

Analysis of Female Participation in Management Positions: Leadership Styles in Companies in the City of Loja, Ecuador

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Abstract

In order to achieve good results in business growth or career development, it's important to have a determined and appropriate leadership style. This article aims to describe and investigate whether there is a relationship between female participation in leadership positions and the leadership styles applied in companies in the city of Loja. A sample of 259 companies was taken, segmented according to their size, and a non-experimental, descriptive research was designed to identify fundamental characteristics of gender participation in companies, correlating two study variables: V1—Female gender has participation in leadership positions, and V2—What type of leadership is present in these positions. A correlational analysis was conducted with non-parametric tests, using the Chi-square statistical test to measure the relationship between the analysis variables. The results showed that male leaders tend to apply Autocratic, Charismatic, and Coaching leadership styles, while female leaders tend to apply Transactional and Transformational leadership styles, which allow for better career development and business growth. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a correlation between these study variables.

Keywords

Participation, Gender, Leadership, Leadership Styles, Companies

1. Introduction

Gender diversity (including men, women, and LGBTI individuals) is differentiated by emotional, affective, and intellectual characteristics that society attributes or considers as masculine or feminine, as this attribution is solidified through means such as education and individual preparation (Hendel, 2017). Gender is

also closely related to identity, but there are criteria for differentiating individuals based on their capabilities. It is important to note that this differentiation has nothing to do with the person's assigned sex at birth [Díaz \(2022\)](#), but rather with their personal expression, how they feel, how they perceive them-selves, and how they behave within society ([Panicello, 2022](#)).

In the business context, gender differentiation is not uncommon at all levels of an organization, where an equal opportunity framework is assumed to exist for all workers. This has shown to have a positive impact on achieving results and improving human talent management ([Andbank, 2020](#)). Particularly, the inclusion of women in leadership positions within organizations has experienced a significant increase in recent times, as there has been a greater presence of women studying business, economics, and industry-related careers. As a result, approximately 40% of global positions are now held by women ([Zabludovsky Kuper, 2015](#)).

According to Gómez Alma, when there is greater diversity in leadership levels, women can more easily access leadership positions, creating a more inclusive work environment. In fact, most companies where women are participants affirm that their earnings have grown from 10% to 15% due to gender inclusion. The average of women in leadership positions has increased in high-income countries (31%) and in medium-high-income countries (26.7%) ([Gómez, 2020](#)). The benefits of women leaders in companies are numerous and significant. For instance, in a study of 13,000 companies worldwide, three out of four private sector companies that include women in leadership positions have seen growth in their profits of 5% to 20%. The positive impact of female leadership is ideal; therefore, through the same study, an interview was conducted with national and international SMEs belonging to 70 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The study found that 54% of companies have experienced improvements in creativity and innovation, 57% indicate that women in leadership positions can promote the arrival of a new employee as well as the retention of existing ones, and finally, they improve corporate reputation and image ([GDI Uniformes, 2021](#)).

This research investigates the correlation between female participation and the leadership styles that companies have. To determine this correlation, two hypotheses were proposed: H0: There is no correlation between leadership style and female participation in leadership positions in companies in the city of Loja; and HA: There is a correlation between leadership style and female participation in leadership positions in companies in the city of Loja. To fulfill this purpose, four sections were executed. The first presents some theoretical references on gender, identity, leadership, leadership styles, characteristics of female leadership, and their importance today. The second section refers to the methodology used in conducting the research. The third section presents descriptive and correlational results of the study variables analyzed. Finally, the respective conclusions and recommendations are made.

1.1. What Is Leadership? Perspectives and Types

In the context of the ongoing changes in business relationships and innovation trends, the concept of leadership has been evolving rapidly in recent times. According to the *Aden Business Magazine* (2022), leadership is defined as “a set of skills that serve to guide and support a group of people. However, a leader is not only capable of influencing their group, but also providing innovative ideas and motivating each participant to bring out their best.” Pablo Orellana (2019a), on the other hand, emphasizes “the action of influencing a group of people with the aim of working together towards a purpose.” Similarly, according to Pérez (2021), leadership is “a set of skills that a person must possess to influence the thinking or behavior of others, motivating them to carry out their tasks efficiently.”

