WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION: A STUDY ON THE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT: The women participation rate in construction sector both in academia and industry is very low, particularly at senior management level. The statistical analyses of western countries reveal that while the numbers of women entering management positions continues to increase, women remain under-represented in senior executive positions. It is important to attract and retain professional women with good leadership qualification and skills in the senior positions in order to maintain a good standard and professionalism within the construction sector. In this context, this paper will examine the literature relating to the educational and executive leadership in construction associated with Women. Focus will be given on the reasons behind the under-representation of women both at educational and executive leadership levels within the construction sector. The study also examines the barriers faced by women entering senior executive positions

Keywords – Construction, Educational Leadership, Executive Leadership, Women

1   BACKGROUND

The construction industry, in the UK in particular, is one of the UK's chief employers with over 2 million people, more than 1 in 14 of the total workforce (CITB, 2003). Currently there are over 11 million women employed in the UK, accounting for almost 50% of the work force. However, women only account for 9% of the construction workforce (CITB, 2003), making it one of the most male dominated of the major industrial sectors. Only when this figure is broken down do we see the true position of women in construction. A remarkable 84% of women in hold secretarial posts, whereas only 10% are employed in a professional capacity, in design and management areas. In the remaining breakdown women account for less than 1% of craft and trades people, 2% are sole traders and 4% are involved in micro enterprises, companies employing 1-10 people. The number of women entering into University education has continued to increase over recent years, and women now account for over 50% of students. However, it is found that despite this increase, women still only constitute 8% of construction students (Green, 2005).

There is a considerable evidence to indicate that the male dominated nature of the construction represents a significant barrier to female recruitment, career progression and retention. Though the number of women within the workforce and the education continue to rise the women participation rate in construction sector both in industry and academia is very low, particularly at senior management level.

The under-representation of women in positions of senior management within educational institutions continues to be a matter of some concern, particularly as the teaching force is largely dominated, nationally and internationally, by women (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). Studies on gender and leadership have revealed a number of barriers to women seeking educational leadership and management positions. Also the executive leadership is constituted as a predominantly male domain, placing women in an antithetical position to executive power (Olsson and Walker 2003).

The issue regarding the lack of women in construction has been a concern for many years, attracting government and industry wide attention. This issue has been made more prominent recently due to the potential skill shortage facing the industry. A healthy construction

industry is vital for the physical regeneration of the region. The UK construction industry is busier now than it has ever been for a decade and is suffering from skill shortage in both craft and manual trades such as bricklaying, plumbing and painting, and at the professional level, in engineering, quantity surveying and estimating (Fox, 1998). Therefore it is not surprising that the UK government is again tapping into what Fox referred to as 'the talents of other half of the workforce', examining ways to encourage women into traditionally male-dominated jobs (Financial Times, 25 April, 2001; Women's Unit, 2000 cited in Whittock, 2002). The potential skills shortages are facing the construction industry, as Construction Industry Training Board Skills Forecast Report (2003) suggests: "*UK construction has delivered a sharp increase (8%) in output over the last year, growing faster than any other major sector. Approximately 83,000 new recruits will be required each year between 2003 and 2007*". The industry cannot rely on the traditional male workforce to meet these targets. The recruitment of women is imperative to achieving these objectives and prolonging the industry's growth. A study by Green (2005) highlights the current position: "*It's a pretty rare breed of woman that works in the industry*"; "*We need more women to fill the skills gaps and to make a change*". In her view traditional gender divisions in the construction sector are still evident and vertical segregation is still prevalent with women being under represented in senior positions. It is said that 'a major obstacle to the industry to recruit the best people is the fact that half of the population is largely ignored by the industry' (Green, 2005). The studies in these areas have been invaluable in pinpointing the factors militating against the participation of more women in the construction work place, and in particular, the recruitment into the construction professions (Agapiou, 2002).

Despite it being such a great concern there has been very little change in the number of women working in industry. Numerous initiatives promoting construction careers to women have been developed but none has had the desired effect. Therefore it is important to study how to attract and retain professional women with good leadership qualification and skills in the senior positions in order to fill the skill gaps at professional level and thus to maintain a good standard and professionalism within the construction sector.

