Participative management theory and feminist leadership styles

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Abstract

Globalization has completely changed the world and brings huge impacts towards the organization. Therefore, to survive and compete in this challenging world, most of the organizations have transformed from traditional management styles to more effective and adaptive management styles. Hence, participative management has emerged as a modern management style, which is less hierarchical, applies a bottom-up approach, and focuses on consensus or consultative decision-making. This management style emphasizes on employee participation in the decision-making (PDM) process of an organization. However, the implementation of participative management also depends on leadership styles practiced by a leader. Thus, feminist leadership styles such as people-oriented, nurturing, participative, democratic and transformative have seemed to be more associated and more supportive towards participative management as compared to traditional leadership styles or masculine leadership styles (control-wise, autocratic, top-down approach and coercive) . This study examined the association between participative management and feminist leadership styles based on the review of past literature. The conceptual findings revealed that the participative management theory had similar characteristics and association with feminist leadership styles. It can be concluded that feminist leadership styles can bring successfulness to the implementation of participative management in the organization and enhance the level of employee participation in decision-making (PDM).

Keywords: employee, feminist leadership styles, leadership, management style, participation in decision-making, participative management

Introduction

Participative management has been known since 60 years ago and the pioneering studies of participative management are Lewin et al. (1939), Coch and French (1948), and Likert (1967). This management theory has been acknowledged as one of the most effective management/leadership practices and the best theories that describe the relationship between participative leadership and employee participation in decision-making (PDM) in the organization around the world (Likert, 1967; Yukl, 2010). Several scholars have described the concept of 'participative management' under the term of 'participative leadership' and these terms have been used interchangeably in management and leadership studies (Burhanuddin, 2013). Therefore, this article incorporated both of these concepts to explain the leadership and management practices that can foster employee PDM.

In the modern era of management, many researchers argued that participative management is the most effective management style due to the rapid change of the

environment, politics, and cultures such as globalization, climate changes, diversity change, and new technology (Hay Group, 2011; Maslina et al., 2015). Previous studies showed that participative management has influenced organizational performance (Saeed ul Hassan et al., 2010; Burhanuddin & Aspland, 2012; Jago, 2015) and employee organizational commitment (Siti Salwa et al., 2015). Participative management involves employees in the decision-making process and empowering employees in problem-solving (Rolkováa & Farkašová, 2014), seeking and taking into consideration employees' ideas, suggestion, information, and input before making an important decision (Chen & Tjosvold, 2006; Kim, 2011), consultative, empowerment, collective decision-making, democratic, and power sharing (Somech, 2006; Clark, 2007; Angermeier et al., 2009). There are no boundaries between leader and employee because they share the same value and goals. Several benefits of participative management suggested by Yukl (2010) include: (i) high quality of decision-making; (ii) more comprehensive issues and great acceptance of decision by employees due to direct involvement in the decision-making process; (iii) an increase in employee satisfaction and commitment in decision-making; and (iv) employee skills enhancement in decision-making.

However, the successfulness of participative management depends on leadership styles practiced by a leader. Recently, due to the challenges in the globalization world and advance technology, leadership styles in most of the organizations are transforming from masculine leadership styles to more feminist leadership styles such as participative management. Indeed, feminist leadership has become more important in today's organizations than ever before. Some studies indicated that the trend of leadership style in the 21st century has been moving towards feminist leadership styles such as more openness, democratic, participative, delegative, team work management approach (West, 2012; Arnold & Loughlin 2013; Peterson, 2018), collaborative, consultative, and mentoring, which lead to less hierarchical and more flexible styles (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gaucher et al., 2011; Loughlin et al., 2012; Madsen, 2012; Gerzema & D'Antonio, 2013; Katila & Eriksson, 2013; Varje et al., 2013; O'Connor & Göransson, 2015) and emphasize on participative management rather than masculine and autocratic management system. Masculine and traditional leadership styles seem to be less effective in this contemporary world. According to Lazzari et al. (2009), "feminist leadership involves reconstructing power as empowerment, for example, making decisions with others, sharing control of resources and educational curricula, and generating ideas or ideologies and knowledge" (p. 352). Feminist leadership styles are often described as consultative, relation-oriented, friendly and patient democratic, non-hierarchical, participative in decision-making, and supportive leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gaucher et al., 2011; Loughlin et al., 2012; Madsen, 2012; Arnold & Loughlin 2013; Gerzema & D'Antonio, 2013; Katila & Eriksson, 2013; Varje et al., 2013; O'Connor & Göransson, 2015; Peterson, 2018).