There are different perspectives on the definition of leadership, as there are numerous authors with a broad scope, building and improving the concept of leadership without losing sight of its main focus.

1.2. Types of Leadership

Pablo Orellana (2019b) defines leadership types as a set of attitudes, skills, and ways of leading work teams to achieve results in an organization with appropriate processes. Diego Villacorta (2019) mentions some current types of leadership that allow for better development in organizations:

Autocratic Leadership: A leader who makes their own decisions, with centralized ideas, assigning tasks or responsibilities as they arise.

Laissez-Faire Leadership: This type of leadership empowers employees, as their leaders give them almost all the authority. However, it is essential that this style be kept under control.

Transactional Leadership: A style in which employees receive a bonus for the work done by the manager. It is a leadership style that helps establish roles and responsibilities for each employee.

Transformational Leadership: Essentially, this is leadership in which employees are presented with goals in a week or month, but it is here that the leader motivates them to step out of their comfort zone.

Coaching Leadership: The leader tries to identify and nurture the individual strengths of each team member, focusing on strategies to achieve better performance in work teams.

Over time, authors with different perspectives have emerged. This is the case of Daniel (2017), who defines five types of leadership that will be conceptualized below:

Affiliative Leadership: This is a leadership style in which there is harmony among team members, basically focusing on collaboration.

Directive Leadership: Orders must be carried out immediately, and the leader delves into how employees should perform the assigned tasks to efficiently meet objectives.

Charismatic Leadership: A leader who expresses empathy and good treat-

ment towards others, and if they can maintain their position, they gain the respect of the group of people under their responsibility.

Coaching Leadership: Each member of the team sets goals that are achieved through their own effort and dedication, as they are responsible for discovering and researching how to achieve them.

Democratic Leadership: Their main objective is to create commitment among collaborators by assigning tasks and, at the same time, they have the ability to listen to the opinions of others.

1.3. Definition of Female Leadership

Female leadership is defined as the participation of women in different areas where they hold high positions, make decisions, lead work teams, and implement strategies, considering that they have a multitude of innate skills that allow them to face current prejudices (Universidad Internacional de Valencia, 2021).

1.4. Characteristics of Female Leadership

According to *World Visión* (2022) magazine, assuming a leadership role brings about a series of behavioral changes for women, as it presents an opportunity to lead a team where there is a real decision-making process that challenges the project at hand. Therefore, 5 characteristics of female leadership are highlighted, including:

- 1) Empathy and people orientation. Female leaders are highly committed to project goals, with a natural ability to socialize and establish personal and emotional bonds with their team.
- 2) Tendency towards cooperation. Women leaders encourage other team members to participate and accept their opinions or ideas.
- 3) Ability to act in many directions. They have an innate ability to make decisions and carry out multiple actions simultaneously.
- 4) Negotiation skills. Women leaders have a broad perspective, as they look beyond economic interests.
- 5) Greater predisposition to change. This characteristic is based on three elements: flexibility, communication, and persuasiveness, meaning that a woman with a more open mind towards new approaches.

1.5. Added Value Women Bring to Companies

From *Melchior's* (2016) perspective, he emphasizes that women make 80% of household purchasing decisions, which provides a broad overview of the value women generate within companies. Some of their contributions include being sincere when expressing their opinions, having a high level of influence in workgroups, promoting balance, and creating a healthy and harmonious environment. Similarly, *Cristina Navarrete* (2022) states that women can adapt to changing processes, which is essential for a company's success. Female leadership paves the way for a new business culture and style, ultimately reflecting a

different aspect in all areas of the company.

1.6. Importance of Female Leadership Today

Over time, the fight against workplace discrimination has led to the development of new corporate policies and organizational cultures. These changes aim not only to create a better structure but also to improve human relationships within companies, fostering a fairer and more equitable work environment for everyone involved (Santander, 2022). Furthermore, female leadership allows companies to be more profitable in the long run while projecting a more committed corporate image. Including women in leadership positions helps break down gender inequalities and greatly contributes to economic strengthening (World Visión, 2022).