2   AIM AND METHODOLOGY

This paper mainly focused on the reasons behind the under-representation of women in senior management levels in construction. The growing presence of women in the international workforce continues to motivate research on the leadership styles of women, particularly to determine if women have their own ways of leading. The real issue in leadership differences lies in the equity in selecting the right person with the appropriate skills and qualities to ensure the effectiveness and success of the organization (Bass and Avolio, 1994). The integration of women in leadership roles is not a matter of "fitting in" the traditional models, but "giving in" the opportunities for them to practice their own leadership styles. Since organizations have been mostly occupied by men, some women have chosen successful male leaders and their styles as their role models (Appelbaum and Shapiro, 1993). Some others dare break the mould and start with leadership styles that openly reveal feminine traits and behaviours as "silent cries" for social justice and a place of their own in organizations. The strategic value of these styles for organizations lies in the merging of both innate feminine characteristics and professional skills developed in the workplace that contributes to the attainability of organizational goals.

The presence of feminine or masculine characteristics in leadership styles is related to the construct of gender (Larson and Freeman, 1997). Gender, race, class, and other elements of social difference are acknowledged to play an important role in the development of

leadership styles. Fitzgerald (2003) suggested that it is impossible to create conceptualisations of leading and managing without taking into account issues of gender and ethnicity.

In this context, this paper aimed to examine the literature relating to the educational and executive leadership in construction associated with Women. The study, while examining the reasons behind the under-representation of women at senior management level in construction, will also discuss the barriers faced by women entering senior executive positions. A critical literature review was carried on various book and journals that are related to gender, leadership and construction. Thus this paper primarily addresses the following questions.

1. What are the leadership styles that could be taken up by women in construction industry?
2. What are the reasons behind the under-representation of women at senior positions within construction sector?

3 LEADERSHIP IN CONSTRUCTION: GENDER PERSPECTVE

3.1 Introduction

The leadership is defined as 'the ability to influence – either directly or indirectly – the behaviour, thoughts, and actions of a significant number of individuals' (Gardner, 1995). Leadership is one of the least-understood concepts in business, despite the countless articles and books written about it. Many theories of leadership have been developed, yet no single approach adequately captures the essence of the concept. The intention of leadership theories is to explain relationship between leadership styles and the context in which leadership is evaluated. A review of management literature reveals that studies of leadership have focused mainly on finding the most appropriate or effective leadership style. Although many studies have been undertaken in the area of leadership styles, they have generally tended to be among manufacturing industries characterized by permanent organization structures. Few published work exists that is directly concerned with the construction industry (Giritli and Oraz, 2004). Langford et al. (1995) state that 'a lack understanding of knowledge of the industry on the part of social scientists and a lack of understanding of social science by those in the industry has been the cause of this dearth'. However, there seems to be few empirical studies related to the subject in project-based industries such as construction.

The construction sector can be researched into two discrete perspectives namely academic perspective and industry perspective. The academia may refer to the Universities and higher educational institutions where construction related courses are conducted. Construction as an industry is defined as one that employs workers in two main categories namely 'managers and professionals', who plan, organise, advise on specialist functions or field activities, direct and coordinate all activities and resources involved with construction operations; and 'construction trades', who construct, install, finish, maintain and repair internal and external structures of domestic, commercial and industrial buildings and civil constructions (Employment Service, 1990 *cited in* Fielden et al., 2000).

Educational leadership refers to "leadership influence through the generation and dissemination of educational knowledge and instructional information, development of teaching programs, and supervision of teaching performance" (Shum and Cheng, 1997) whereas executive leadership is defined as 'set of activities directed toward the development and management of the organization as a whole, including all of its subcomponents, to reflect long-range policies and purposes that have emerged from the senior leader's interactions

within the organization and his or her interpretations of the organization's external environment' (Zaccaro, 2001).

3.2 Leadership in Construction

As per the forgoing discussions and definitions, the leaders within construction sector could be defined as below for the purpose of this study. In this context the managers and professionals of construction both in the industry and in the academia could be categorised into four types as follows (Bennett, 1999);

1. *Non management role*: includes assistant quantity surveyors, assistant engineers, trainers, designers etc. These positions are generally self-directed.
2. *Supervisory role*: includes engineers, management consultants, university lecturers etc. These positions typically fulfill a supporting role to middle management.
3. *Middle management role*: includes facilities manager, contract manager, senior quantity surveyor etc. These positions are mainly responsible for managing the whole process of a project and leading a project team
4. *Senior Management role*: includes company directors, company partners, project directors, academic directors, professors etc. These positions are often the ones of power where company-wide decisions are made

Among the above four categories the ones who play 'middle management role' and 'senior management role' perform a managerial role where the people and the associated activities are to be managed. In order to perform this role, they should have their influence towards their subordinates. But the extent of their influence will depend on the style of leadership that they use to get the work done. Since the leadership is defined as the ability to influence, those who fall under the categories 3 and 4 above could be considered as the leaders of construction. They cab be further divided as educational leaders and executive leaders based upon the type of organization (either educational or industrial) they are attached to.

