Gender and Leadership: Transgender and Cisgender Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Based on the topic of gender and leadership, this paper is to clarify the importance of gender identity to distinguish cisgender and transgender individuals. Besides, it is to answer the question if transgender leadership has any differentiation to cisgender leadership.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper relies on a theoretical approach to analyse two facets of gender including cisgender and transgender. Based on a literature background, a collective research between transgender and cisgender leadership is mentioned. Finally, the paper also indicates the reality of transgender leadership development in the current context through the corporate equality index report of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation.

Findings: The results show that coming out process plays a vital role to distinguish transgender individuals to cisgender ones. However, there is no difference in their leadership competency.

Value: This paper highlights a different approach in the research of gender and leadership which clarify cisgender leaders and transgender leaders. Furthermore, this research is to affirm that despite a similarity in their leadership competency, the sexual bias to transgender community will limit the development of leadership and the organization's diversity. By the ways, the paper also identifies the element of "openness" as the solution for this situation.

Research limitation: This paper is using collective literature and report from other foundations. Therefore, the results may be affected by their statements and opinions.

Keywords: Gender identity; Cisgender leadership; Transgender leadership; Come out; Openness

INTRODUCTION

Although the term of leadership is so familiar to everybody in the world, there will be thousand answers for the question: "what is the leadership?" The grounded theories reflected leadership definition in the relationship between leader and followers where influence is the key factor. Ciulla, Joanne B. had mentioned some definitions of leadership in their book which described Leadership as the ability to impress the leader or an influence relationship between leaders and the follower [1]. Northouse, in his book, also indicated leadership as a process of influencing others to obtain the common goal [2]. Time, the world has changed and scholars have broadened the research areas of They also looked forward to some practical issues affecting leadership such as gender, social ethnic, culture etc. The interplay between leadership and gender has indeed got much attention because according to Schein et al. gender and characteristics of the leaders are the factors affecting on the leader's success [3].

Jennifer has approached gender and leadership through research of gender – based models to categorize leadership styles. 6 models with 3 approaches have given thereby gender differences were based on the stereotypical sex differences or psychological sex under the trait models; status or social roles under the expectation models and cultural difference under the multicultural model [4]. At the starting point, the researchers only focused on two popular facets of gender including male and female. However, the growth of the social perception has created new facets of gender. Furthermore, people nowadays have more than two options for gender types.

Cisgender describes "an individual who has a match between the genders they were assigned at birth" [5]. Cis means "on the side of." So, a cis-male means a male assigned male, and a female-assigned female is considered a cis-female. Basically, the term cisgender is a collective terminology to include straight men and women. Cisgender can be heterosexual.

The term Transgender, on the contrary, has emerged nowadays to describe people who differ to sex assigned [6]. In Latin, Trans is for "on the other side." Besides, how a transgender person expresses

their identity differs from one to others, so a transgender person might be considered homosexual, bisexual, etc. [7]. The term transgender is included in the term LGBT standing for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender [8]. In general, they are on behalf of the minority, so they often share a similar culture and community. In this paper, I used the term transgender to represent the total community of people who are non-cisgender and to make a clear view in comparison to cisgender people.

Generally, I follow an approach that divides gender into cisgender and transgender facets. Hereby, I provide evident that coming out process is the major factor to differ transgender from cisgender individuals. This paper also highlights the relationship between gender identity development and transgender leadership development. Besides, although transgender leadership has also seen effectiveness in managerial management, its development is still prevented by the social bias. I also mention "openness" as the key to create the integration. The total paper includes three sections. In section 1 – Gender identity, the author clarifies the importance of gender identity and coming out process in the differentiation between cisgender and transgender. For the next section, an analysis of cisgender and transgender leadership is shown. Last but not the least, openness will be mentioned in the section 3 as the potential solution for the equality right of the transgender leaders and individuals in workplace.

Gender Identity

For a long time, people have believed that everyone is straight and gender has been binary, including men and women, boy and girl. In reality, the term gender is more complicated and seen in multi-dimensions. Gendered language has seen an extension when maintaining the binary gender system as cisgender and adding many terms that describe people outside that system as a transgender person [9]. Hereby, the concept of gender identity is more concerned and mentioned as the key factor to percept and expresses one's true gender. WHO defined gender identity as an individual's perception of his/her gender from deep inside, which may contrast to his/her biological gender [10]. Deana F. Morrow and Lori Messinger considered gender identity as a personal sense of identity that can be masculine, feminine or some combination [11]. These definitions emphasize gender identity as a learned process. Individuals can be considered cisgender or transgender, which depends on their recognition of

Themselves despite what society expects. In essence, people only express their gender identities after precepting and learning from internal and external environments.

