

Full Length Research Paper

Gender differences in organizational strategy execution: A comparative study between female and male managers in obstacle management

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This paper investigates the differences faced by women and men regarding their abilities to manage obstacles inherent in the organizational strategy execution. A survey questionnaire was administered to 282 managers in order to study the five dimensions of the obstacles inherent in organizational strategy execution identified through a previous research which was designed to validate the set of obstacles faced by managers. We used principal component analysis to categorize the obstacle dimensions and then we used ANOVA to examine the link between dimensions of strategy execution and socio-demographic variables such as age, span of control, number of years in the organization. Past research produced significant gender differences with respect to the strategy execution of the organizational objectives of managers. It also disclosed many gender differences in the set of obstacles related to emotions, immediate action, rules, integrity and initiatives. In contrast with the literature, our first hypothesis that there would be a gender difference in terms of obstacles between female and male managers for the dimension of emotions was not supported. However, this study does show a significant gender difference regarding the obstacle dimensions of immediate action, initiatives and rules: this hypothesis was supported. The study modeled five obstacle dimensions in order to identify differences in practice between female and male managers. On an emotional level, women and men face the same problem-solving in organizational performance development, but for the other dimensions, their capacity to confront the obstacles is different. On a professional level, our study shows that women managers who have reached top management positions can perform as many men managers in terms of the implementation of clear and achievable objectives. At this stage, our model cannot be generalized and further studies that would better identify the causes underlying these differences in practice are needed. Additional work is required in order to be able to generalize our findings. This study proves its contribution by identifying a more refined set of specific obstacles for each facet of organizational strategy execution faced by women and men managers in the execution of their objectives.

Key words: Gender, strategy, management, organization, women, leadership, strategy execution, business.

INTRODUCTION

The research on gender in management has been interested in the differences in management obstacles faced by women and by men. According to several authors, women and men face different obstacles in their professional and work promotion towards top management positions (Linehan and Scullion, 2008;

Tonge, 2008; Ezzedeen et al., 2009; Altintas et al., 2008; Lamsa and Hiillos, 2008; Füsün and Murat, 2008). In this regard, the research on gender in management has identified several obstacles or barriers that women in managerial positions face. For instance (Tonge, 2008) has identified three types of obstacles faced by women in management - psychological, situational and social. It has been found that several factors are barriers to management work of women. Yeganeh (2011) investigated the effects of cultural values on the gender

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gap. Ezzedeen et al. (2009), who explored women's career/advancement and career/family balance, also found several obstacles faced by women in their strategies within work and family contexts. Obstacles faced by women in management have also been characterized (Linehan and Scullion, 2008) when searching for a mentor or an adequate network to accede to a top management position. Several authors have contributed to the literature on gender similarities and differences in leadership style and behaviour of managers (Vinnicombe and Cames, 1998; Phillips, 1995; Govender and Bayat, 1993; Cooper, 1992; Collard, 2001; Van Engen, Van der Leeden and Willemsen 2001; Burke and Collins, 2001; McColl Kennedy and Anderson, 2005).

However, very little research on gender management has examined specific factors of the various dimensions of strategy execution in the context of whether or not gender differences exist.

Research objectives

The objective of this research was to analyze the obstacles faced by women and men managers in the execution of their objectives. The two specific objectives of this research were the following:

1. Assess differences among female and male managers for the five dimensions of organizational strategy execution identified in previous research on managerial obstacles.
2. Assess empirically gender differences for socio-demographic variables within the framework of organizational strategy execution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature on management and on the Kolb model (1984) and subsequent empirical work by Richard and Sabourin (2009), Sabourin (2009), Ayandé and Sabourin (2010) has led us to support the existence of five dimensions implicit in strategy execution. We labelled these dimensions as follows: the dimensions of rules, emotions, initiatives, immediate action and integrity. In the following lines, we review the literature according to these five dimensions.

The rules dimension

The rules dimension can be defined as a strategy based

on a factual analysis of the situations in order to set up a more coherent and more rational system (Sabourin, 2009). According to Kolb (1984), this strategy has to do with the "abstract conceptualization". This strategy leads to the forming of concepts and formulation of generalizations which integrate the observations and the reflections. For instance, it leads to a "business model" resulting from analysis and rational reflection (Sabourin, 2009).

Self-efficacy positively predicts performance and personal goal-setting in complex decision-making procedures (Bandura and Wood, 1989; Cervone et al., 1991; Dickinson and Poling, 1996; Mitchell et al., 1994; Latham et al., 1996). If self-efficacy predicts performance, no task-specific overconfidence or underconfidence is present. If self-efficacy does not predict performance, some bias may be present. For example, research results show that self-efficacy may not predict performance in the early stages of a new task (Cervone and Wood, 1995; Stone, 1994). Several studies show, however, that self-efficacy becomes more accurate with task experience and objective performance feedback (Bandura and Jourden, 1991; Bandura and Schunk, 1981; Bandura and Wood, 1989; Wood et al., 1990).

Regarding the clarification of objectives, men report higher self-perceived ability than do women in the performance of complex tasks (Busch, 1995b), difficult tasks with uncertainty and few opportunities for feedback (Heilman, 1994; Lenney, 1977), and in financial decision-making (Barber and Odean, 2000; Barber and Odean, 2001; Biais et al., 2005; Gysler et al., 2002; Jones and Tullous, 2002; Prince, 1993).

Jones and Tullous (2002) discovered that male entrepreneurs reported higher confidence than female entrepreneurs in their ability to make financial decisions. Males' estimations of their need for financial consulting were lower than women's estimations. In reality, however, the male entrepreneurs were overconfident and required more actual assistance from financial consultants than did females.

Evidence suggests that men are more confident than women in complex financial decision-making. However, researchers have not reconciled whether women and men are accurate, overconfident or underconfident in their confidence estimations (Endres, 2008).

Regarding organizational rules Siebers (2009), argued that the lack of unequal access to career advancement and remuneration payment between ethnic majority and minority employees, shows that this inequality is partly due to the prevalence of post-bureaucratic methods of labour control, whereas minority members have an interest in bureaucratic forms of labour control.

The emotions dimension

This second dimension encompassing emotions has to do with commitment and the developing of employees' convictions in the context of strategy execution (Sabourin, 2009). This is what Kolb (1984) has labelled "reflexive observation". This strategy transformation can bring about commitment by clarifying the problems, reconciling the divergent points of view and establishing consensus. In the context of this strategy, the divergent and conflicting points of view are comfortably accepted.