Hey/ McBer categorises leadership styles into six distinct styles based on two major classes or styles: they are transactional and transformational (Goleman, 2000). Under transformational leadership, the most prominent behaviour used is inspirational motivation, followed by idealized attributes, intellectual stimulation, idealized behaviours, and individualized consideration. Under transactional leadership, the most prominent behaviour used is contingent reward, followed by management-by-exception active, and management-by-exception passive (Chan and Chan, 2005). In this regard corrective style ('do what I tell you) and authoritative style ('come with me') fall under transactional style whereas affiliative style ('people come first'), democratic style ('what do you think'), pacesetting style ('do as I do, now') and coaching style ('try this') fall under the transformational leadership styles (Goleman, 2000).

In construction academic environment the leadership styles hardly differ from that of other discipline academic. Because there are similarities in the nature of the educational institutes irrespective of under what type of disciplinary one falls. Also such institutes basically have a stable or permanent structure.

Unlike the construction academia the construction industry has its own characteristics. Because the construction industry is mainly project oriented where the project-based organization is disbanded upon the completion of the task. Thus the industry should be considered as a special case. In considering leadership styles, the unique characteristics of the construction industry such as project characteristics, contractual arrangements, project life-cycle and environmental factors can have an impact on leadership styles in construction.

This-project based nature of construction industry with its temporary multi-organizations, will almost certainly have an important influence on the managerial leadership styles of professionals working in the industry (Giritli and Oraz, 2004). Although, in most project environments, there is a strong preference for a democratic participative style, it may not be the most effective for all situations. Cleland (1995) argues that project leadership should be appropriate to the project situation because leadership is a continuous and flexible process. Naum (2001) states that large capital investment projects coupled with high complexity of decision issues can require different styles of leadership, and he admits that 'a participative style of leadership with bureaucratic organization is expected to be more appropriate than a directive style'. In contrast, Nicholas (1990 *cited in* Giritli and Oraz, 2004) suggests that a less participating, more directive style might be more appropriate when there is less time and high pressure to complete the work.

According to findings by Chan and Chan (2005) the transformational and transactional leadership are exhibited in the same individual building professionals, but to different degrees and intensities. Building professionals use transformational leadership more frequently than transactional leadership in their work. Transformational leadership and transactional leadership are complementary to each other. Transformational leadership can augment transactional leadership to produce greater synergistic effects on the employees' work outcomes than either transformational or transactional leadership in isolation. However, transactional leadership cannot augment transformational leadership to the same extent.

Another study by Pheng and Lee (1997) on construction project managers revealed that most of the respondents agreed that the project manager should possess firm and capable leadership qualities. The reasons given were that a project manager must be able to lead as he is regarded as the leader of the project team. Without firm leadership, he would not be able to gain respect from the other consultants. Furthermore, without good leadership qualities, he would not be able to motivate his team to work towards the common goals of the project. Strong leadership is therefore a very important criterion for the project manager. Also they mentioned the 'Team management leadership style' as the ideal style because such managers have great concern for people and production and work to motivate employees to reach the highest levels of accomplishment and are flexible and responsive to change, and understand the need to change.

The extensive use of sub-contracting is another factor that can have an impact on the leadership style of projects. The study by Bresnen *et al.* (1986) showed that task-oriented forms of leader behaviour are more appropriate where subcontract labour forms the bulk of the workplace. Furthermore, construction professionals need different leadership styles in different phases of the project life cycle. The style of leadership changes as the project progresses through its life cycle. During the different phases of the design process, styles may need to allow for more debates, fine-tuning and deliberation (Giritli and Oraz, 2004). It is also said that the environment in which leadership is exercised is also influential in shaping the leadership style of people who occupy managerial positions in construction settings. The leaders should be able to impose more authoritarian styles at times when there is a need to control the workers. In sum, it is difficult to determine the most appropriate leadership style to conform with each particular situation in the development of a project. Naum (2001) concludes that 'Leaders may thus have to switch from one style of leadership to another or combine elements of different styles until the right balance between concerns for tasks and concern for people is reached'. For this reason, individuals involved in the management process of construction should be able to enact a range of leadership behaviours.