Gender identity is approached to the differentiation between cisgender and transgender in this paper. Naturally, the research of cisgender has been similar to the structure of gender binary when categorizes into men and women according to sex assigned at birth. Although there are many critiques in using this terminology, the author uses cisgender as an opposite term of transgender to construct interplay of gender identity.

In her research of LGBT in 1989, Laura Brown has figured out that the LGBT (stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people would be defined in three elements: biculturalism, marginality, and normative creativity [12]. Biculturalism is the experience of existing in two cultures: heterosexual and the other, while marginality implies the majority's treatment of the LGBT

individuals as the otherness. And normative creativity highlights the ability to learn and make up the rules for the minority. She also proposed individuals to create boundaries for their identity to develop the abilities of higher-order problem serving.

Gender identity has played a critical role in human development. And its importance has also been mentioned in many sections of studying. In business scholarship, for both cisgender and transgender, gender identity supports the opinion: who they are and what they will become. Regarding the research of cisgender, gender identity explains the difference in men's and women's characteristics and career satisfaction. For instance, men emphasize socio-emotional satisfaction, whereas status-based satisfaction is an objective that women emphasize [13]. For transgender research, gender identity expression promotes the "self-concept" definition and supports a diversified working environment. Some UK studies show that around 40% of transgender workers have no chance to reveal their own gender identity. Therefore, gender identity is necessary to deal with the neglect of transgender [14].

Vivienne. C Cass was one of the first researchers of gender identity with the contribution of Cass's homosexual identity foundation model (1979), which described gender identity as a 6-stage-process

Cass affirmed Identity as a process achieved through the development and interaction between individuals and the environment, as figure 1 [15]. At the first stage, individuals start with considering who they really are? Cisgender or transgender. That is the reason why they continue to make a comparison to other people. During the third stage, individuals might fulfil society's demands, emotions, and sexuality, contributing to orienting their own gender. In this stage, one can categorize themselves into three groups: desirable, undesirable and partly positive. At the time of identity acceptance, there is a positive change toward the true gender when individuals accept who they are. They will come to the 5th stage of identity pride. In this stage, people will highlight the loyalty to their group form as a cisgender or transgender. And in the final stage, sexual identity becomes an important part of the individuals. In this model, it is clear that there are two subsets supporting the individual's identity, including covering process and out-coming process. In a closer view, at the third stage, individuals find out their own identity; for example, they are transgender. However, at this stage, people show a clear division in the solution when choosing between accepting or not. The covering process gradually moves to the out-coming process when one accepts themselves as transgender and starts reacting to society as who they are. The crux of the gender identity is set at the time if a person accepts themselves and come out or not.

Life-span models have a focus on the context and the time of the identity process. D'Augelli has proposed a model of identity-based on human development views. With five perspectives of human development, including:

- People change over their life span

- There is no fix in human nature

- Human development is different

- Individual and family's acts influence personal development

- Researching an individual is not adequate in the development discussion (Figure 2)
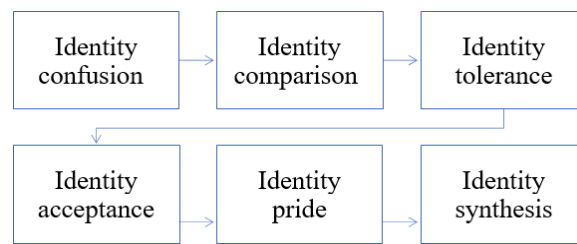
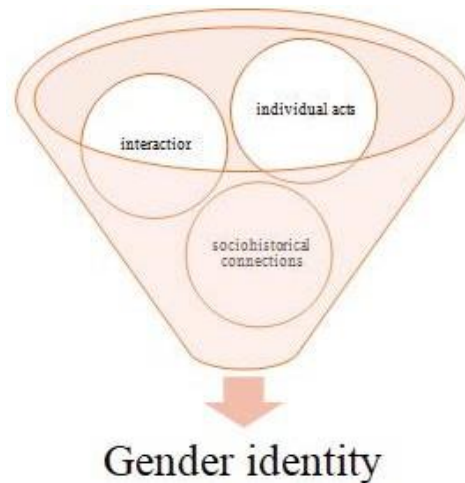**Figure 1:** Cass's homosexual identity foundation model.