2. Methodology

A non-experimental study was conducted, based on a descriptive analysis with a quantitative approach, complemented by a correlational scope of two variables with dichotomous questions to determine executive positions and leadership style. This helped define whether or not women have more participation in executive positions and the type of leadership most practiced in companies in the city of Loja.

2.1. Data and Sample

The present research was carried out during the second week of June 2022 in the city of Loja, Ecuador, which has a high percentage of business growth. The base information was obtained from the document provided by the Superintendence of Companies, which allowed access to the names of the companies. The study population targeted companies in the city, using a stratified probability sampling technique, with a sample of 259 companies classified according to the size of the business. The sample was divided into 5 large companies, 17 medium-sized companies, 53 small companies, and 184 micro-companies, selected by probability to guarantee the random selection of multiple homogeneous groups, ensuring that the sample was representative of the study population and reducing selection bias.

Data was collected through an instrument, a questionnaire and Google Forms, with dichotomous, closed, and multiple-choice questions to expedite the data collection process and facilitate rapid tabulation. In this case, the questionnaire was developed by the authors to adapt the questions and analysis variables to the reality of local businesses and specific research objectives. Moreover, by using their own questionnaire, the authors ensured that the questions were clear and precise, facilitating the collection and analysis of the data. Overall, the use of a questionnaire developed by the authors allows for greater control over the questions and analysis variables, contributing to the quality of the data collected.

2.2. Measurements and Indicators

Primary data sources were used to analyze percentages and frequencies based on the study's basic information, correlating two variables using Pearson's Chi-Square statistical test:

V1: Do women participate in executive positions?

V2: Which type of leadership is prevalent in executive positions?

This allowed for the development of the following research question:

Is there a correlation between the type of leadership and female participation in executive positions in companies in the city of Loja?

2.3. Research Hypotheses

H0: There is no correlation between the type of leadership and female participation in executive positions in companies in the city of Loja.

HA: There is a correlation between the type of leadership and female participation in executive positions in companies in the city of Loja.

To answer the two variables explained above, a correlational analysis of the non-parametric Pearson Chi-Square statistical test was developed, seeking a correlation between the elements of analysis through the two variables.

2.4. Operationalization of Variables

The present table, titled "Correlation factors", provides relevant information about the variables and analysis factors related to the correlation between leadership type and women's participation in managerial positions in companies in the city of Loja.

Table 1 presents the correlation factors that have been considered in relation to the proposed hypotheses. The first hypothesis posits the absence of correlation between leadership type and female participation in managerial positions in companies in the city of Loja. In this regard, various analysis factors are examined, such as planning, finance, marketing, production, human talent, and innovation and development (entrepreneurship), to determine if there is a direct relationship between women's participation and these aspects.

3. Results

In Tipán Luis' research, "Leadership Styles: A Gender Approach", he explains that there are numerous studies related to leadership styles that confirm women predominantly exhibit transformational leadership, while men tend to display transactional leadership (Tipán, 2019). These findings are similar to those presented by EAFIT University, which states that the predominant leadership style for both men and women in the manufacturing sector of SMEs in Cali is transformational. For example, in Central America, according to Del Valle, Santiago, & Lugo (2010) in their study "Gender comparison of leadership styles in a sample of managers in Puerto Rico," 44% of participants were women and 56% were

Table 1. Correlation factors.

Hypothesis	Variables	Analysis Factors
There is no correlation between leadership type and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja	Female gender has participation in management positions	Planning Finance Marketing Production Human Talent Innovation and Development (Entrepreneurship)
There is a correlation between leadership type and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja	What is the type of leadership present in management positions	Autocratic Leadership Democratic Leadership Charismatic Leadership Coaching Leadership Affiliative Leadership Directive Leadership Mentoring Leadership Laissez-faire Leadership Transactional Leadership Transformational Leadership

Note: Details of the correlation factors.

men. Upon comparing transformational, transactional, directive, participative, and laissez-faire leadership styles, it was observed that women use the directive leadership style (García et al., 2016). These data are close to the reality of Ecuador and the region and can be compared with the descriptive statistics of this study.