Literature review

Participative Management Theory

The history of participative management was first mentioned by America's National Research Council in Hawthorne Plant at a large telephone-parts factory in 1924. The Hawthorne experiment, or Hawthorne effect, involved a small group of employees who indicated that their productivity and satisfaction would increase if their work environment was supportive (Economist, 2008). Then in 1940s, Fleishman expanded the experiment on the effects of leadership behaviors on a small group of employees. In 1950s, Likert continued

the previous work and conducted a research in the military, manufacturing companies, and student leaders and college administrations by using a leader behavior description questionnaire (LBDQ) based on the Michigan Leadership Theory. He found that employee orientation (a leader who is more concerned on interpersonal relations with employees) produces better results than production orientation (a leader who is more concerned on task/job). Based on Likert's findings, Lowin (1968) developed a supportive model that focused on a manager's roles to provide psychological support for employees. He concluded that employee participation and involvement can increase employee responsibility at the workplace. He also suggested that traditional leadership styles, which apply an autocratic management style, should be replaced by democratic/participative leadership management. Later on, another study by Heller (1971) on 260 managers from 15 large American companies also supported that the delegation of power and employee participation are necessary for organizations. Based on the situational leadership theory, Vroom and Yetton (1973) also suggested that participative leadership can improve productivity in the organization.

Participative leadership refers to the leader's encouragement and support towards employees to take some responsibility and involve in the decision-making process at the workplace (Somech, 2006; Huang et al., 2010; Sauer, 2011; Rolkováa & Farkašová, 2014). "Participative leadership involves efforts by a leader to encourage and facilitate the participation of others in making important decisions" (Yukl, 2010). It is a process where leaders allow their employees to participate in decision-making. In addition, participative leadership is a sharing power and authority between leader and employees; the leader encourages on employee PDM for attaining organization goals and completing tasks (Pride et al., 2009; DuBrin, 2010; Daft & Lane, 2011; Rounds & Segner, 2011). According to the GLOBE study, participative leadership can be defined as "a leadership dimension that reflects the degree to which managers involve others in making and impending decisions" (Javidan et al., 2006). Meanwhile, Sauer (2011) defined the term as "sharing of problem-solving by consulting [employees] […] before making a decision" (p. 575).

The participative management theory refers to the four management systems developed by Likert (1967) in his famous book, 'The Human Organization: Its Management and Value', namely:

1. System 1 (Exploitative-Authoritative)
    -   Emphasizes on hierarchy and rules
    -   All decisions are made by leader and employees need to follow all the orders from leader
    -   Top-down approach
    -   Leader gives punishment for those who did not follow the rules and orders
2. System 2 (Benevolent-Authoritative)
    -   Leader is benevolent and retains the right to make all the decisions
    -   Top-down approach but sometimes leader may allow some inputs from employees
    -   Punishment (sometimes)
3. System 3 (Consultative)
    -   Leader consults with employees before making decisions
    -   Substantial confidence in employees
    -   Up-down communication flows
    -   Emphasize reward-punishment
4. System 4 (Participation)
    -   Leader has full confidence in employees

- Free communication flows
- Employees have active roles in decision making process

In detail, according to Likert (1967), System 1 (Exploitative-Authoritative) and System 2 (Benevolent-Authoritative) are more related to the traditional organizational structure and most of the leaders have autocratic decision-making. These two systems associate with non-participation in decision-making; the situation where the employees only have little influence or no contribution in making decisions. In these systems, the leader has no trust and confidence towards their employees and the discussion between leader and employees rarely happens in the organization. Leaders usually do not seek for employees' ideas before making a decision and employees feel a constant fear of policy and punishment. Only the top management feels responsible for accomplishing organizational goals, while the lower level has less responsibility due to little influence and downward communication in the organization. Information tends to be inaccurate because the leader just wants to hear what they want to hear only, whereas other information is filtered. In terms of relationship, the leader is not close to the employees, and they do not know anything about their employees' problems. Furthermore, most of the decisions are made by the top management, and there is no involvement or low participation of employees in the process of decision-making. Hence, employees have no motivation towards the decision and its implementation because they just receive orders from the higher management. Typically, the problem that arises at the lower management is often ignored by the top management.