Figure: 2 D'augelli has applied to explain the development of gender identity in a context aspect.

During life-span, gender identity expression will be affected by three factors: individual acts, interaction and socio-historical connections. Core factors of this model include developmental plasticity and inter individual differences. Therefore, ones can recognize themselves as transgender people through the above influences, and then enter the five developmental areas such as (1) existing heterosexual identity, (2) promoting the personal identity, (3) contributing social identity, (4) entering the relationships, and (5) entering their community [16]. A clear point that a transgender person may feel inappropriate with heterogenic development. Therefore, the out-coming event may be the decisive factor to branch off the gender identity.

Regarding the above typical theories of gender identity, it is clear to notice the relationship between the coming out process and gender identity. Coming out of the closet as its description is the moment that someone discloses their secrets. This process is more familiar to the transgender than the cisgender. Unlike the development of cisgender whose true gender is assigned at birth, transgender people undertake the development as non-heterosexual as their definition. Jimmie Manning considered "coming out" as the phenomenon to differentiate the transgender from the sexual majority [17]. Therefore, people's disclosing sexual orientation and gender identity have been referred to as "out." Being "out" does not guarantee a better life for transgender. However, owing to the growth of social acceptance and the company's non-discrimination policy, which reached 83 percent in 2018 [18], gender identity and coming out are encouraged in the transgender community for their development and benefits. In his research, William Lucio also mentioned that "outness" promoted positive job satisfaction, confidence, and higher commitment level [19].

To sum up, I literally agree with Brown in identifying LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) individuals and the rest of the world. Although this paper mentions the term transgender, obviously, it is also included in Brown's research. I also add the process of coming out as one of the major monuments to identify one's gender identity and differentiate between transgender and cisgender.

Cisgender leadership and transgender leadership

The previous part describes coming out as the major difference between cisgender and transgender individuals. A person precepting himself as a transgender person can still grow up and develop in the closet. However, coming out will be a landmark moment for a new life when his gender identity is expressed. The question is that if there will be a difference in cisgender and transgender leadership? The concept of leadership has kept growing with time. According to Silva at el, leadership definitions were divided into two periods before and after World War II. They clarified the difference between these concepts as personal qualities before the Second World War and a complex phenomenon in the leader's and followers' context after the II world war [20]. There is a clear view that these definitions almost approached leadership definitions in the context and research of cisgender because of its overwhelming to the transgender in society. Therefore, there is a minority in the research of transgender leadership.

Cisgender leadership literature has mostly focused on the sex difference in the leadership style, especially the difference between men and women leadership. There has been a debate that affirmed whether or not sex differences have affected the organization's leadership styles and competency in the organization. The objectors of the gender difference in cisgender identified those men and women managers occupying the same organizational

role showed little difference because men or women selected a position in the organization must meet the set of company's criteria but the sex difference. The supporters of sex difference in leadership style have concentrated on several sources such as the gender-stereotypic behaviors and gender-role spillover. One such reason is the ingrained gender difference in personality traits and a behavioral tendency, which identifies that men and women join the management with different skills. And women have been shifting to more friendly, pleasant, expressive, and socially sensitive than men. The other source figured out the influence of gender- role on the organizational role, which leaded people to different expectations for men and women leaders. This reason has been the foundation for a series of research that found that people in the organization expected a male supervisor because of the stereotype that women negatively affected morale [21]. [3] Published research of gender stereotypes in leadership, which has clarified that no matter which countries or cultures, it exited a view that women were valuated less than the man in the capacity of management characteristics. Research from 5 different nations in different cultures and continents indicated that material sex-typing was a global phenomenon. [22] Considered gender and leadership in classification and comparison between men's leadership and women's leadership. They supported the view that biology was the determinant of leadership. Richard Herrera et al. also focused on the differentiation of male and female, which were considered predictors in the leadership and cultural dimensions. They figured that gender difference could affect gender egalitarianism and assertiveness in cultural dimensions and participate and self-protective leadership in leadership dimensions [23]. In research about gender in management named (Untangling the relationship between gender and leadership), which was based on the research of Schein "think manager-think male," also supported the classification of Male and female in gender and constructed the interplay with leadership [24]. To see that in the interplay of gender, cisgender leadership has been categorized into task orientation, which can be autocratic, transactional, or interpersonal relationships, which can be democratic and transformational, which reflects the femininity or masculinity of sex stereotypes [25].