Van der Boon (2003) indicated that research shows that women handle emotions and relationships differently than do men. Women's empathy and insight are receiving boardroom attention as companies realize that in an ever-globalising world these skills are indispensable.

In this dimension, a relevant topic is the emotional implication in the construction of network relations. For instance, in this regard, the authors have noted that although women and men share some barriers to networking, women practitioners perceived themselves as facing more than twice as many barriers as their male counterparts, which may increase their reluctance to engage in networking activities (Tonge, 2008). Jodyanne (2009) suggested that both women and men appeared similarly motivated by a combination of push and pull factors. Caldwell et al. (2009), investigated the main effects of differences among workers regarding gender in conjunction with relevant contextual factors that moderate these main effects on individuals' procedural justice judgments. Men are more likely than women to view change-related managerial actions as just, but this relationship is not significant if the organization has undergone shifts in power structures concurrent with the focal change.

The initiatives dimension

The initiatives dimension relies on the active experimentation of initiatives, realization of projects and continuous improvement of the existing activities (Sabourin, 2009). This is what Kolb (1984) called the process of "active experimentation". In this context, the hypotheses proposed in new circumstances are verified in real time projects. Results are obtained through an active experimentation of new methods. This strategy involves creativity and ideas supporting initiatives and their implementation. With such a strategy, decisions are made after feedback is obtained about the project. Armenakis et al. (2009) mentioned that one of the important factors related to organizational changes is the

active participation of the change recipient in the change effort. It was argued that the necessity to take initiatives depends in large-scale on our own needs of the time and interests we have for achieving the project (Jodyanne, 2009; O'Brien et al., 2010). Titus and Roger (2003) found that women managers delegate less than do their men counterparts, and showed no differences between their directive, consultative and participative leadership styles. Sarah et al. (2005) examined the impact of managerial gender on the subordinates they supervise, and showed that women with female supervisors also reported significantly higher levels of job autonomy and work absences than did women with male supervisors or men with either male or female supervisors. According to Bass (1990) and Bass and Stogdill (1990, 1991), women are less likely to practice management-by-exception, intervening only when something goes wrong. Women also typically temper criticism with positive feedback.

The immediate action dimension

Fourthly, the dimension of immediate action is carried out through immediate action and allows for immediate implementation on a small-scale level to obtain results quickly and which adjust on the basis of feedback (Sabourin, 2009). According to Kolb (1984), results are obtained by means of immediate action. There is an opportunity for fast decision-making without respect to an established plan. Interaction with the others is favoured only as far as it gives results quickly. This strategy is pragmatic and acts on the basis of the first obtained results. Armenakis et al. (2009) mentioned that a relevant topic is the assessment of reactions to organizational change. Thanos et al. (2011) explored the dynamics of network emergence that give rise to the outcomes of process improvement interventions. Davis et al. (2010) examined the effects of CEO gender on market orientation and performance (growth and profitability) among a sample of small and medium-size service businesses. They found that in a female-led service, the SMEs perform significantly better due to their stronger market orientation compared to those led by males. Jeanquart-Barone and Sekaran (1994) found that women had more trust in male than in female supervisors. While Valentine et al. (2002) noted that compared to those with male supervisors, both male and female employees who had women supervisors reported lower job responsibility and more intent to quit. Peters and Kabacoff (2002) suggested that women in executive roles tend to be as oriented to strategic thinking and as willing to take risks as men.

The integrity dimension

The dimension of integrity deals with the capacity to achieve objectives within the values and principles of the organization. Executing objectives in the context of integrity, this has to do with the capacity to achieve objectives without compromising the values and principles in the functioning of the organization.

Neal-Smith and Cockburn, (2009) mentioned that the capacity to innovate and to realize this performance is linked to the opportunity to produce a more inclusive culture in order to improve the working culture for women, and to appreciate the diversity that women bring to an organization. Beverly et al. (2008) argued that concepts of diversity and equality should be taken into account in the values and the processes with executing strategies or managing the organization with an idea to integrate the global and local socio-cultural and sociopolitical environment of the project: a real asset for organizational development priorities. Gill (2010) mentioned that if females are more ethical than males, as the literature on the subject generally suggests, engaging and encouraging females in their careers would certainly promote a more ethical environment. The findings provided evidence that female business students are more ethically predisposed than are their male counterparts. Females appear to demonstrate greater sensitivity when dealing with ethical issues. Manda and Myumi (2010) found that women managers face different value challenges than do men managers. They found that role conflict and certain features of the organizational work culture, particularly the management culture, which was generally perceived as strongly masculine, were the factors that contributed to delaying or avoiding accession to the post of headship in schools.

Gender in management, socio-demographic and degree of control factors in strategy execution

In the review of literature, few researchers have examined the role played by socio-demographic factors, such as age, tenure or span of control, to explain strategy execution.

Regarding variables such as the locus of control, Sturges et al. (2010), highlighted that women and men are shown to act in different ways, depending on the level of POS (perceived organizational support) that they receive, whereas POS encourages individuals with an internal locus of control to engage in internal career self-management behaviour, in line with the trait activation theory. POS moderates the relationship between both gender and locus of control, and internally focuses career

self-management behaviour, suggesting that it may send out a signal to certain employees about how supportive the organizational environment is toward career self-management.

Regarding gender differences in self-efficacy and confidence, the research indicates that men perceive their capability to be higher than women do in contexts such as mathematics (Ackerman et al., 2001; Betz and Hackett, 1983,1986; Hackett, 1985; Rammstedt and Rammsayer, 2002), computing and marketing knowledge (Busch et al., 1995a), complex computer tasks (Busch, 1995b), entrepreneurial action (Chen et al., 1998; Chowdhury and Endres, 2005; Scherer et al., 1990), and in cognitive ability (Furnham, 2005; Furnham et al., 2005; Rammstedt and Rammsayer, 2002).

In conclusion, the literature review on the gender management obstacle in relation with strategy execution brings out five main hypotheses:

H₁: There would be gender differences between managers in the obstacles to management regarding the emotions dimension: lack of commitment and form of resistance to change, of employees in the execution of their objectives.