Meanwhile, the other two systems, namely System 3 (Consultative) and System 4 (Participative), are more relevant to employee PDM. Both systems are more significant to the context of this study. In System 3 (Consultative), the leader has partial trust and confidence on the ability of employees to make a decision. However, most of the final decisions are decided by the leader after several discussions with the employees. Moreover, in the consultative system, employees are free to consult, discuss, and share ideas and opinions with their leaders. Furthermore, the consultative leader usually motivates employees by rewards and sometimes by punishment forces. Employees have responsibilities to achieve the organizational goals and objectives; however, the high-level management always has the priority to accomplish it. The communication between leader and employee is an average and down-up approach. The leadership styles in this system are usually based on relation-oriented such as understanding and having concerns of employees' problems. Only the top management can make a decision regarding policies and general issues, while the middle and low management are usually involved in other particular decisions. Furthermore, the senior management is moderately aware of employees' problems at the lower management (Likert, 1967).

According to Likert, the most effective system is System 4 (Participative), where employees are fully involved in all decisions related to their jobs, employees always have equal PDM, and leaders always get ideas and opinions from employees (Likert, 1967). Participative management styles emphasize on the consultation process between employer and employee, exchange of ideas, and consensus decisions (House & Mitchell, 1974; Sauer, 2011) and focus on employees' need, welfare, and appreciation so as to create a friendly environment and interesting workplace (House & Mitchell, 1974). A participative leader also motivates employees by economic rewards based on compensation, and this system has effectively enhanced the sense of responsibility among employees to achieve organizational goals (Likert, 1967). Furthermore, the participative system emphasizes on very frequent communication between individuals and groups using down, up, and peer interaction approaches. Most of the information between the management and employees are very accurate because employees are allowed to question the management if they disagree with the

systems. Therefore, no information is filtered or restricted. Furthermore, leadership styles in this system are friendly, caring, and empathic towards employees' problems. Teamwork or group participation is important in order for decision-making to be implemented throughout the organization. Besides, the management always takes into account the lower management problems. Employees always have high motivation to implement organizational goals since they fully participate in the decision-making process (Likert, 1967). The main tool used by the participative system is employee PDM. Table 1 shows the details of four management systems by Likert (1967).

Table 1. Likert's 1967 four systems of management

Organisational variable	System 1 (Exploitative-Authoritative)	System 2 (Benevolent-Authoritative)	System 3 (Consultative)	System 4 (Participation)
1. Leadership process:				
• Superiors have confidence and trust in subordinates	Have no confidence and trust	Have condescending confidence and trust	Substantial but not complete confidence and trust	Complete confidence and trust
• Superiors behave so that subordinates feel free to discuss important things about their jobs	Subordinates do not feel free at all	Subordinates do not feel very free	Subordinates feel rather free	Subordinates feel completely free
• Superiors tries to get subordinate's ideas and opinions	Seldom	Sometimes	Usually	Always
2. Motivational forces:				
• Manner in which motives are used	Fear, threats, punishment and occasional rewards	Rewards and some actual or potential punishment	Rewards occasional punishment and some involvement	Economic rewards based on compensation system developed through participation, group participation and involvement in setting goals
• Amount of responsibility felt by each member of organization for achieving organization's goals	High levels of management feel responsibility; lower levels feel less	Managerial personnel usually feel responsibility	Substantial proportion of personnel, especially at high levels	
3. Communication process:				
• Amount of interaction and communication	Very little	Little	Quite a bit	Much with both individuals and groups
• Direction of information flow	Downward	Mostly downward	Down and up	Down, up and with peers
• Extent to which downward communications are accepted by subordinates	View with great suspicion	May or may not be viewed with suspicion	Often accepted but at times viewed with suspicion	Generally accepted, but if not, openly and candidly questioned