Although leadership theories have seen significant growth at the academic level and dedicated the different perspectives and social aspects, there still have neglected the issues of diversity [26]. Most

existing research on transgender has emerged since the 2000s. The research of [27] indicated the link between LGBT identity and leadership development. They support the opinion that involvement in LGBT activities promotes gender identity development and leadership identity development. In the next research, Renn has divided LGBT student leaders into positional leaders and transformational leaders [28]. This categorization is based on the LID model. Model of leadership identity (LID) was mentioned in his research in 2005 with six stages including: awareness, exploration/ engagement, leader identified, leadership differentiated, generativity and integration. Renn then affirmed that positional leaders showed the characteristics from stage one to three, whereas transformational leaders reflected the stage four to six. A group of the researchers including [29] has proposed a model defining LGBT leadership in three dimensions such as sexual orientation, gender orientation and group composition as bellow Figure 3.

With the intersection of three dimensions, eight options were shown in the context of stigma and margination. Sexual orientation considers whether or not LGBT individuals should disclose their identity in the interaction with society. Gender orientation directs LGBT leaders into masculine or feminine tendencies. Whereas, situations have divided the environment of LGBT leaders into LGBT group and mixed group. This model showed the profound effects of these dimensions on the process of LGBT leadership. Hereby, how LGBT identity can influence the leadership depends on the interaction to the individual and situation parameters [29]. According to William Lucio, LGBT leadership has focused on two tactics, including cohesive and proactive communication, to influence their followers. These factors, such as group discussion and external allies identifying, are often utilized in the LGBT leadership style. He also affirmed that LGBT leaders not only engaged in transformational leadership but also relational leadership styles [30]. Chang and Bowring have revealed some characteristics of LGBT leadership such as connecting and advocacy. They conducted interviews with LGBT leaders and found that LGBT leaders tended to build a relationship to their follower as well as try to include them in the discussions [31].
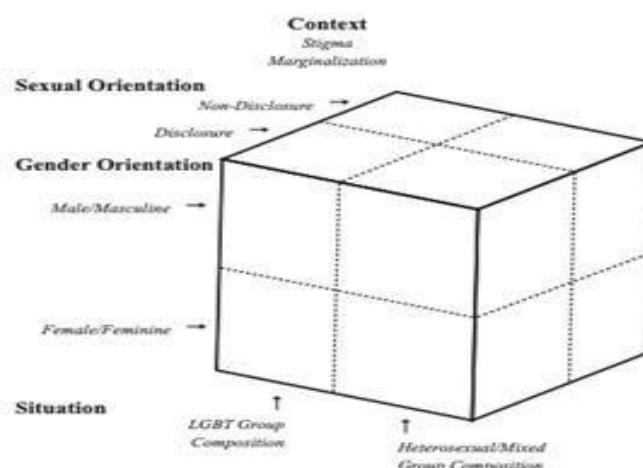

Figure 3: Affirmative model of lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Leadership Enactment.

From the previous literature, it is clear that transgender leadership does not differ from cisgender leadership. Transgender leadership also shows the effectiveness and efficiency in managerial management such as inclusion, communication, creativity, intuition and collaboration [32]. However, it has no issue if a transgender person leads a transgender group. According to [29], LGBT leaders can face discrimination in the mixed group. Therefore, in the heteronormative culture, the transgender leader may consider the pros and cons of self-disclosing. And social bias is the factor that prevents the development of transgender leadership. Fabio Fasoli and Peter Hegarty considered recruitment activities as sexual – orientation courts. They revealed that discrimination happened in recruitment because transgender people are considered less valuable than cisgenders [33]. Valerio et al. confirmed that prejudice had been the major obstacle to create the discrimination when both their studies supported the assumptions that an individual with high sexual prejudice perceived gay leaders less effective than heterosexual and a gay leader with feminine qualities would be less effective than one with masculine qualities [34].

