



## Original Article

# How Can the Embodiment of Women Leadership Alter the Stereotypically Masculine Schema for Leadership?

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**Abstract:** Nowadays, the perception of leadership is different from the traditional one that used to align to agentic characteristics. However, from the top of mind, people normally think about masculine characteristics when referring to the concept of leadership. This can be so disadvantageous for female leaders in that they can be trapped in the line between two perspectives: one of their natural characteristics and one that is suitable for stereotypical definitions of leadership. By in-depth interview with nine women in top management positions in (partly) private sectors in Vietnam, the study aims to explore how the embodiment of female leadership can change the stereotypically masculine schema for leadership. An emerging finding is that women do not try to manifest their appearance and competency as recommended in theory. Instead, they embody their leadership by bringing happiness to others, by helping others to achieve high results and making others satisfied in their life and work. More importantly, they build up their followership with sincere hearts, which is relevant to the female instincts of caring, and nurturing and with their natural skills and warm hearts. Accordingly, this leads to a recommendation that women in leadership should not blur their natural characteristics. Instead, they should consider their distinctive strengths for their further development.

*Keywords:* Embodiment, women leadership, stereotype, masculine.

## 1. Introduction

There is a view that in any Western or Eastern country of the world, females normally are underrepresented in comparison to males, especially in male-dominated sectors such as in science, technology, engineering and

manufacturing (STEM) [1]. Fortunately, this trend seems to be outdated. The more society develops, the more gender imbalance is addressed by the issuing of policies and regulations as well as some legal organizations being established to protect female rights [2]. However, gender imbalance improvement is somehow a hindrance. On the one hand, the community continues to announce slogans to protect women; on the other hand, elsewhere in

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society, gender discrimination toward females exists as a norm.

Females who are leaders have to face a lot of barriers to enjoy the freedom of career development. Stereotypical gender perceptions could be the first and foremost barrier to females enjoying this freedom of career development [3, 4]. Women are often thought to be inappropriate for leadership and management positions due to their communal characteristics, whereas, men are perceived to possess more agentic traits that are often associated with successful management and leadership [5-8]. It is assumed with these gender stereotypes that women don't have enough attributes associated with management and this has become an impediment for women's career advancement. In the same vein, when referring to leader concepts, "think leader, think male" is regarded as the "glass ceiling" phenomenon [9-13] and "think trouble, think female" as the "glass-cliff" phenomenon [14, 15]. The attitude "think professor, think male" [16] and "think vice-chancellor, think male" [17] makes women more likely to meet disapproval than men when occupying leadership positions [18, 19]. Moreover, this situation seems to be more severe with the increasingly high proportion of male leaders in male-dominated sectors, compared to the gradual increase of females in female-dominated sectors. This phenomenon is called the "glass escalator" [10]. Additionally, female leaders also manage some contradictions in organizational contexts as well as balancing their responsibilities as a wife, and a mother in the family context [20].

To address those obstacles, female leaders have struggled to find effective ways to illustrate their leadership styles. Some females choose body image and competency as symbols to illustrate their leadership style [21, 22]. Others may choose any of the following, which are all effective ways to illustrate their leadership properly: facial attractiveness [22], characteristic autobiographies [23], narratives and storytelling [24-26], media representation of personal values and personal journeys to

leadership, and presentation of models of women leaders or family stories [23].

Unfortunately, even though with many efforts, female leaders are still trapped in a labyrinth to confirm their leadership effectiveness. When women leaders perform in accordance with their gender identity, they are seen as being types of servants or victim leaders, and subsequently, they are labeled as narcissistic [27]. By contrast, if their behaviors are masculine, they can be labeled with negative images like "dragon lady", "battle-axe", "honorary men" or "flawed women" [28]. Accordingly, women are considered less effective when they are in male-dominated settings or leadership roles that are defined as more masculine [29].

So, what is the right way for female leaders? It should be understood that the importance is not to define which characteristic of identity of female leaders is relevant to confirm their leadership effectiveness. By contrast, the key role here is to justify what women leaders should do to change stereotypical perceptions and definitions of leadership. This paper is designed to explore how the embodiment of female leadership can alter the stereotypically masculine schema for leadership.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Female leadership and some barriers to the stereotypically masculine schema for leadership

Some scholars have defined the main differences in the perspectives of male and female leadership styles. And most researches have revealed that female leaders tend to be people orientated, meanwhile, male leaders almost always are task orientated.