Organisational variable	System 1 (Exploitative-Authoritative)	System 2 (Benevolent-Authoritative)	System 3 (Consultative)	System 4 (Participation)
• Accuracy of upward communication	Tends to be inaccurate	Information that boss wants to hear flows; other information is restricted and filtered	Information that boss wants to hear flows; other information may be limited or cautiously given	Accurate
• Psychological closeness of superiors to subordinates	Has no knowledge or understanding of problems of subordinates	Has some knowledge or understanding of problems of subordinates	Knows and understands problems of subordinates quite well	Knows and understands problems of subordinates very well
4. Interaction influence process:				
• Amount of interaction	Little	Little	Moderate	Extensive, friendly interaction
• Amount of cooperative teamwork present	None	Relatively little	Moderate	Very substantial
5. Decision making process:				
• Level in organization decisions formally made	Bulk of decisions at top of organization	Policy at top, many decisions within prescribed framework made at lower levels	Broad policy and general decisions at top, more specific decisions at lower levels	Decision making widely done throughout organization
• Decision makers aware of problems, particularly those at lower levels	Often unaware or only partially aware	Aware of some, unaware of others	Moderately aware	Generally quite well aware
• Extent to which technical and professional knowledge is used in decision making	Used only if possessed at higher levels	Much of what is available in higher and middle levels is used	Much of what is available in higher, middle and lower levels is used	Much of what is available anywhere within the organization is used
• Subordinates involved in decisions related to their work	Not at all	Never involved in decision; occasionally consulted	Usually are consulted but ordinarily not involved in the decision making	Are involved fully in all decisions related to their work
• Decision made as the motivational consequences	Decision making contributes little or nothing to the motivation	Decision making contributes relatively little motivation	Some contribution by decision making to motivation to implement	Substantial contribution by decision making process to motivation to implement
6. Goal setting or ordering:				
• Manner in which usually done	Orders issued	Orders issued, opportunity to comment may or may not	Goals are set or orders issued after discussion with	Except in emergencies, goals are usually established by

Organisational variable	System 1 (Exploitative-Authoritative)	System 2 (Benevolent-Authoritative)	System 3 (Consultative)	System 4 (Participation)
		exist	subordinates	means of group participation
• Forces to accept, resist or reject goals	Goals are overtly accepted but are covertly resisted strongly	Goals are overtly accepted but often covertly resisted to at least moderate degree	Goals are overtly accepted but at times with some convert resistance	Goals are fully accepted both overtly and covertly
7. Control processes:				
• Extent to which the review and control functions are concentrated	Highly concentrated in top management	Relatively highly concentrated, with some delegated control to middle and lower levels	Moderate downward delegation; lower as well as higher levels feel responsible	Quite widespread responsibility, with lower units at times imposing more rigorous review and tighter control than top management
• Extent to which there is an informal organization present and supporting or opposing goals of formal organization	Informal organization present and supporting or opposing goals of formal organization	Informal organization usually present and partially resisting goals	Informal organization may be present and may either support or partially resisting goals	Informal and formal organization are one and the same
• Extent to which control data are used for self-guidance or group problem solving	Used for policing and in punitive manner	Used for policing coupled with reward and punishment; sometimes punitively	Largely used for policing with emphasis usually on reward but sometimes with some punishment	Used for self-guidance and for coordinated problem solving and guidance; not used punitively

Source: Adopted from Likert 1967 in his book: The Human Organization: Its Management and Value