H₂: There would be difference between female and male managers regarding obstacles connected to the immediate action dimensions: taking value added action and facing emergencies in the execution.

H₃: There would be gender difference between managers in the obstacles to management regarding the dimension initiatives: translating the objectives into concrete projects/empowerment.

H₄: There would be difference between female and male managers in the obstacles to management regarding the rules dimension: clarifying and aligning the objectives.

H₅: There would be gender difference between managers in the obstacles to management regarding the integrity dimension: executing with integrity in the scope of the organizational values and principles.

METHODOLOGY

This research is part of a broader research on managerial strategy execution and was conducted in four major steps.

Step 1: Empirical validation of the dimensions of our conceptual framework

1. Data were collected from managers through structured training in

the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Three regions of the world, namely, Europe, North America and Australia, were selected. A group of 168 respondents completed the questionnaire. The characteristic of the group lies in the fact that all respondents carry out their activities in the private sector. Their administrative position at the professional hierarchy of the company is between the status of middle managers and head of a department.

2. The measuring instrument (Kolb and Kolb, 2005) which is the "learning style inventory" was used since the initial variables were related to the modes of learning. We validated the questions during an executive seminar with three managers of the organization.

3. To ensure that each of the questions was properly understood, the validation was preceded by a pre-test which was conducted on 15 referees of the Belgian Management Training Association. All questions were suitably understood after adjustments were made to one of them in order to clarify its understanding by the respondents.

4. Descriptive analyses were completed to identify certain characteristics of the sample. A frequency analysis and the Cronbach Alpha test were completed. The results of R-square (degree of variance explained by the model) and factorial analyses were used to verify the hypotheses. As shown in Table 2, reference is made to the Cronbach alpha test, an indicator of reliability with a scale of measure between 0 (not reliable) and 1 (reliable).

5. Four of the five dimensions of our conceptual framework have been validated in previous research. The first four dimensions had a positive Cronbach alpha and the fifth dimension was added afterwards, subsequent to focus group feedback. Table 1 presents the concept definitions and the variances and reliability obtained in previous work (Richard and Sabourin, 2009).

Step 2: Focus groups to identify managerial obstacles

Twelve focus groups were conducted with an average of 15 managers per group to identify obstacles faced by managers. The obstacles identified were used as input to elaborate the measurement instrument related to obstacles.

Step 3: Development of a measurement instrument

We further developed an instrument, a tool to measure the role of the 25 obstacles that were identified by the focus groups. The questionnaire was administered and the questions were sequentially adjusted for five groups of approximately 25 managers per group. For each of the 25 variables (Table 2), the indications of intensity were measured by using a five-point Likert-type scale. All of the constructs were measured by using multi-item scales anchored by 1 (strongly agree) and 5 (strongly disagree).

Step 4: Surveys of managers to identify the five dimensions with principal components analysis (PCA)

Step 4 consisted of surveying a group of 282 managers. The participants were all managers and project managers with an information technology background and were in charge of supervising information technology projects. The group was selected to ensure the homogeneity of the respondents in terms of origins, tasks and functions.

Step 5: Data analysis

This study presents our findings regarding the principal component analysis and the socio-demographic variables. The PCA shows the obstacles dimension in order of importance. The socio-demographic variables reveal the correlations between the obstacles dimension. The results also revealed that 49% of those surveyed were male managers and 51% were female managers.

The reliability of our findings was examined in detail using the KMO and Bartlett's test (Table 3). In the KMO and Bartlett's sphericity's test results on the reliability of data sets, the KMO value of 0.905 was close to 1.0 and thus, very significant statistically. This adds good confidence and weightage to our PCA analysis.

To get a perspective of the five dimensions that regroup the 25 variables of our conceptual framework, the principal component analysis (PCA) was employed using SPSS analysis tools. The raw scores were standardized to allow a uniform unbiased distribution of all variables. The correlation matrix was derived and the eigenvalues of these variables drawn from the matrix were used for multivariate principal component extractions. The first five significant principal components with a cut-off of >1.0 were selected.

Table 4 shows that more than 63.46% of the total variance was attributed to these five principal components. From 25 observations, only 17 were taken into account after the PCA. The most important obstacle that both women and men must deal with initially is the emotions dimension, followed by immediate action, rules, initiatives and incidental integrity. For each observation, we have the mean, standard deviation, communalities, and finally the weight. The components are classified (Table 4) by their loading, eigenvalues, total percentage of the explained variance, and the cumulative percentage of the explained variance. If the principal component analysis allows us to identify the weight of each dimension in terms of barriers and its importance in the obstacles management, it also allows us to determine the weight and the importance of each observation that composes the dimensional obstacles.

The PCA (Table 4) shows the dimensions, in order of importance, which are classified as follows: the emotions dimension (getting a commitment to the objectives), the immediate action dimension (value added actions and dealing with urgent matters), the rules dimension (clarifying and aligning the objectives), the initiatives dimension (translating the objectives into projects), and finally, the integrity dimension (executing within the integrity of values and principles).

Step 6: Findings

ANOVA analysis of gender differences

The ANOVA analysis aims to verify the existence of differences between the gender (female and male) variable and the variables of the number of years as an employee (Nyae), number of years in the position (Nytp), keeping control (Contrl), capacity to succeed (Success), time lost in management (Tme) and performance improvement (Pmv). For each group of variables cited above, an analysis was performed in order to examine

Table1. Concepts and definitions.

Concept definitions	Variances and reliability
Rules (abstract conceptualization): theoretical conceptualization by means of rules, postulates and models to systematize information.	Variance explained: 53.5% Alpha of Cronbach: 0.799
Emotions (reflexive observation): problem recognition and capacity to develop convictions and to get commitment.	Variance explained: 60 % Alpha of Cronbach: 0.831
Initiatives (active experimentation): select a model to test its possible consequences. Learn by trying, finding new ways to put new ideas into practice. Support initiatives to responsabilize employees.	Variance explained: 53% Alpha of Cronbach 0.8
Immediate action: oriented action that is immediate and concrete. Action oriented towards direct contacts and apprehension rather than comprehension. Quick adjustments resulting from feedback.	Variance explained: 52.6% Alpha of Cronbach: 0.740
Integrity: ability to meet organizational objectives respecting the integrity of the mission. Active and deliberate construction of the organizational values into the structure of the organization's everyday actions.	Not applicable

Table 2. Description of measurement questions in the dimensions.