3.3 Gender and Leadership

Although mainstream research on leadership generally continues to ignore gender relations, over recent years there has been major expansion of international research on gender relations in leadership, organizations and management (Hearn and Piekkari, 2005). Previous studies have found differences in leadership styles in terms of gender and managerial hierarchy. Discussions on the gendered differentiation of leadership have centered on the different qualities and styles of leadership of men and women; that is, the so-called masculine and feminine styles of leadership (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). Hofstede (2001) suggests that the masculinity / femininity dimension affects the meaning of work in people's lives (Giritli and Oraz, 2004). High masculinity may give rise to a fairly macho type of leadership, whereas high femininity may lead to a more empathetic consideration type of leadership. In masculine cultures, there is a higher emphasis on assertiveness and the acquisition of money and other material things. Feminine cultures stress relationships among people, concern for others, and interest in the quality of work environment (Giritli and Oraz, 2004).

The presence of feminine or masculine characteristics in leadership styles is related to the construct of gender (Larson and Freeman, 1997). Gender, race, class, and other elements of social difference are acknowledged to play an important role in the development of leadership styles. Studies such as those conducted by Martin Court (1995) in New Zealand, Margaret Grogan (1996) in the USA and Marianne Coleman (2001) in England and Wales have uncovered similarities in women's social, economic and educational backgrounds, career progression, family circumstances and leadership styles (Fitzgerald 2003). Fitzgerald also suggested that it is impossible to create conceptualisations of leading and managing without taking into account issues of gender and ethnicity.

As women have become a more prominent presence as managers and executives in organisations, more attention has been devoted to the possible differences between the leadership styles of women and men. Intuitive reasoning suggests that early socialisation patterns develop different qualities in women and men that would likely result in variations in leadership styles (Powell, 1993). The growing number of women in managerial positions created interest in the role of women as leaders (Klenke, 1996). In recent years, both mainstream management literature and organisational policy show evidence of a marked turn to leadership rather than management as the means to enhance organisational performance in contemporary organisations. This is matched by a growing trend in the UK to attribute ever-greater significance to leadership as a way of solving organisational problems not only within the private sector, but also within the public sector more generally, across education (in schools and in universities) as well as in health and local government organisations.(Ford, 2005). The belief that women are better than men at managing different activities simultaneously finds its origins in the role of women in various societies. Women are often carers of the family and of the household in addition to external employment. In a research done by Priola (2004) almost all of the participants interviewed referred to multitasking presenting it as a female quality and ability. Earlier thinking emphasized that women who had achieved leadership positions were imitators of male characteristics, but contemporary theories recognize feminine leadership styles (Stanford et al., 1995).

Research findings of Trinidad and Normore (2005) show that women adopt democratic and participative leadership styles in the corporate world and in education. Transformational leadership is the preferred leadership style used by women. The characteristics of transformational leadership relate to female values developed through socialization processes that include building relationships, communication, consensus building, power as influence, and working together for a common purpose. This is also supported by Shane et al (1995)

saying that femininity was found to be positively correlated with transformational leadership. Further several studies focusing on transformational leadership indicated that women are perceived, and perceive themselves, as using transformational leadership styles more than men (Bass et al., 1996; Druskat, 1994; Rosener, 1990 *cited in* Kark, 2004). More specifically, many authors refer to transformational leadership as a feminine leadership style. However, research by Hackman et al, (1992) showed that transformational leadership is a stereotypically gender-balanced style. Also the transformational, empowering and collaborative style of leadership associated with women is compared with the more directive and authoritarian style traditionally associated with male leaders. The debate has progressed further to engage the concept of the androgynous leader which, rather than attributing the different qualities exclusively to any one gender, suggests that every good leader has available to them both sets of characteristics from which they are able to select the most appropriate for the situation (Singleton, 1993). Some other researches also indicate that the most successful leaders in any environment are those who can employ a range of styles depending on situational attributes.

