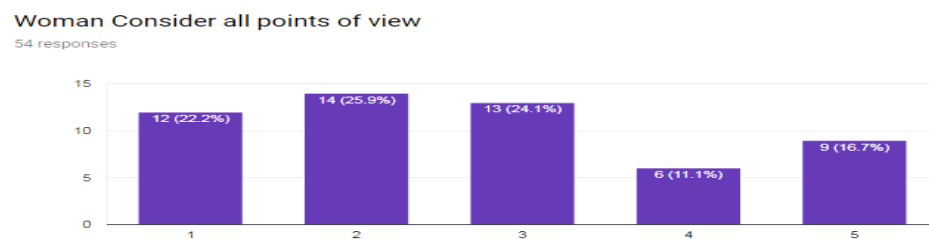
**Figure 7:** Women Allow Employees To Leave If Private Matter Arise

Based on Figure 8, the employees were asked “if women allow changing day off”. Thus, based on Figure 8, 20.4% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 16.7 % of the respondents who agreed, 33.3 % of the respondents chose neutral. This is compared to 22.2% of the respondents who disagreed and 7.4% of the respondent who strongly disagree with the question statement. Thus, based on this, it is deduced that women allow changing day off.



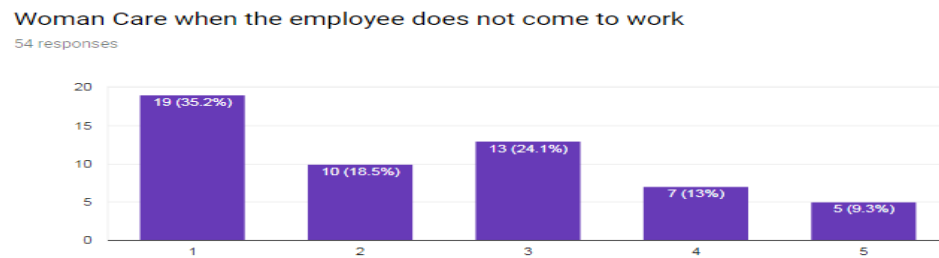
**Figure 8:** Women Allow Changing Day Off.

Based on Figure 9, the employees were asked “if women consider all points of view”. Thus, based on Figure 9, 22.2% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 25.9 % of the respondents who agreed, 24.1 % of the respondents chose neutral. This is compared to 11.1% of the respondents who disagreed and 16.7% of the respondent who strongly disagree with the question statement. Thus, based on this, it is deduced that women consider all points of view.



**Figure 9:** Women Consider All Point Of View

Based on Figure 10, the employees were asked “if women care when the employee does not come to work”. Thus, based on Figure 10, 35.2% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 18.5 % of the respondents who agreed, 24.1 % of the respondents chose neutral. This is compared to 13% of the respondents who disagreed and 9.3% of the respondent who strongly disagree with the question statement. Thus, based on this, it is deduced that women care when the employee does not come to work.



**Figure 10:** Women Care About The Employee

## OVERALL DISCUSSION

From the results it is clear that women leadership in Saudi Arabia is gaining attention as time progresses. The outcome of this work has shown that the characteristics of women leaders differ from men leaders. The outcome of this work is inline with the work of Lanaj et al.[20] where it was stated that women leaders have distinctive qualities and traits when compared to men leaders in terms of administration style in terms of strength, perseverance, adaptability, grit and tenacity.

Furthermore, the outcome of this work has shown that in term of gender choice for leadership, majority of the respondents have stated that they prefer male leadership compared to women leadership. According to Brescoll et al. [21] this trend is still prevalent among organization around the world, where some organization feels that men leaders exhibit and have an overall better performance and traits needed for a leader. In addition, it was also stated that the emergence of women as leaders is slowly being adapted by organizations. On the other hand, the outcome of this work has shown that women leaders keep in contact for work related feedback, providing assistance on work to the employees and explain clearly on targets set.. This outcome is inline with the work of Glass et al.[22] where it was stated that women leaders compassionate towards the organization output. Thus, they always check on their employees for feedback, provide assistance when needed, and communicate the employees with regards to job requirement.

Furthermore, the outcome of this work has shown that women leaders exhibit servant style leadership. On the other hand, the outcome of this work has demonstrated that women leaders consider the overall view point of a matter and exhibit care on employees well being. This outcome is agreed by Rhode [23] where it was stated that due to the nature of women, they tend to exhibit authoritative leadership style. Furthermore, the work by Arnold [24] has stated



that women leaders are compassionate with regards to well being of their employees and tend to consider all point of views whenever a work-related decision is made.

## CONCLUSION

The work has analyzed the aspects of the women leadership in private companies in Saudi Arabia. Thus, based on the outcome of this work, it was observed that women leadership diversity is growing in the Saudi community. The outcome of this work has shown that women leadership is being adapted by the organization as women leaders have unique leadership style and compassion towards their employee. Furthermore, the authors feel that women leadership needs to receive great motivation and a huge reinforcement from family and community. This will enable them to consolidate their role leadership role in organizations. It is recommended that for future research, a more detailed study needs to be done by analyzing employee performance based on leadership style and gender.

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