**Female Management Styles in Sports Clubs**

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**Management/leadership Abstract 2010-092**

**June 4, 2010**

**25-minute oral presentation**

(White IBIS)

**Introduction**

Sport is commonly considered the domain of men (Knoppers, Meyer, Ewing, & Forrest, 1991). What, then, does it mean to have female leaders in sport organizations? This study intends to examine this question by analyzing the effects of the presence of women in leadership positions within sport organizations.

**Theoretical Framework: Male and Female Management Styles**

Scholars have devoted much research to examining the differences in management style between men and women (Harvard Business School, 1995). Certain attributes and approaches are typically assigned to the masculine, while others are perceived as feminine. These perspectives have evolved as the concept of gender and equality has transformed over time. Historically, the masculine traits of strength, independence, confidence, decisiveness, assertiveness, competitiveness and others have been viewed as positive attributes for effective leadership and management (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2007). By contrast, typically feminine traits such as passiveness, cooperation, and being emotional were seen as weaknesses (Ryan et al., 2007). Today, such rigid distinctions are fading. Effective management skills may include such feminine qualities as cooperation, nurturing, flexibility, and collaboration (Eagly, Johanesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Harvard Business School, 1995).

**State of the Art: Effectiveness of Male and Female Management Styles**

As stated, perspectives on effective leadership and management have evolved to include more feminine attributes. How effective are these female management styles? Females tend to organize, communicate, and lead differently. They focus on engagement, participation, and the process of communicating (Baldiga, 2005). This type of participative management is shown to improve employee satisfaction (Kim, 2002). Higher levels of employee satisfaction can significantly improve overall performance and productivity, while lowering turnover and absenteeism (Hewlett & Luce, 2005).

Within sport organizations, there is little research on the effectiveness of female and male management styles. We do know that women working in sports are often held to different standards. Women who adopt male toughness are often ostracized (Ryan et al., 2007) and women face greater social networking challenges than men in the sports industry (Cunningham & Sagas, 2008). But there is lack of research regarding the effectiveness of female leadership styles among sport organizations. Thus, this paper tries to highlight this question by analyzing nonprofit sports clubs in Germany.

**Method**

The analysis is based on data retrieved from the German Sport Club Panel. This survey was carried out by means of an online survey which was carried out from September to December 2007. Out of the 90,467 existent sports clubs in Germany, 37,206 sports clubs were invited via email to the survey. Altogether n=13,068 interviews could be realized, which equals a response rate of 35.1%.

Organizational effectiveness was measured as absence of organizational problems. In the questionnaire, sports clubs were asked a list of problems and they had to indicate the severity of every problem on a five-point scale. The use of female management styles was assumed if the club belongs to the highest quartile regarding its share of female board members. Linear regression analyses were carried with the severity of the problems as dependent variables (five-point scale) and the share of female members and female board members (1=sport club belongs to the highest quartile regarding the share of women) as independent dummy variables.
Results

A high proportion of female board members presents a protection element for numerous problems of the clubs' development. Thus, sports clubs with a high proportion of female board members show significantly fewer problems in the area of adherence/acquisition of members and coaches. Even problems of demographic change and finances seem smaller for sports clubs with a high proportion of female board members. These results are independent from the share of female members in the club.

Discussion

Female management styles seem to fit better to voluntary sport association than traditional male leadership styles. Sports clubs with a higher share of female board members show stronger results in crucial components of organizational effectiveness. However, as the study worked with proxy indicators for female leadership styles further research is required. Sport management programs should consider teaching more feminine management skills and leadership styles.

References