According to Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt [30], transformational leadership constructs are recorded as having a higher score by women leaders than male leaders, especially constructs such as individualized consideration. Transactional and laissez-faire leadership are associated with men leaders. In another

research by Young [31], the study also concluded that females adopt transformational leadership styles more often than men, especially with a high score of individualized consideration. In addition, in the publication of "Ways women lead" in the Harvard Business Review by Rosener [32], the researcher argued that women often were limited in having equal access to formal power, therefore they tend to generate their personal power, influence, and teamwork in leading other people. And some later researches also contended that women in their leadership tend to apply a transformational style more than men with democratic behaviors and social skills. In addition, women also place emphasis on maintaining effective working relationships, on value cooperation, and responsibility to others while dedicating to achieve outcomes that address the concerns of all parties involved. Besides, in 1991, the International Women's Forum conducted a survey and discovered that male supervisors tend to adopt a transactional leadership style. Female supervisors, on the other hand, tend to use a transformational leadership style with many efforts to interact with subordinates, involve employees in decision-making, sharing authority, exchanging information, at the same time respecting employees' self-value and encouraging employees to love their jobs [33].

When comparing leadership effectiveness, some researches show the contribution of feminine traits in leadership. Bass and Avolio [34] indicated that using transformational leadership has a positive effect on the performance of an individual, of a group, and of an organization. Morgan [35] also remarked that organizations shaped by male value systems emphasize logical, linear modes of thought and action, and drive for productivity at the cost of networking and community building. On the other hand, organizations that are shaped by female value systems tend to "balance and integrate the rational-analytic mode with values that emphasize more empathic, intuitive, organic forms of behavior". According to Arnold, Connelly [36], a transformational leadership style significantly and positively

facilitated the relevancy between employees' internal emotions and their feelings in a given situation. Thus, if women have some advantages to become transformational, they can make a good contribution to creating a belief in employees that is a vital characteristic in increasing the competitive labour market nowadays to retain talents. Recently, the topic of authentic leadership has dramatically attracted the attention of scholars in organizational and business ethics literature. Avolio, Gardner [37] defined authentic leaders as "those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character". In some aspects, authentic leadership can be considered as a more advanced definition of transformational, serving and spiritual leadership. However, the key distinction is that authentic leaders have a deep sense of self and know how they should behave in specific situations. This perception can incorporate transformational and ethical leadership [37]. Recent research of Liu, Cutcher [38] asserts that authenticity construction is aligned to gender norms perceived by leaders. This attribute of authenticity is an iterative constitution between embodied gendered leadership and its context. From the above arguments it could be interpreted that transformational and authentic leadership styles are congruent with females' gendered traits as well as perceived norms in the community..

With some kinds of typical leadership styles mentioned above, female leaders are considered as emotional in their leading. This could be a potential reason leading to the situation where females face challenges in recruitment, training and development opportunities, and career advancement [29, 39-44]. In terms of career development, women still have chances in middle levels of management, but continue to be underrepresented in top executive positions

[5, 6, 14, 45, 46]. Although women increasingly participate in the workforce, they are mainly found in lower organizational ranks or work in flat careers as healthcare or teaching professionals [47]. If they want to develop further, they may need to address such main obstacles as family obligations, working time constraints, gender stereotypes and attitudes in the society (Gender, female and family study - Science and Society Publication). Obstacles for women's career development have been conceptualized by some by "glass" metaphors. Initially, when referring to leader concepts, "think leader, think male" is first quoted, which is called the "glass ceiling" phenomena [9-13]. However, in some difficult situations, females are normally referred to as "think trouble, think female". Indeed, women leaders also suffer from the "glass-cliff" phenomena, in which they are granted leadership roles when their organizations are experiencing a declining life-cycle period, in a crisis, or when almost bankrupt [14, 15]. Besides, when occupying leadership positions, women likely encounter more disapproval than men due to perceived gender role violations [18, 19].