"Openness" – The key of integration

These previous parts have seen the interplay between gender identity and the leadership development. In transgender perspective, coming out process has been regarded as the beginning of a transgender individual's journey. And it also contributes to their identity synthesis. It seems logical to think that coming out is a salient factor for the development of transgender identity and leadership. However, in reality, decision of coming out often challenges transgender individuals' limitation when they face the majority's discrimination. **Ruggs,** has published a research on how external and internal factors effect on transgender employees [35]. The factors influencing discrimination have been classified into internal factor including transgender employees' openness and external factors including organizational policies and supportive coworkers. Based on a hypothesis research, these authors have revealed correlations between perceived discrimination and the internal – external factors. The results of this study have showed that a higher protection in organizational policies, higher coworker reaction and being open about gender identity would decrease the level of perceived discrimination to transgender employees. It has also highlighted that the external factors will much more effect on transgender ones than the internal factor. Similarly, the term "openness" in my paper is mentioned in a duality including the transgender perspective and the social perspective.

In transgender perspective, openness implies coming out process when the transgender employees disclose their gender identity. **Norman et al.** in their article have analyzed the correlation between a leader's transparency and positivity and the follower's trust [36]. Furthermore, they also manifested that transparency and positivity have been considered the characteristics of authentic leadership, the achievement of any leaders. By using a mixed method design, these researchers then revealed that a leader was considered more effective and more trustworthy through his/her higher transparency and positivity. At the same time, a leader with high transparency and positivity would be assessed as an authentic leader. Based on connections in the previous part, transgender leadership cannot exist without coming out event because it is the first step in the process of transgender identity. There is no guarantee that coming out leads to positive results in the

relationship with followers in mixed group. However, "openness" in somewhat reflects transgender transparency and promote the development of transgender leadership. **Fairbanks et al**, in one of their news about (How Openly LGBTQ+ Fortune 500 CEOs Are Changing the Corporate Game), has mentioned some company's executives who disclosed their gender identity as the typical examples for the positive results of openness [37]. Tim Cook - CEO of Apple, Inga Beale – Former CEO of Lloy, Jum Fitterling – CEO of Dow Chemical Company, Beth Ford – CEO of Land O'Lakes, etc. have been considered the rising stars because of their successful leadership in the transgender community. Their success also inspires other transgender individuals and leaders.

In social perspective, term "openness" highlights the appearance of environmental factors such as workplace, policy, incentives and benefits that facilitate transgender employees. The report of corporate equality index 2018 from the human rights campaign foundation has showed a positive picture for transgender employees in the business organizations. The list of 20 companies with the highest friendly environment to LGBT community included Wal-Mart Stores Inc, Exxon Mobil Corp, Apple Inc., McKesson Corp., and CVS Health Corps. Etc. More than 90 percent of rated companies have provided sexual orientation protections and gender identity protections to their employees. Around 31.5 percent of their compensation is used for benefits account. And these companies also provided health insurance benefits to LGBTQ workers and their families (Human rights campaign foundation, 2018). Brad Sears and Cristy Mallory and Nan Hunter in their article have indicated six benefits of organizations for enacting non-discrimination policies including recruitment and retention, ideas and innovation, customer service, employee productivity, public sector clients and employee relations and morale [38]. Although I have not found any research confirming that the direct relationship between the integration in workplace creates a positive development for transgender development, it is clear that the social factors still contribute to construct an integrating environment for transgender and cisgender individuals.

CONCLUSION

Results of this study have indicated a different approach in the research of gender and leadership when analysing this relationship under the lens of gender identity. Gender identity is an important part of who an individual is. This perception is also a great motivation for the individual's identity expression whether they are cisgender as usual or transgender individuals. Besides, the paper has highlighted another manifestation of differing cisgender and transgender individual including coming out process. It has seen the milestone for transgender people when coming out from the closet to obtain a transgender identity. Then, the term transgender leadership has existed as the result of the transgender identity. This research has proved the growing relationship between gender identity and transgender leadership development with coming out as the key factor. Furthermore, the evident for the similarity in leadership styles between transgender and cisgender leaders are also revealed. Hereby, the research also points out the undervaluation of transgender leadership compared to cisgender leadership. As the result of social gender stereotype, transgender leadership has been indeed neglected for a long time. Finally, the term "openness" is also mentioned as the potential solution for the gender integration in workplace.

Although it is necessary to make a more profound research of the correlation between openness and the leadership development, this paper has raised a necessity for an acknowledgement for transgender leadership in the academic level nowadays.

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