From the forgoing discussions it is clearly seen that there are various styles of leadership available and a range of styles is needed in order to manage the construction sectors effectively. It is also discussed the concept of gender and leadership and certain styles are identified as the more suitable leadership styles for women. Hence, this chapter summarises the leadership styles in general, in construction and in associated with women. By taking the issues discussed here into account, the following chapter combines all these facts together and gives a review of the status of women in educational and executive leadership in construction.

4   CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN LEADERS IN CONSTRUCTION

This chapter mainly focuses on the status of the women leaders in construction and thus could be discussed under three headings, namely (i) the under-representation of women in senior management levels, (ii) the barriers faced by women to reach educational and executive leadership positions, and (iii) a discussion on justifying the suitability of women leaders within construction sectors.

4.1   The under representation of women in senior management levels

As per the CITB (2003) it was revealed that women constitute only 9% of the construction workforce, making it one of the most male dominated of the major industrial sectors. When this figure is broken further we could see only 10% of women are employed in a professional capacity in design and management area. Similarly the number of women entering into construction related education still only constitutes 8%. Further, despite the introduction of Equal Opportunities policies by universities most academic staff continue to be male. Women hold only 35% of full time academic posts, and only 10% of professorships. The figures are even more revealing in the case of construction, where less than 0.5% of professors are women.

The teaching profession both in this country and internationally is, with few exceptions, predominated by women as it has traditionally been seen as a 'suitable' job for women. The fact that the teaching profession is relatively lower paid and does not enjoy the same high status as other male-dominated professions may partly account for the fact that there are more women than men in this profession. However, a look at the statistics reveals that despite the

large numbers of women in the profession, they are greatly under-represented in positions of management (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). The sector of higher education is characterised by specific aspects which make it distinguishable from the business world. However, in higher education, as well as in business, men and masculine values are dominant (Whitehead, 2001).

Executive leadership is repeatedly constituted as a world dominated by corporate masculinity, a man's world, which accommodates women as 'other' or 'silence' (Marshall, 1995; Sinclair, 1994; Maier, 1999; Halford and Leonard, 2001 *cited in* Olsson and Walker 2003). The statistical analyses of western countries reveal that while the numbers of women entering management positions continues to increase, women remain under-represented in senior executive positions (Davidson and Bruke, 2000)

Like any new trend in traditional settings, it takes years to develop leadership styles until these styles are understood and accepted. Meanwhile, women face several barriers that prevent them from been considered leaders or leadership candidates (Still, 1994).Therefore it is appropriate to look into the barriers faced by women entering into educational and executive leadership positions in construction.

4.2   The barriers

Firstly in the context of academia, a number of writers have attempted to identify and categorise some of the barriers to the progress of women's careers in educational leadership (Brown and Ralph, 1996; Coleman, 2001; Hall, 1996 *cited in* Cubillo and Brown, 2003). One of the theories put forward the socialisation and stereotyping as the barriers for women seeking a senior position in education. Schmuck (1986 *cited in* Cubillo and Brown, 2003) warns of the dangers of subscribing to this "deficit" model where women are seen to need to be trained or educated up to the level of men, rather than be valued for what they might bring to the field of management. Some internal barriers such as one's lack of confidence, lack of competitiveness and fear of failure have also been identified for women entry into leadership position. Cubillo (1999) found in her study that women's so-called lack of confidence was more to do with unfamiliarity with the territory than a lack of faith in their abilities. The fear of failure, too, tended to be much reduced once women were aware of the "rules of the game". Women leaders in education need to find the leadership styles that, without denying its feminine origins, result in effectiveness. The redefinition of skills and characteristics of an effective school leader, following the current trends of organizational leadership, will help erase gender stereotypes and focus on desirable characteristics that candidates (men or women) bring to the position (Logan, 1998). Whatever the idealized view of educational leaders and despite calls for leaders who shape the fundamental culture, structure, and goals of educational organizations, stereotypes about leadership need to be challenged and addressed before educational training programs designed to promote women to the top will be successful.