## 2.2. Embodiment of female leadership

According to the Social Identity Theory of leadership, prototypicality becomes an increasingly powerful determinant of effective social influence and of effective leadership as people more strongly define themselves (self-categorize) in terms of group membership (social identity), rather than in terms of individuality, idiosyncrasy, or interpersonal relationships (personal identity) [48]. Accordingly, leader schema should be congruent to organizational prototypicality, which could result in leadership influence. Regarding female leadership effectiveness, Yoder [49] stated two basic principles to achieve that end. Firstly, a female should not adopt a command-and-control style that relies on having and using a higher status. Instead,

each woman should talk and listen extensively with subordinates, avoid dominant speech acts, use humor to lighten tense exchanges, and be respectful of others. In the same vein, the research of Liu, Cutcher [38] contends that female leaders managing in male-dominated sectors wanting to be considered as effective and authentic leaders, should perform with the expected norms for a female such as: nurturing, caring, being outgoing and communal. Conversely, another research asserts when women leaders perform as expected of their gender identity, they appear to be types of servants or victim leaders, and subsequently they are labeled as narcissistic [27]. Secondly, female leaders should adjust their behaviors according to group orientation rather than applying their own ones. To take the case of female leadership in traditional sectors for males with masculine-oriented behaviors as an example, female leaders also need to change their behaviors to align with sector characteristics. However, if their behaviors are seen as masculine, they can be labeled with negative images like "dragon lady", "battle-axe", "honorary men" or "flawed women" [28]. Accordingly, women are considered less effective when they are in male-dominated settings or leadership roles that are defined as more masculine [29]. As a result, female leaders are trapped in many perspectives of their relevant behaviors, which could be one of the main reasons why females frequently lack confidence in doing their granted responsibilities (Gender, female and family study - Science and Society Publication).

In order to address those obstacles, female leaders have struggled to find effective ways to illustrate their leadership styles. Some females choose body image as the symbol to illustrate their leadership styles and competencies [21, 22]. Facial attractiveness [22], characteristic autobiographies [23], narratives and storytelling [24-26], media representation of personal values and personal journeys to leadership, and presentation of a model of women leaders or family stories [23] and the

like are all effective ways to illustrate their leadership properly.

Women have to develop other tools to display their virtue and trustworthiness, such as unrelenting hard work and self-sacrifice to promote the wellbeing of others. Tuyen [50] contended that men did business through “relationships”; however, women cannot do that, they need to cultivate their prestige and trust just because they are women.

### *2.3. Review of gender statement in Vietnam*

Like some other Eastern countries, Vietnamese culture has been affected by Confucian ideology for a long time, especially in leadership and management opportunities for women. Confucianism drove females with three main obligations “Three principles”, “Three obediences”, and “Four Virtues” [51]. Those principles align females to many family obligations, look down on their ability, and make it impossible for them to join any social activities or freely develop their strengths and careers further. In contrast, it’s obvious that females can do what males do, and can achieve what males can achieve. In the case of Vietnam, females invaluablely contributed greatly to the success of Vietnam in the wartime when they were called the “Long hair army”, and were encouraged by President Ho Chi Minh in “eight golden Vietnamese words” published in March 1965: “Heroic, Indomitable, Faithful and Responsible”, and acknowledged by a number of prestigious awards, of which the highest is the “Heroic Vietnamese Mother” [52]. However, with the war gone, everything became stable, and many females refused to leave their development tracks and come back to their traditional family roles. When they became leaders, they could not do some things as male leaders can do due to some principles existing for females in the (post) Confucianism context. For example, if women were to wine and dine their prospective business partners, they would lose rather than gain “prestige”. They cannot as easily call on family metaphors to meld their corporate leadership with the moral authority of the patriarchy.

In Confucian ideology, women are regarded as “mean people” and “unable to be well-educated”. As a result, in the Feudalism empire, women were not allowed to go to school or to work. Also, they could not join Governmental Boards and take managerial positions. This was an ideology to hamper women’s career development. They were bound to family responsibilities. They were also required to show their fidelity and decorum. It’s said that women who are decisive, strong, and dedicated to career advancement, can be regarded as aggressive and an unfortunate issue for their family. Before the time of French domination, there were some first schools to allow women to go to, and to then join labour market after their graduation.

Gradually, Vietnam is being seen as a country to facilitate women’s development. Vietnam is ranked at 128/187 countries in terms of the HDI - Human Development Index. Meanwhile, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) is ranked at 3/11 in the ASEAN countries. Accordingly, Vietnam is limited in terms of the HDI compared to other countries in the world, but Vietnam is pretty good in the GII compared to other countries in the ASEAN area (Human development report 2011, UNDP). Although the position of women in Vietnamese society has been positively justified with many opportunities, they are still facing many threats. The top-of-mind challenge is Vietnam’s societal ideology as a barrier to women’s development. Even though Vietnam has issued many policies and regulations to facilitate women’s participation in management, the full effectiveness is still under expectation. The main problem is the recognition of women’s contribution and policy implementation, in which, gender stereotypes and gender inequality still are a hinder in managerial practices in Vietnam (Vietnam’s well-educated women in industrialization and modernization, 2016).