Obstacle	Dimensions and variables	Measurement-questions
	Dimension of rules	
Obs ₁	V1- Lack of clarity in expected results	The actual results I am expected to achieve with my manager and my organization are not clear.
Obs ₂	V2- Too much emphasis on financial and compliance rules	We have goals to meet financial expectations and have established rules to be followed, but no goals have been established to improve customer services.
Obs ₃	V3- Lack of understanding of the results to be achieved by employees	Even though they were informed, my employees do not clearly comprehend the results to be achieved..
Obs ₄	V4- Lack of clear expectations of other departments	The expectations of other departments are not often clear.
Obs ₅	V5- Lack of procedural clarity for the rewards	I notice that many issues I deal with involve costs that the organization pays little attention to.

Table 2. Contd.

	Dimension of emotions	
Obs ₆	V6- Lack of commitment to established goals by employees ("buy-in")	My employees do not contribute to my goals (do not "buy-in").
Obs ₇	V7- Lack of awareness of the importance of objectives by employees.	My employees are not fully aware of the importance of my objectives.
Obs ₈	V8- Lack of motivation on behalf of employees to outdo themselves in achieving goals	My employees are not very motivated to outdo themselves to achieve my goals.
Obs ₉	V9- Lack of trust among employees	There is a lack of trust among my employees.
Obs ₁₀	V10- Lack of clarity among team members	There are team members who complain that we are not always fair.
	Dimension of initiatives	
Obs ₁₁	V11- Lack of accountability for their actions by employees	My employees are not generally held accountable for their actions.
Obs ₁₂	V12 Lack of willingness and capability of employees to take initiatives.	My employees are not entirely able and willing to take initiatives.
Obs ₁₃	V13- Lack of autonomy of employees	When I am absent, my team members are not able to address problems on their own.
Obs ₁₄	V14- Lack of sense of initiative and improvement implementation of employees	Initiatives are not often undertaken because there is a tendency to leave things as they are.
Obs ₁₅	V15 - Lack of team coherence and common objectives/ Measurement-question	We represent a group of individuals rather than work as a team with clear, common goals
	Dimension of immediate action	
Obs ₁₆	V16- Difficulty planning for and dealing with emergencies	We have difficulty planning for and dealing with emergencies.

Table 2. Contd.

Obs ₁₇	V17- Too many emergencies and last-minute requests	We handle too many emergencies and last-minute requests.
Obs ₁₈	V18- Urgent issues unresolved without finding durable solutions	Urgent issues go unresolved without ever finding durable solutions.
Obs ₁₉	V19- Difficulty creating profitable action plans with long-term results	We have difficulty creating profitable action plans with long-term results.
Obs ₂₀	V20- Too many meetings and non-productive activities with no concrete action taken	We hold too many meetings and non-productive activities with no concrete action taken.
Dimension of integrity		
Obs ₂₁	V21- Lack of shared organizational values	At times, I don't think we all share the same values in my organization.
Obs ₂₂	V22- Lack of process compliance	When under pressure, we do not always follow the procedures and work methods.
Obs ₂₃	V23- Gap between personal and organizational values	Sometimes, I notice differences between my values and the values of the organization.
Obs ₂₄	V24- Lack of focus on building the organization's reputation	Sometimes, in my work, I don't feel I am actively working towards building the organization's reputation.
Obs ₂₅	V25- Sense of obligation	Employees do not all seem to have a sense of obligation.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		0.905
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approximate Chi-square	2873.131
	df	190
	Significance	0.000

Table 4. Obstacles output summary by PCA Model.

Obstacle	Mean	Standard deviation	Communalities		Components				
			Initial	Extraction	Emotions	Immediate action	Rules	Initiatives	Integrity
Obs ₇	3.75	0.967	1.000	0.786	0.859				
Obs ₆	3.9	0.894	1.000	0.784	0.821				
Obs ₉	4.06	0.893	1.000	0.665	0.753				
Obs ₈	3.57	1.035	1.000	0.681	0.685				
Obs ₁₀	3.52	1.142	1.000	0.439	0.509				
Obs ₁₈	3.01	1.208	1.000	0.777		0.831			
Obs ₁₇	2.54	1.243	1.000	0.695		0.82			
Obs ₁₉	2.97	1.106	1.000	0.671		0.735			
Obs ₁₆	3.20	1.139	1.000	0.622		0.705			
Obs ₂₀	3.15	1.231	1.000	0.508		0.61			
Obs ₄	3.28	1.082	1.000	0.595			0.727		
Obs ₁	3.63	1.131	1.000	0.511			0.694		
Obs ₂	3.80	1.140	1.000	0.516			0.682		
Obs ₃	3.63	0.972	1.000	0.539			0.645		
Obs ₅	3.14	1.248	1.000	0.467			0.546		
Obs ₁₂	3.06	1.118	1.000	0.686				0.787	
Obs ₁₃	3.91	0.971	1.000	0.664				0.763	
Obs ₁₁	3.68	1.082	1.000	0.679				0.665	
Obs ₁₄	3.30	1.119	1.000	0.536				0.587	
Obs ₂₁	2.81	1.156	1.000	0.652					0.687
Obs ₂₃	3.24	1.134	1.000	0.748					0.841
Obs ₂₄	3.70	1.108	1.000	0.573					0.613
Eigenvalues					7.511	2.282	1.799	1.196	1.175
% Variance explained					34.139	10.373	8.177	5.437	5.343
Cumulative % variance explained					34.139	44.512	52.689	58.126	63.469

the difference in terms of mean scores and in terms of the five dimensions of obstacles.

As a result of the PCA analysis, we conducted an ANOVA analysis to determine which variables are correlated. However, prior to ANOVA, it is necessary to test our research hypotheses.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Based on the five obstacle dimensions of our conceptual model (Table 4) and connected to our previous literature review showing the research findings of several authors that emphasized

gender differences in management, we retained the following research hypotheses:

H₀: "There are no significant gender differences in the sample of managers surveyed". In that case H₀ should be accepted: the level of significance

= $p > 0.05$.

H₁: There are differences between female and male managers in the obstacles regarding the emotions dimension: lack of commitment and resistance to change by employees in the execution of their objectives.

H₂: There are differences between female and male managers in the obstacles regarding the immediate action dimension: in taking value added action and facing emergencies in execution.