Secondly in the context of industry, the components of invisible barriers that block women from the executive position are identified as failure to have their contribution recognized, not being taken seriously, isolated in their organization and seeing others promoted ahead of them (Mattis, 2000). Women's slow movement into senior management positions can be explained in three different ways (Gutek, 1993). They are structural barriers or discrimination, gender roles and stereotypes and individual differences or deficiencies. The structural barriers approach emphasizes that minority group members (basically women) encounter difficulties in adjusting to and fitting in with the majority culture (masculine culture). Gender role stereotypes have a major impact on selection and promotion procedures as well as on evaluation of managerial performance. The typical good manager is (still)

described in traditionally masculine terms (Schein and Mueller, 1992). The individual differences as the main reason for the paucity of the advancement of women into management, looks into the question of whether the stereotypes illustrated above are for real. Further, the male dominated culture and environment displayed by the construction industry put the women into difficulties to fit in with male colleagues work and social activities. The construction industry has a tradition of working long hours, including routinely working through weekends. There is a strong culture within the industry that working long hours demonstrates employment commitment (Sutherland and Davidson, 1993) and a lack of compliance with such cultural norms can adversely impact promotion prospects and even future job security. Site based employees, both professional and manual workers, are usually subject to changing work locations. This can involve traveling substantial distances or periods away from home, a situation which can present serious difficulties in terms of transport and child-care (Greckol, 1987 *cited in* Fielden et al, 2000). The construction industry fails to appreciate some of the issues associated with combining work and family commitment (Gale, 1994), and organizations tend to treat family and work as completely separate. Evetts (1993 *cited in* Fielden et al, 2000) found that many women in construction did not feel that management was an appropriate career for them because of the conflict between family and work commitments.

4.3   Discussion

The issues related to the under-representation of women in educational and executive leadership in construction and the reasons for that are presented in this chapter. Also, the leadership styles that are used in construction and the relationship between gender and leadership are also discussed in the previous chapter. Now the discussion mainly focuses on the women into leadership in construction by combining all these issues together so that the appropriateness of women in leadership position could be identified within the construction sector.

It is said although democratic participative style is not be the most effective for all situations, in most project environments, there is a strong preference for that style. It is also highlighted in the finding from the study by Trinidad and Normore that women adopt democratic and participative leadership styles in the corporate world and in education. From this it could be said that the women have the capability to manage the construction environment both the industry as well as the academia.

This democratic participative style can fall under the major category of 'transformational' leadership style. According to findings by Chan and Chan the building professionals use transformational leadership more frequently than transactional leadership in their work. Transformational leadership can augment transactional leadership to produce greater synergistic effects on the employees' work outcomes than either transformational or transactional leadership in isolation. However, transactional leadership cannot augment transformational leadership to the same extent. It is also revealed that the transformational leadership is the preferred leadership style used by women. The characteristics of transformational leadership relate to female values developed through socialization processes that include building relationships, communication, consensus building, power as influence, and working together for a common purpose. More specifically, many authors refer to transformational leadership as a feminine leadership style. However the barriers pertaining to construction, industry in particular, may be a big challenge for women to use the transformational leadership style towards their workers.

5   CONCLUSION

This research paper reviewed various literatures on 'women in construction', 'educational and executive leadership' and 'gender and leadership' in order to examine the leadership styles in construction associated with women.

From the literature survey it is revealed that women adopt democratic and participative leadership styles in the corporate world and in education. From this it could be said that the women have the capability to manage the construction environment both the industry as well as the academia. This democratic participative style can fall under the major category of 'transformational' leadership style which is the preferred leadership style used by women. The characteristics of transformational leadership relate to female values developed through socialization processes that include building relationships, communication, consensus building, power as influence, and working together for a common purpose. More specifically, many authors refer to transformational leadership as a feminine leadership style. However the barriers pertaining to construction, industry in particular, may be a big challenge for women to use the transformational leadership style towards their workers. Such barriers are one of the reasons behind the under-representation of women in senior management positions. In this regard this paper also identified some barriers faced by women in capturing the top most position in both construction industry and academic organizations. In the academic context socialisation and stereotyping could be said as the barriers for women seeking a senior position in education. Also some internal barriers such as one's lack of confidence, lack of competitiveness and fear of failure have been identified for women entry into educational leadership position. On the other hand in the industry context, the components of invisible barriers that block women from the executive position are identified as failure to have their contribution recognized, not being taken seriously, isolated in their organization and seeing others promoted ahead of them. The structural barriers or discrimination, gender roles and stereotypes and individual differences or deficiencies are also said to be the causes for women's slow movement into senior management positions.

This study will be a supportive resource to any reader interested in identifying the women's leadership qualities to manage the construction sector and in finding out the ways to remove the barriers of women's entry into managerial positions. Further it provides a good guidance to continue the research work, in particular, in the area of gender and leadership which could be considered as an under-theorised area.

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