From this initial review, the main objective of this research is to explore how women embody their leadership to overcome gendered cultural norms, specifically with a stereotypically masculine schema for leadership.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

In-depth interviews with nine female leaders in various industries were conducted to collect information. All of them are CEOs with the highest power of decision-making in their organizations. All companies in this research are in the private sectors. Among these companies, two companies are partly state-owned with limited shares. The others are 100% private companies. The interview

locations were determined by the participants. Five interviews were conducted in the company's office, two in private family homes, and one in a cafeteria. The age range of respondents was 35 to 60 with a median age of 40. One women leader is from the Financing and Banking sector, three from Manufacturing, one from Education, two from Retailing, one from Advertising and Promoting, and one from Social enterprise. The list of participants is as follows:

Table 1. List of research participants

No.	Name	Position	Company	Industry
1	Nguyen Thanh Giang	CEO	Purpose Group	Advertising and promoting
2	Tran Phuong Lan	CEO	Vin University	Education
3	Bui Thi Thanh Huong	Chief of Finance Office	TPBank	Finance and banking
4	Nguyen Tra My	Deputy President	Pan Group	Manufacturing
5	Vu Thi Thuan	President	Traphaco Co.	Manufacturing
6	Tran Kim Lien	President	Vinaseed Co.	Manufacturing
7	Tran Mai Hoa	CEO	Vin Retail Co.	Retail
8	Pham Bach Diep	CEO	FPT Retail Co.	Retail
9	Tu Thi Thu Hien	Founder and CEO	WISE Co.	Social enterprise

#### 3.2. Data collection

As per the guidelines delineating three sections of the interview protocol, the interviews comprised the following: introductory questions, main topic questions, and reflection questions [53], and a semi-structured interview schedule consisted of three main parts too. The first part of the questions was to make a demographic introduction. The second part was to investigate the interviewees' working experience, and to let them talk about their career advancement as well as their troubles or the contradictions they were facing. The last part was to investigate their most interesting memories in order to check their perception in terms of which were the biggest contradictions and how they overcame those contradictions. Probing questions were used during the interview to encourage participants to share their opinions more deeply and to

clarify their perceptions. The full content of all interviews was tape-recorded. Interviews were from 45 minutes to 2 hours and the average duration was one hour and 20 minutes. All of the female leaders were ready to share their names and their experiences in my research. As said, interviews were tape-recorded to allow uninterrupted data gathering and to facilitate accurate information.

#### 3.3. Data analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is used in this research to illuminate the experiences of the female leaders. This method allowed the gathering of in-depth information and perceptions via interviews, discussions, and participant observations. This method was also suitable for this research because the topic under investigation is under-researched with complex issues of female leaders' psychology

and challenges in their leadership. In addition, the sample of the research was small, with nine female leaders, which is relevant to the principle of IPA that the method should be for a small sample of from six to fifteen participants [54]. By this method, the paper attempts to make sense of the subjective meanings of the experiences of the female leaders. From that, the research can conclude challenges women leaders are facing and methods used to manage those barriers.

Based on the suggested process of IPA, the paper presents four main steps of data analysis as follows. The first stage is that the transcript is read a number of times to let the author become as familiar as possible with the account. In other words, in the first stage, the author involves a free textual analysis. In the second stage, similar ideas are combined to document emerging theme titles. The third stage involves a more analytical or theoretical ordering, the author tries to make sense of the connections between themes which are emerging. Some of the themes will cluster together, and some may emerge as superordinate concepts. The next stage is to produce a table of the themes, ordered coherently. Thus, the above process will have identified some clusters of themes, which capture most strongly the respondent's concerns on this particular topic. The clusters are themselves given a name and represent the superordinate themes.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Identity paradox

The first emerging issue is the contradiction between the different female interviewees' appearance and their competencies. Ms. Tra My shared that most people think of her as "long legs" as "short mindset". Previously, she was misunderstood as a secretary, now, she is a CEO. That is due to her beauty.