H₃: There are differences between female and male managers in the obstacles regarding the rules dimension: in clarifying and aligning the objectives.

H₄: There are differences between female and male managers in the obstacles regarding the taking of initiatives dimension: in translating objectives into concrete projects and empowerment.

H₅: There are differences between female and male managers in the obstacles regarding the integrity dimension: in executing with the values and norms predefined by the organization.

The test of hypotheses will be conducted by an ANOVA analysis. This also allows the validation of the null hypothesis H₀: "there are no significant gender differences in the sample of managers surveyed". In that case, H₀ should be accepted, significance = $p > 0.05$; in the case where H₀ should be rejected, this would imply that there is a significant level of gender difference between the sample group and therefore, significance = $p < 0.05$.

Part A. The dimension of organizational strategy execution regarding obstacles

This first part presents our findings for each of the five dimensions previously identified by our PCA analysis. These findings are presented below by dimension and order of importance.

The Component₁: Obstacles of the emotions dimension

The Component₁ explains 34.1% of the internal variance and screens an eigenvalue of 7.51 (Table 4). A higher loading of variables from the emotions dimension marks the importance of this Component₁. This dimension addresses reflexive observations such as: problem recognition and capacity to develop convictions and to get commitment. As shown in Table 4, it should be noted that the emotions dimension is the most important

obstacle present when managers must fulfill their organizational goals. These variables concern Obs₇, Obs₆, Obs₉, Obs₈ and Obs₁₀ (Table 4). The variable Obs₇: lack of awareness of the importance of managers' objectives accounts for the highest factor loading with 0.859. The variable Obs₆: lack of commitment to established goals by employees is the second factor loading with 0.821. The variable Obs₉: lack of trust among employees is the fourth factor in terms of loading with 0.753. The variable Obs₈: lack of motivation of employees to outdo themselves in achieving goals is the fifth factor with a loading of 0.685. The variable Obs₁₀: lack of clarity among members represents the sixth factor loading with 0.509.

Component₂: Obstacles of the immediate action dimension

Immediate action related variables are the second set of obstacles that managers have to deal with in strategy management execution. The Component₂ explains 10.3% of the internal variance with an eigenvalue of 2.28 (Table 4). This Component₂ represents the second dimension in terms of importance. The immediate action dimension concerns the Obs₁₈, Obs₁₇, Obs₁₉, Obs₁₆, and Obs₂₀ (Table 4). These are defined as taking immediate action to respond to urgent matters or to take value added actions. The variable Obs₁₈: urgent issues unresolved without finding durable solutions, accounts for the highest factor loading with 0.831. The Obs₁₇: Too many emergencies and last-minute requests accounts the second factor loading with 0.820. The variable Obs₁₉: difficulty creating profitable action plans with long-term results represents the third factor loading with 0.735. The variable Obs₁₆: difficulty planning for and dealing with emergencies is the fourth factor loading with 0.705. The variable Obs₂₀: too many meetings and non-productive activities with no concrete action taken is the fifth factor loading with 0.610.

Component₃: Obstacles of the rules dimension

The Component₃ explains 8.1% of the internal variance with an eigenvalue of 1.79. This signifies that variables related to rules are the third set of obstacles that managers have to deal with in strategy management execution. The Component₃ takes into account the variable related to the Rules dimension and concerns: Obs₄, Obs₁, Obs₂, Obs₃ and Obs₅ (Table 4). The Obs₄: lack of clear expectations of other departments has the highest factor loading with 0.727. The variable Obs₁: lack of clarity in expected results represents the second factor loading with 0.694. The variable Obs₂: Too much emphasis on financial and compliance rules is the third factor loading with 0.682. The variable Obs₃: lack of

understanding of the results to be achieved by employees is the fourth factor loading with 0.645. The variable Obs₅: lack of clarity in the procedure of rewards is the fifth factor loading with 0.546.

Component₄: Obstacles of the initiatives dimension

The fourth important set of obstacles that managers faced in the execution of their organizational objectives are inherent to the taking of initiatives. The Component₄ represents 5.437% of the internal variance with an eigenvalue of 1.19. The Component₄ is connected to the Initiatives dimension and is defined as translating objectives into concrete projects. The Component₄ takes into account the variable related to taking initiatives, and concerns Obs₁₂, Obs₁₃, Obs₁₁, and Obs₁₄ (Table 2). The variable Obs₁₂: lack of willingness and capability of employees to take initiatives has the highest factor loading with 0.787. The variable Obs₁₃: lack of autonomy of employees represents the second factor loading with 0.763. The variable Obs₁₁: lack of accountability by employees for their actions is the third factor loading with 0.665. The variable Obs₁₄: lack of sense of initiative and improvements implemented by employees is the fourth factor loading with 0.587.

Component₅: Obstacles of the integrity dimension

The Component₅ explains 5.34 % of the internal variance with an eigenvalue of 1.17. The dimension of integrity is the least important set of obstacles that female and male managers have to face when executing their strategic objectives. The Component₅ is related to obstacles that are connected to Integrity. This dimension was defined as executing tasks within the Integrity of the values and principles of the organization. The Component₅ takes into account the variable related to Integrity and concerns Obs₂₁, Obs₂₃, and Obs₂₄ (Table 2). The variable Obs₂₁: lack of shared organizational values has the highest factor loading with 0.687. The variable Obs₂₃: gap between personal and organizational values represents the second factor loading with 0.841. The variable Obs₂₄: lack of focus on building the organization's reputation is the third factor loading with 0.613.

Part B. Gender differences and socio-demographic variables of strategy execution regarding obstacles

This study presents our findings for the set of socio-demographic variables which are: number of years as an

employee (Nyae), number of years in the position (Nytp), keeping control (Control), capacity to success (Success), time lost in management (Tme) and performance improvement (Pmv). In order of importance, the dimension for which the largest number of gender differences was recorded regarding strategy execution was the immediate action dimension followed by the Initiatives dimension, the rules dimension and finally, the integrity dimension for which we found no difference with regard to the five obstacle dimensions. The differences that were identified between female and male managers are primarily derived from the comparison of means after analysis of the variance (ANOVA). Thus, we found the some differences for each dimension as shown in Table 5

The emotions dimension

Interestingly enough, not a single difference was found between female and male managers with respect to the dimension of emotions (making a commitment to your objectives). It is extraordinary that the F value = 0.58 and the level of significance = 0.81 is greater than 0.05 (Table 5). Therefore, in terms of the obstacles related to emotions, no significant level of difference between females and males was determined.