To characterize the companies in the city of Loja, we can describe them as businesses that, with a small difference, are led by women at a 47.5% participation rate between the ages of 25 to 34. These women are significantly involved in business growth and development to meet consumer needs. It is emphasized that both male and female genders have a significant presence in executive positions in companies, with the understanding that women exhibit greater empathy. A detailed description can be observed in the following **Table 2**.

In **Table 3**, multiple-choice questions were used to identify the leadership type and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja. The highest percentage according to the “female” gender was taken as a reference, and the results were descriptively presented in percentage terms. Female participation in the finance department was 67.6%, and in the human talent department, it was 63.7%. These two departments are where women perform best within the companies. Regarding the types of leadership applied, the following were found: democratic leadership at 58.8%, directive leadership at 54.0%, transactional leadership at 83.0%, and transformational leadership at 64.0%. These elements show a high degree of significance according to the female gender within companies in the city of Loja.

Table 2. Descriptive details.

	Segment	Count	%
Gender	Male	133	51.0%
	Female	122	47.0%
	LGBTI	4	2.0%
	Total	259	100.0%
Age	20 - 24	21	8.1%
	25 - 29	64	24.7%
	30 - 34	59	22.8%
	35 - 39	51	19.7%
	40 - 44	29	11.2%
	45 - 49	19	7.3%
	50 - 54	11	4.2%
	55+	5	1.9%
	Total	259	100.0%
What type of company do you currently lead?	Microenterprise	184	71.0%
	Small	53	20.5%
	Medium	17	6.6%
	Large	5	1.9%
	Total	259	100.0%
In the company you currently lead, which genders exist in leadership positions?	Male	37	14.3%
	Female	26	10.0%
	LGBTIQA+	1	0.4%
	Male, Female	186	71.8%
	Female, LGBTIQA+	1	0.4%
	Male, Female, LGBTIQA+	8	3.1%
	Total	259	100.0%
Is there a salary difference based on gender among leadership positions?	Yes	51	19.7%
	No	208	80.3%
	Total	259	100.0%
From your professional perspective, which gender do you think is more empathetic in performing their duties within each department of the company?	Male	63	24.0%
	Female	93	36.0%
	LGBTIQA+	2	1.0%
	Indifferent	101	39.0%
	Total	259	100.0%

Note: Data obtained from field research in companies in the city of Loja.

Table 3. Percentage analysis of leadership type and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja.

		Male	Female	LGBTIQA+	Total
Study Variable V1	Planning	72.2%	27.4%	0.4%	100.0%
	Finance	31.7%	67.6%	0.8%	100.0%
	Marketing	52.1%	46.3%	1.5%	100.0%
	Production	69.1%	30.1%	0.8%	100.0%
	Human Talent	35.5%	63.7%	0.8%	100.0%
	Innovation and Development	67.2%	31.7%	1.2%	100.0%
Study Variable V2	Autocratic Leadership	61.9%	38.1%	0.0%	100.0%
	Democratic Leadership	41.2%	58.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	Charismatic Leadership	58.6%	41.4%	0.0%	100.0%
	Coaching Leadership	62.0%	25.0%	12.5%	100.0%
	Affiliative Leadership	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Directive Leadership	41.0%	54.0%	4.0%	100.0%
	Mentoring Leadership	54.0%	40.0%	6.0%	100.0%
	Laissez-faire Leadership	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Transactional Leadership	17.0%	83.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Transformational Leadership	36.0%	64.0%	0.0%	100.0%	

Note: Data obtained from field research in companies in the city of Loja.