*I see that Miss Universal also has some interesting characteristics. She is currently so beautiful thanks to her contribution in her*

*previous life. Also, some of Miss Universal's qualities are intelligence as well as being active. However, some are so unethical as to talk about beauty.*

Ms. Huong contended that male partners don't directly tell their opinions; however, she can recognize them through their attitudes and reactions.

*Yes, sometimes, males don't tell their opinions directly, but via their attitude, and eye contact, I can recognize some things. It's also typical with the person who I meet for the first time. I was assigned with a difficult task, for example, a male colleague saw me, and I knew it could be a trouble and actually, I could not finish the deal for the first time. He might think females like me cannot solve such problems which he thinks could be solved by males only. He thinks females should have not joined the company and females obviously are not capable.*

Ms. Hien also shared more ideas that in many cases, females should be very intelligent and stand up and raise their voice. The main reason is that females usually are aligned to such specific characteristics as beautiful, young, happy, talkative, which makes it difficult for female leaders to develop their businesses. Otherwise, it's so hard for females to join in the conversation among males. Ms. Huong said that females are thought of as symbols of weakness and emotion. Hence, females are considered to have some limitations. Ms. Hien said that sometimes male partners illustrated their attitude toward gender unconsciously, and she knew they had constructive feedbacks; however, their constructive statements still illustrates their imbalanced points of view on gender.

*We (the company) are going to celebrate its 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary. Many partners have sent us congratulations. And the first thing in their mind is that my company name is a wife, is a beauty. Our partners also agree that they would support new enterprises with female leaders; however, they hardly mention specific plans, each of their supports is so general that we cannot know how to proceed.*

The next paradox is the conflict between self-identification and career development offered. Participants argued that females cannot share family responsibilities equally with their husbands, but they can find many other kinds of support. Ms. Hien said that:

*It's impossible that wives require husbands to share 50/50 housework. If they want to be free from housework and dedicate themselves to their professional tasks, they should be active to find other backup plans.*

Ms. Huong asserted that she's still not ready to take a CEO position of a bank even though she had received some proposals. The main reason is that she saw some troubles, some potential possibilities that could affect her current safety and force her to trade off her family. Ms. Huong states that:

*When females are trapped in troublesome situations, they usually think about their children, as is their instinct. That's why they never take risks and never trade-off their family to their promotion chances. It can be seen that almost all issues in finance and banking sectors normally resulted from male, not female leaders. For me, I'm not ready to take over high and risky positions because I can estimate there may be very negative possibilities.*

#### 4.2. Getting motivation from creating happiness and development for other people

The first way is to make your life and work imbalanced, with the right choice in the short-term and balanced in the long-term. All of the nine female leaders said that there was no balance in their life and work; however, they didn't mind; they thought it was obvious that this was the situation. For them, it would be a choice, an arrangement and a goal-setting in one specific time. Once they set objectives, they would try to finish. They agreed that in some periods of time, they ignored their families and were dedicated to their work. And in some periods, they came back to their families, took care of their children before promotion in their careers. Obviously, after that time, females

need to try more many times to recover their positions or their pace of work.

The second way is to train the next subordinate generation. The updated Maslow's Needs Hierarchy in 2010 argued that the highest level is transcendence. Accordingly, a leader wants to gain influence, and it is vital to build up in-group subordinates by supporting them to improve their work and life benefits. In addition, a leader can sharpen personal relations by including subordinates' families, children, and wife/husbands. As a result, subordinates can feel committed and engaged in organizations and the leader.

The third way is to bring benefits and fun to other people. Female leaders feel successful when they bring about benefits for their companies and other stakeholders. Interviewees really were eager to tell stories where they were used to make their stakeholders happy. Participants affirmed that they were so interested in what makes other related people satisfied. In addition, they also feel sad when their stakeholders suffer from troubles. This could be considered as the social impacts of leadership.

The fourth way is to build up trust by doing everything with result orientation. According to female leaders' opinions, trust could help them gain influence with other people. However, there is a significant difference between male and female leaders in increasing trust. Male leaders can use their strong and assertive attitude. However, this seems to be impossible for women leaders. Participants claimed that if they want to gain other's trust, they need to somehow create achievements. In other words, their working style should be result-oriented.