The immediate action dimension

The managers' attitude towards their ability to cope with urgent actions oriented towards direct contacts and apprehension rather than comprehension, showed differences in management practices and in achieving their organizational goals. We found five significant results.

1. The capacity of the managers to deal with immediate action obstacles is linked to the variable (Nytp). Once female and male managers acted upon their objectives, the results show that they did not behave identically to the obstacles they faced in their management. These differences are highlighted across the variable gender and the variable Nytp. There is a significant level of correlation which allows concluding that there is a link between immediate action taken by female and male managers and the Nytp. We noted an F value = 4.139 and a level of significance = 0.043 (Table 5). The mean scores show this difference which is higher for men (mean (M) = 0.089, standard deviation (SD) = 0.953) than for women (M = -0.077, SD = 1.055). This suggests that women face fewer obstacles for Immediate Action in relation to Nytp. Accordingly, the more their careers

Table 5. Summary ANOVA and gender difference in management of obstacles.

Components	Means		Standard deviation		F-value	Significance
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Component₁ emotions						
Gender	0.015	-0.008	1.000	1.010	0.58	0.81
Component₂ immediate action						
Nytp	0.089	-0.077	0.953	1.055	0.139	0.043*
Time lost	0.075	-0.082	0.961	1.051	0.198	0.000*
Performance	0.077	-0.062	0.947	1.055	0.923	0.025*
Control	0.089	-0.079	0.953	1.052	0.578	0.000*
Success	0.089	-0.079	0.953	1.052	0.978	0.009*
Component₃ rules						
Nytp	-0.074	0.085	0.990	1.024	0.971	0.008*
Time lost	-0.060	0.076	0.990	1.025	0.664	0.001*
Component₄ taking initiatives						
Nyae	-0.649	0.118	1.013	0.986	0.349	0.012*
Gender	-0.649	0.118	1.013	0.986	0.867	0.05*
Success	-0.064	0.134	1.013	0.985	0.953	0.027*
Component₅ integrity						
Gender	0.048	0.000	0.938	1.035	0.031	0.86

* Significance level of difference: significance < 0.05 or significance = 0.

progress and they gain experience in their position, female managers cope better with Immediate Action obstacles than do their male counterparts.

2. When female and male managers implemented immediate actions for organizational performance development, we noted differences in Tme: the time devoted for the development of efficient measures to cope with the emergency. Indeed, the results showed that men have higher Tme than do women in the context of the implementation of immediate action in the company. Our findings indicate an F value = 20.315 and a level of significance = 0.000. This allows us to conclude that there is a relationship between the variables of Gender and Tme. The mean scores reveal for women (M = -0.082 and SD = 1.051) a better score than for men (M = 0.075 and SD = 0.961) (Table 5). This result shows that male managers met more obstacles in the implementation of actions with the aim of performing, and this is emphasized by their higher mean (M= 0.075). Thus, male managers lost more time in the implementation of emergency operations. Accordingly,

female managers wasted less time than men managers in terms of immediate action obstacles, and this is emphasized by their lower mean (M = -0.082). In conclusion, women were more efficient than men in their immediate action operational stage within the organizational framework.

3. Through the survey results, we noted that female managers encountered fewer difficulties in implementing measures to improve the performance of their organization. There is a linkage between the variables Pmv and Component₂ (immediate action dimension). This relationship is highlighted by an F value = 1.923 and a level of Significance = 0.025. The mean scores for men (M = 0.077; SD = 0.947) and for women (M = -0.062; SD = 1.055) are shown in Table 5. Due to the high mean (M= 0.077), men met more obstacles coming from the immediate action dimension than did women in terms of performance improvement. The lower mean (M= -0.062), leads us to conclude that women performed better than did men in developing skills to reduce the obstacles to an immediate action operational stage within the

organizational framework.

4. Female and male managers do not have the same capabilities of process control when it comes to the implementation of immediate actions. This is highlighted by an F value = 9.578; a level of Significance = 0.000. In terms of control, the female managers obtained a better score than did male managers. Respectively, the mean scores are revealed for women (M = -0.079, SD = 1.052) and for men (M = 0.089, SD = 0.953) in Table 5. Accordingly, women managers (M = -0.079) demonstrated a better capacity than did men managers (M = 0.089) in the controlling process and immediate action obstacles.

5. In terms of considering that their success resulted from "being lucky", women also achieved a better means score. Female and male managers have different perceptions of their success through the implementation of immediate action in urgent situations. There is a linkage between the variables gender and success: this is highlighted by an F value = 3.978 and a level of significance = 0.009. Respectively, it has been noted for women (M = -0.079, SD = 1.052) and for men (M = 0.089, SD = 0.953) in Table 5. Female managers did not consider that their success resulted merely from an external factor such as luck. In conclusion, women considered more so than men managers that their success was linked to their capacity to master management practices.

The rules dimension

This dimension is defined as a strategy based on factual analysis of the situation to set up a more coherent and more rational system. Our ANOVA analysis highlights two specific findings for the rules dimension:

1. The female managers face more obstacles than do male managers in the implementation and respect of the standards and current regulations. It is highlighted by the correlation between the variable Nytp and the Component₃ (obstacles related to rules), which shows an F value = 4.971 and a level of significance = 0.008; that is a noteworthy level of linkage with obstacles related to the Rules dimension (Table 5). This implies that according to our findings men obtain (M = -0.074 and SD = 0.990), a better means score than the women (M = 0.085 and SD = 1.024). Male managers face fewer obstacles compared to women regarding the dimension of rules when they have more experience in their managerial position. On the contrary, female managers met more obstacles in the observance of rules as they pursued their path toward a management position.

2. By referring to the management obstacles that are bound to the compliance of regulations, priorities and clarification of objectives, we found that female managers lost much more time than did male managers in connection with the execution of organizational strategies. In reality, women lost much more time in implementing and enforcing standards that were applicable in their organizations in order to achieve the goals that were set. This is highlighted by, the correlation between the Component₃ (the rules dimension) and the variable Tme. This linkage is characterized by an F value = 5.664, and a level of significance = 0.001. The mean scores revealed for male managers are (M = -0.074, SD = 0.0990), and for female managers (M = 0.064, SD = 1.025) (Table 5). Male managers achieved a better score because of the lower mean they screen in terms of Rules obstacles related to Tme. Female managers faced more difficulties because of their higher mean and they needed more time per day than male managers to implement the rules dimension in order to clarify and align their objectives in the organization.