According to the descriptive context of this research, it is possible to determine the most notable study elements among the two analyzed variables. However, the primary objective is to determine whether there is a correlation between these two variables: the female gender's participation in management positions and the type of leadership present in management positions in companies. Therefore, a Pearson's Chi-square correlation analysis was conducted for these elements, where the cross of the two variables resulted in a moderate correlation, as shown in **Table 4**. To better understand this, let us recall the hypotheses posed for this research:

H0: There is no correlation between the type of leadership and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja.

HA: There is a correlation between the type of leadership and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja.

The null hypothesis (H0) states that there are no coincidences between the type of leadership and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja, while the alternative hypothesis (HA) suggests that there is such a connection.

Table 4. Chi-square test.

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Bilateral Significance
Planning			
Pearson Chi-square	61.294 ^a	16	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	18.642	16	0.288
Valid Cases	259		

a. 15 cells (55.6%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.00.

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Bilateral Significance
Finance			
Pearson Chi-square	38.858 ^a	16	0.001
Likelihood Ratio	20.193	16	0.212
Valid Cases	259		

a. 14 cells (51.9%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.01.

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Bilateral Significance
Marketing			
Pearson Chi-square	27.510 ^a	16	0.036
Likelihood Ratio	19.860	16	0.227
Valid Cases	259		

a. 13 cells (48.1%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.02.

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Bilateral Significance
Production			
Pearson Chi-square	41.630 ^a	16	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	22.030	16	0.142
Valid Cases	259		

a. 14 cells (51.9%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.01.

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Bilateral Significance
Human Talent			
Pearson Chi-square	67.851 ^a	16	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	49.906	16	0.000
Valid Cases	259		

a. 14 cells (51.9%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Bilateral Significance
Innovation and Development			
Pearson Chi-square	30.617 ^a	16	0.015
Likelihood Ratio	19.824	16	0.228
Valid Cases	259		

a. 14 cells (51.9%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.01.

Table 4 presents the results of the chi-square test for each of the functional areas assessed (planning, finance, marketing, production, human talent, and innovation and development). In each case, the value of the Pearson chi-square statistic, the number of degrees of freedom (df), and the asymptotic bilateral significance are reported.

The value of the Pearson chi-square statistic is used to assess whether there is any association between the two variables under study. In general, the larger the value of the chi-square statistic, the greater the evidence against the null hypothesis.

In this case, it is observed that for all the functional areas assessed, the value of the Pearson chi-square statistic is significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that there is evidence against the null hypothesis, and the idea that there are no coincidences between the type of leadership and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja can be rejected.

Therefore, the results of the chi-square test suggest that there is a connection between the type of leadership and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja in all the assessed functional areas. However, due to the aforementioned limitations, caution is recommended when interpreting the obtained results.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

This research allowed us to carry out a descriptive and correlational analysis with the non-parametric Pearson Chi-square statistical test, comprising two variables of analysis: gender participation (Male, Female, LGBTI), and types of leadership in management positions (Autocratic, Democratic, Charismatic, Coaching, Affiliative, Directive, Facilitative, Laissez-faire, Transactional, and Transformational).

The descriptive study provided important information regarding the characterization of companies in the city of Loja, with a higher contribution from women in managerial positions, as well as a younger contribution between the ages of 25 to 29 years, and a greater empathy in departments to develop activities on the part of women.

Table 3 presents the results of a study on the type of leadership and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja. The de-

scriptive results show that women have significant participation in the finance and human talent departments, with 67.6% and 63.7%, respectively. Regarding the type of leadership applied, transactional and transformational leadership are the most relevant for women, with 83.0% and 64.0%, respectively.

Table 4 presents the results of the chi-square test, which were obtained to determine if there is a coincidence between the type of leadership and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja. The results indicate that there is a moderate connection between these two variables. This means that there is a significant relationship between the type of leadership applied and female participation in management positions in companies in the city of Loja.

In conclusion, the research suggests that female participation in management positions of companies in the city of Loja is significant in the finance and human talent departments, and that transactional and transformational leadership are the most relevant for women. Additionally, a moderate relationship between the type of leadership and female participation in management positions was found.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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