Feminist leadership styles

The history of feminist leadership styles emerged since the feminist movement in the 1960s. The terms of 'feminist' and 'feminine' have been interchangeably used in previous studies and both terms refer to the characteristics of women such as democratic, less hierarchical, less autocratic, less decisive, more collaborative, and participative than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gaucher et al., 2011; Loughlin et al., 2012; Madsen, 2012; Arnold & Loughlin 2013; Gerzema & D'Antonio, 2013; Katila & Eriksson, 2013;Varje et al., 2013; O'Connor & Göransson, 2015; Peterson, 2018). According to Mills (1992), "Femininity has often been confused with the condition of being female" (p. 271) and "…masculinity is not only and necessarily coupled with male bodies" (Peterson, 2018). This is known as 'stereotypes' in our culture between genders in leadership (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Oanh Phuong Vo, 2017). According to Kathleen Schafer who is a leadership expert with more than 20 years of experience, she indicated that "masculine doesn't mean male, and feminine doesn't mean female. Indeed, everyone has both masculine and feminine characteristics, and we need a balance of both to be effective leaders" (2011: 8). Kramarae and Treichler (1985) defined

feminist in their book as "a person, female or male, whose worldview places the female in the center of life and society, and/or who is not prejudiced based on gender or sexual preferences. Also, anyone in a male-dominated or patriarchal society who works toward the political, economic, spiritual, sexual, and social equality of women". This is supported by feminist perspectives that refer feminist as "a fundamental value whereby all persons should be permitted equality of opportunity for full development to the extent that this development does not impede that of others……feminists—who may be either women or men……" (Lott, 1994). Furthermore, Alvesson and Due Billing (1997) stated that masculine and feminist are "forms of subjectivities […] that are present in all persons, men as well women (p. 85). For examples, Gupta et al. (2009) found empirical findings that both women and men positively related with masculine leadership styles. Fletcher (2004) and Peterson (2018) also did not mention about gender when they defined feminist and masculine leadership styles. He indicated that feminist leadership styles are when a leader commits to the growth of group members, enhances open interaction and communication with employees; hence, this is called feminist leadership styles. Feminist leadership style also can be defined as women characteristics such as collaborative, communicative, social responsible, good listener, trustworthy, committed, relational, supportive, responsive and flexible (Peterson, 2018). Past literature indicated that feminist leadership styles were categorized based on traditional stereotypes in leadership (Heilman & Eagly, 2008; Kark et al., 2012; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Peterson, 2018) as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Attributes of feminist leadership styles

No.	Feminist leadership styles attributes	Sources
1.	Relationship-oriented, more transformative	(Wakefield, 2017; Berkery et al., 2013; Batliwala, 2011; Bagilhole & White, 2008; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001)
2.	Participative	(Arnold & Loughlin 2013; Eagly, 2007; Chin, 2004)
3.	Understanding and sympathetic, friendly, openness, relationship, interactive, empowerment, democratic, participative, flexible, negotiate, act as moderator and coach, transformational, enhance others' self-skills and self-worth, collaborative, teamwork, and relation-oriented	(Peterson, 2018; O'Connor & Göransson, 2015; Arnold & Loughlin 2013; Varje et al., 2013; Gerzema & D'Antonio, 2013; Katila & Eriksson, 2013; Madsen, 2012; Loughlin et al., 2012; Gaucher et al., 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Rosette & Tost, 2010; Powell, 2010; Westman, 2002)
4.	Caring, nurturing, and collaborative	(Nakama, 2005; McCrea & Ehrich, 2000)
5.	Communal	(Arnold & Loughlin 2013)
6.	Human-based and role modeling -clear expectations and rewards	(Mckinsey, 2009)
7.	Collective power, less controlling, power-sharing, empowering	(Wakefield, 2017)

Methods

This is a conceptual article based on a review and analysis of research related to participative management and feminist leadership styles. Most of the secondary data (e.g. journals, books, website, dissertation etc.) were found using the Google search engine and terms such as 'participative management', 'participation', 'feminist leadership styles' were used to allocate

the data regarding this topic. The original version book written by Likert (1967) "*Human organization: Its management and value*" was the main reference used by the author to discuss on participative management system and theory in the organization. This book and several books were searched using the university library catalog and were borrowed from the library for further reading.