The initiatives dimension

The ability of managers to take initiatives (Component₄) reveals differences in practice between females and males. Taking initiatives is characterized by the aspects related to the selection of a model and the testing of its consequences: learning by trying, finding new way to put new ideas into practice. Thus, we noted that the male managers surveyed had a better mean score than did the female managers.

1. Initially, we observed through the results that women managers have experienced more obstacles than men managers in taking initiatives within their respective organizations. This is highlighted by an F value = 3.867 and a level of significance = 0.05. The results show that with a growing Nyae, female managers faced more obstacles than male managers in taking initiatives within their respective organizations. This is emphasized by an F value = 6.349 and a level of significance = 0.012. The mean scores were higher for women (M = 0.118, SD = 0.986) than for men (M = -0.649, SD = 1.013) (Table 5). The capacity of the managers to deal with the obstacles related to taking initiatives is linked to the Nyae. In the two sample groups, women demonstrated lower capacities to implement initiatives.

2. Female and male managers have different perceptions of their success through the implementation of initiatives. In terms of considering whether their success resulted from being lucky, men achieved better mean scores than

women. This is highlighted by an F value = 4.953, and a level of significance = 0.027. The mean scores for men (M = -0.064, SD = 1.013) and for women (M = 0.134, SD = 0.985), are shown in Table 5. Male managers obtained a better score in terms of success in the management of obstacles. Men managers consider their success in the context of taking initiatives as being linked to luck.

The integrity dimension

The integrity dimension concerns the ability to meet organizational objectives actively respecting the institutional values and the mission. This component did not show a correlation between female and male managers. This is highlighted by an F value = 0.031 and a level of significance = 0.86 (Table 5). In conclusion, female and male managers did not show differences regarding the obstacles which are bound to the Integrity dimension.

DISCUSSION

Table 5 shows that 3 out of 5 hypotheses were supported by the comparative study between female and male managers in the scope of organizational strategy execution.

H₁: There are gender differences between female and male managers when executing their objectives with respect to the emotions dimension obstacles such as lack of commitment and resistance to change by employees.

Although Van Der Boon (2003) notes in his research that women and men handle their emotions differently; this assertion appears inconsistent with the results of our study which found no difference between female managers and male managers, when facing the emotional challenges associated with managing their businesses. Our hypothesis was rejected. We found no gender differences between female and male managers with regards to the emotions dimension in the obstacles they face as managers. The rejection of this hypothesis supports the assertion of Jodyanne (2009), that both women and men appeared similarly motivated by a combination of push and pull factors.

H₂: There are differences between female and male managers in the obstacles regarding the "immediate action" dimension: taking value added action and facing emergencies in the course of execution.

There are several authors who reinforce our hypothesis

that there are differences between women and men. As pointed out by Davis et al. (2010) through their study that highlights differences between women and men managers in the implementation of growth strategies and market development to promote their businesses, female-led firms were slightly better than their male-led counterparts in translating market performance into financial performance. Sarah et al. (2005) emphasized in their study, that not only should we not expect large differences in behaviour between supervisory level women and men in organizations with strong managerial role expectations, but that even small differences, when they recur over time, can accumulate to produce significant impacts. Our study also found gender differences among female and male managers regarding the immediate action dimension. The study found significant differences in terms of Nytp, Tme, performance improvement, Control and Success when female and male managers had to deal with urgent situations. Our hypothesis was supported.

H₃: There are differences between female and male managers in the obstacles regarding the "rules" dimension: clarifying and aligning the objectives.

Several authors highlighted some differences between female managers and male managers regarding the formulation of concepts and of generalizations which integrate the observations and reflections (John and Tullous, 2002; Endres, 2008; Bandura and Wood, 1989). According to Sean et al. (2009), women are generally more ethical than are men. Being a woman was related to increased ethical judgment, being a woman and older was associated with increased ethical intention, and being a woman and a supervisor was related to a higher level of altruism. The assertion made by the aforementioned authors appears to be consistent with the findings of our study, which showed gender differences among female and male managers regarding the rules dimension. This study found significant differences in terms of Nytp and Tme when female and male managers had to deal with priorities, clarification and alignment of objectives. Our hypothesis was supported.

H₄: There are differences between female and male managers in the obstacles regarding the taking of initiatives dimension: translating objectives into concrete projects and empowerment.

Our hypothesis was supported and appeared consistent with the findings of many authors. For example, Sarah et al. (2005) suggested that women and men often possess differences in managerial style,

that if present, could have some effect on subordinates' work experiences and related outcomes if the necessity to take initiatives depends on personal needs of time and interest needed for achieving the project (Jodyanne, 2009). This could result in differences in approaches, methods and motives for launching change within their organizations, for both female managers and male managers, Bass (1990) and Bass and Stogdill (1990, 1991); Rosener, 1990; Phillips, 1995).

We found gender differences between female and male managers regarding the taking of initiatives dimension. This study found significant differences in terms of Nyae, Gender and Success when female and male managers had to deal with translating objectives into concrete projects and empowerment.

H₅: There are differences between female and male managers in the obstacles regarding the "integrity dimension": executing according to values and norms predefined by the organization.

Our hypothesis was rejected. We found no gender differences between female and male managers regarding the Integrity dimension, when female and male managers had to comply with the standards and regulations of their organizations. This is unlike the results obtained by the studies of Neal-Smith and Cockburn (2009), Beverly et al. (2008) which reaffirmed the importance for an organization to take into account all the characteristics that are related to ethnic diversity and gender mainstreaming in the workplace. It is important to note that the lack of adequate measures for the implementation of such programs to promote gender and diversity in the workplace can seriously hinder the ability of a manager to flatten out organizational obstacles. According to Gill (2010), promoting female executives would provide an opportunity for an organization to gain a higher sense of ethical issues.

Among all the different dimensions, the dimensions for which the largest number of gender differences regarding strategy execution was found were for immediate action, initiatives and the rules dimension.