The fifth way is to maintain their resilience in any situation. Participants contended that in order to overcome all challenges as mentioned above, they should sharpen their resilience, try to do things again and again and ignore every potential attitude that damages their motivation. Ms. Huong said that in some cases, male partners refused to work with her sensitively; however, she did not give up, and she used to

propose matters until male partners accepted to cooperate with her. Obviously, her proposals needed to be relevant and acceptable. Ms. Giang repeated many times that female leaders need to overcome their inferiority, to illustrate their intelligence and raise their voice. In addition, Ms. Diep said that female leaders should not stick to doing business in the way a man does, such as having a beer, eating dinner out and the like. Female leaders should clarify the exact demands of customers and find the way to satisfy them, rather than pay more attention to where to go for dinner or to drink beer with partners. In order to do that, female leaders need to enhance their resilience, Ms. Diep stated.

## **5. Discussion**

Normally, females are considered as symbols of beauty, of love and of happiness. Some people said that females were born in order to make life happier and more beautiful. Accordingly, female leaders usually are required to be neat and tidy. Besides, there are still some thoughts that beautiful women are for looking at, not for work, due to their limited competencies. Accordingly, some controversial ideas are raised that women can promote their career path thanks to their relatives or having sex with the person who can make final decisions. In some cases, female leaders in general, and beautiful ones specifically, are considered as less effective compared to males, especially in such special aspects as law, finance and banking which are stereotypically considered as sectors for male leaders. Meanwhile, based on some theories about the embodiment of female leadership, appearance and competencies are good ways to illustrate female leadership [21, 22]. However, in the context of Vietnam, as a post Confucianism country, they seem not to be so sufficient due to some principles of Feudalism and Confucianism. Hence, female leaders in those contexts should not try to use their appearance or competency as recommended. Instead, they should embody their leadership by bringing

happiness for others, helping others to achieve high results, and making others satisfied in their life and work. More importantly, they should build up their followership with their sincere hearts, which is relevant to female instincts of caring, nurturing with their natural skills and with warm hearts. Accordingly, it turns out to be obvious that female leaders should not blur their natural characteristics; instead, they should consider their distinctive strengths for further development.

Many scholars proved that nowadays, females suffer less from high family responsibilities than in the past. They are not bound to the view that they themselves take care of their family. Instead, they can choose other kinds of service support. As a result, females experience more career opportunities. However, there are still some females who cannot overcome their own thoughts and want to come back to their social roles as mother and wife in their families. In some cases, they gain experience and achieve some achievements in their careers. And they think that's enough, and that it is the time to come back to their family after refusing to gain higher professional positions. In addition, with characteristics of carefulness and risk avoidance and in situations in which female leaders cannot be sure about the possibility of new positions, they normally refuse to take over. It could be seen that these circumstances are an explanation for new potential approaches to the concept of the "glass ceiling". The "glass ceiling" was coined to describe the often subtle, but very real, barriers that women face as they try to climb the organizational hierarchy [15]. The main reasons to argue for the glass ceiling concept are that many females face gender discrimination in recruitment, promotion and other career opportunity development. Contrary to glass ceiling concepts, based on the data collected as mentioned above, female leaders contended that some females refused newly higher positions because (1) they cannot overcome their own thoughts binding them to traditional social responsibilities, and (2) they don't accept risky opportunities owing to their

natural female characteristics. In other words, they voluntarily withdraw without any requirements. In order to overcome this contradiction, female leaders choose to experience an imbalance in the short-term, resulting in a balance in the long-term. In other words, they can more highly focus on work/family in the short-term and this scheme can be automatically rebalanced in the long-term. In those periods, there are no risks for the positions of women leaders in the family as well as in organizational contexts because their solution is to build up trust by result orientation, not by small actions in the short-term. In the same vein, female leaders can still maintain their power and influence in both contexts.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, some issues related to gender and women leadership in a Confucian culture have been discussed. The embodiment of women leadership has been reviewed. The Vietnamese context is emphasized to support the embodiment of women leadership in the Vietnamese context of a Confucian culture. The main findings support the arguments that women should not eliminate their natural characteristics that have normally been regarded as weaknesses in their leadership. Instead, they should take advantages of those traits to bring more value to their subordinates.

The paper has some limitations. Other countries impacted by Confucian values cannot be covered. The differences between private and state-owned organizations were not stressed. Also, participants of the study are CEOs and Presidents in their companies with the full power of decision-making. They are all well-educated with over a 10-year working experience in their sectors. Their companies are leaders in industries with famous reputations. It however, could be understood that while the nine participants are a small number for representative research in Vietnam, it is pretty relevant for an exploratory study. Therefore, if

my arguments presented above are sound, some avenues along with future research on this topic should be considered.

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