Results

Based on the previous studies, it is shown that feminist leadership is closely related to participative management theory due to feminist leadership styles features and characteristics such as relation-oriented, democratic, collaborative, transformational (Flecter, 2004; Batliwala, 2011; Berkery et al., 2013; Wakefield, 2017), participative, relational, collaborative (Eagly, 2007; Arnold & Loughlin 2013). For example, Pun and Jaggernath-Furlonge (2009) indicated that PDM is the common technique used by feminist leaders in the relation-oriented aspect. Furthermore, many scholars described feminist leadership as participative; a leader who promotes, supports, and encourages employee involvement in decision-making at the workplace (Arnold & Loughlin 2013). Another study also supported that feminist leadership styles are also found to be more participative than masculine leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Mckinsey (2009), in his survey of over 800 business leaders, defined and supported feminist leadership styles as people-based, role modeling, clear expectations, rewards, and inspiration, as well as are more encouraging towards employee PDM as compared to masculine leadership styles.

Therefore, feminist attributes have been found to have a significant relationship with participative management, and employees who worked with feminist leaders showed high involvement in decision-making either in the public sector or private sectors as compared to masculine leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Pun & Jaggernath-Furlonge, 2009; Mckinsey, 2009). Table 3 below shows similar characteristics found in the previous literature on participative management theory and feminist leadership styles that contribute to employee PDM in the organization.

Table 3. Similarities between participative management and feminist leadership styles

Participative management	Feminist leadership styles
Encourage and involve employees in decision making process (Rolkováa & Farkašová, 2014; Huang et al., 2010; Bass & Bass, 2008)	Participative and encourage employees towards PDM (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013; Eagly, 2007; Pun & Jaggernath-Furlonge, 2009; Mckinsey, 2009; Chin, 2004; Eagly & Carli, 2007)
Communication (Souply-Pierard & Robert, 2017; Angermeier, 2009; Somech, 2006)	Communicative (Peterson, 2018; Rosette & Tost, 2010; Fletcher, 2004; Westman, 2002)
Transformative and communal (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013)	Transformation and relation-oriented (Wakefield, 2017; Berkery et al., 2013; Batliwala, 2011; Bagilhole & White, 2008)
Power sharing and delegative (Miao et al., 2014; Daft & Lane, 2011; DuBrin, 2010; Clark, 2007)	Power sharing (Wakefield, 2017)
Consultative and cooperative (Sauer, 2011; Bass & Bass, 2008; Clark, 2007)	Consideration and collaborative (Peterson, 2018; Christensen, 2011; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001)
Empowerment, joint decision making, democratic (Rolkováa & Farkašová, 2014; Clark, 2007)	Empowerment, democratic (Wakefield, 2017; Rosette & Tost, 2010; Powell, 2010; Lazzari et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Westman, 2002)

Participative management	Feminist leadership styles
Less hierarchical (West, 2012; Grasmick et al., 2012)	Less hierarchical and more flexible (Peterson, 2018; Townsend, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007)

Conclusion

Overall, based on the review of previous studies, it can be concluded that the topic of participative management theory and feminist leadership styles is a crucial issue in today's organizations. Likert's Participative Management Theory is still relevant and practical in this contemporary management and globalization world, where the information and knowledge are unlimited and borderless. This study proved that leadership styles had influenced on Participative Management Theory as proposed by Likert (1967) and highlight the primary and crucial roles of feminist leadership styles in enhancing the level of employee PDM in the organisation. This study also proposed that feminist leadership styles are more associated with participative management and suitable in today's organisation as compared to masculine leadership styles. The attributes of feminist leadership styles such as people-oriented, nurturing, participative, democratic and transformative tend to boost up and encourage employee participation in the workplace and this leadership style is more relevant and effective in the modern era of management. Hence, this study believes that the successful implementation of participative management depends on effective and flexible leadership styles such as feminist leadership styles in comparison with traditional/masculine leadership styles, which are more control-wise, autocratic, top-down approach, coercive, and prevent employees from getting involved in the decision-making process at the workplace. This study represents an important contribution by reducing the issues of stereotypes in leadership towards women leader in the organization and highlighted the positive benefits of participative management towards the organization goals and employee's performance.

Acknowledgement

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