Gender differences regarding the obstacles of immediate action dimension

We found four significant results for this dimension.

1. Women face fewer obstacles regarding immediate action than do men in relation to Nytp. This implies that men perceive managerial obstacles related to immediate action as more important than do women who have more senior.

2. A contribution would be to show that, men would encounter more obstacles related to the immediate action dimension in terms of time management and number of minutes lost per day because of these obstacles. Men face a larger number of obstacles than do women in relation with factors such as the incapacity to take value added actions, and the number of real and false emergencies.

3. Another contribution related to immediate action is that men perceive these obstacles as more significant on the performance assessment of their organizations. Men discern more than do women that obstacles related to the inability to take immediate action would have a greater impact on the organizational performance.

4. With regard to this dimension, women have a better focus on control than do men. In a consistent manner, women attribute less to luck and more to their own behaviour and to a lack of control those obstacles related to immediate action.

5. Another contribution related to immediate action is that women managers see their success as a set of events or as a planned program of activities fairly well intertwined and made compatible, whilst male managers often think that success is more a matter of luck.

Gender difference regarding the obstacles of initiatives dimension

The second most important dimension related to gender difference is the initiatives dimension, which suggests three critical gender differences:

1. For the initiatives dimension, women faced more obstacles than did men regarding the initiatives taken. This means that female managers face more obstacles based on factors such as the lack of empowerment, and employees' sense of responsibility.

2. We found that female managers with substantial years of experience as an employee of the organization (Nyae) took more initiatives than their male colleagues with the same number of years of experience in the organization.

3. Regarding the Initiatives dimension, we found that female managers have less control on the obstacles related to the taking of initiatives than do male managers. Indeed, female managers demonstrated a lower degree of control than did men in their ability to take initiatives while executing their organizational objectives.

Gender difference regarding the obstacles of the rules dimension

For the rules dimension, our research put into perspective

three specific contributions:

1. Regarding the rules for clarity and alignment with organizational objectives, women faced more obstacles than did men. This implies that obstacles that are related to compliance with informal and formal rules in the organization represented a large part of the efforts that women managers had to deploy. Conversely, men managers did not experience more obstacles than did women in the process of respectfully following organizational rules.
2. Another contribution regarding the rules dimension is highlighted by the fact that female managers with several years of experience in a management position (Nytp) significantly perceive more obstacles than do men, with the same number of years of experience in a management position. This results in more challenging attitudes among female managers than male managers in the implementation of standards and in compliance with rules and procedures. Indeed, the more experience the women had in their jobs, the more obstacles they had met in following the organizational rules of their businesses.
3. Consistently, our findings also show that the degree of control of female managers is lower than that of male managers. Female managers perceive themselves as less capable than men in controlling the obstacles related to the rules dimension.

Implications for management

Our research has implications for the career management of both women and men. It shows that a specific focus should be placed on the obstacles male managers have had to deal with. Even if this study emphasized many gender differences, it did not elucidate why male managers encountered more obstacles related to immediate action. Then, in the case of female managers, a specific focus should be put on the obstacles that are related to initiatives and rules. Our research has implications for social action in relation to the complex subject matter of gender equality. For instance, an organizational context in which women are discriminated against could hinder their efforts to perform and to accede to top management positions. Our research has implications for economic action in order to promote diversity and gender mainstreaming. Our research also has implications for managerial action, in the sense that it will always be beneficial to an organization to have different sensibilities and approaches to problem-solving expressed within its framework in order to promote participative management.

As some authors have argued, the differences noted in the ability to manage the obstacles in each category do not mean that one manager is better than another. This skill which should be developed by both women and men managers to assist them in overcoming the obstacles they face in connection with the execution of organizational strategy, extends far beyond mere observation. This dissimilarity calls for another more insidious reality and reveals more than ever, that the business environment, the trajectory of the manager and the psycho-sociological aspects are factors which can deeply influence the behaviour of these managers in overcoming obstacles. Indeed, in light of the results of this study, we wonder whether the companies surveyed had implemented programs to promote diversity and gender equality. However, it should be noted that the social composition of team-managers or team-projects can sometimes be a hindrance to the woman or man who is responsible for leading its employees. As stressed by Manda and Myuni (2010), women and men managers face a different psycho-sociological challenge when the concerns deal with conflictual situations.

Limitations and further research

There are some limitations to this research mainly because it was completed using an OECD sample. More research to be done in other countries is necessary in order to augment the external validity of the survey findings. However, what seems essential to internalize in light of the results of this study is to avoid focusing simply on the weaknesses of female or male managers. Such a wider scope would allow us to clearly identify differences which, as such, do not hold too much importance when attempting to unearth the real causes. It thus represents an important limitation to the development of further research, but there is also another issue, one that would integrate other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and psycho-sociology, so as to grasp the real reasons behind these great differences in the flattening out of obstacles that hinder the implementation of corporate strategy.

Conclusion

This study is focused on the differences between female and male managers related to strategy execution and organizational performance. We compared the importance of each of the five dimensions of obstacles associated with gender, Nyae, Nytp, Tme, Success, Control, and performance improvement. Taken as a

whole, our findings suggest that, for both women and men, there are some differences associated with the dimensions of emotions, immediate action, rules and initiatives, even if the related obstacles are present in multiple levels so as to develop and promote female and male leadership of execution skills. It is imperative to study more in-depth obstacles faced by female and male managers in order to better understand how the obstacles they face represent an impediment to the development of their competencies and the advancement of their careers. Our research also suggests there is a significant level of gender differences between women and men regarding the obstacles they encounter in matters related to the execution of strategies. These gender differences would be correlated for the factors such as the initiatives (empowerment), immediate action (quick adjustments resulting from feedback) and rules (conceptualizing and formalizing information). However, in contrast with the literature review, our research did not find gender differences for obstacles related to emotions. Furthermore, no gender differences were found for the dimension of integrity. Beyond these differences in the implementation of strategies, it is important to highlight the business environment or the evolutionary context of the company and its ability to integrate new female and male managers. It is in this context that the development of mentoring programs to promote diversity and gender equality within an organization may be an essential asset to better manage obstacles that women and men managers confront. Finally, when the working conditions accord women and men managers the same performance opportunities, it follows that most of the obstacles encountered will focus more on the operational aspects rather than on the organizational or unwritten business rules, which would be an advantage over a clearly defined category of managers.

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