

Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

The effects of developmental opportunities and external hiring in a gender stratification

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The Effects of Developmental Opportunities and External Hiring in a Gender Stratification Model

Abstract

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is a widely studied and documented phenomenon, and multiple factors have been proposed as potential causes of this effect. The present research further probes two explanations – a “glass ceiling” effect, where women face barriers to upward movement, and a “glass door” effect, where women face barriers in organizational entry. In addition to illuminating the connections between lower-level mechanisms and these larger-scale phenomena, we aim to further explore how the “glass door” and “glass ceiling” impacts the experiences of women in their organization. To this end, we incorporate both top-down/contextual and bottom-up/interpersonal mechanisms into an integrative computational model. In a preliminary examination of the model, an agent-based simulation was utilized to explore the effects of two key factors—external hiring rates and differences in developmental opportunities—on gender stratification. Results revealed that gender differences in external hiring exhibited a relatively linear effect on the rates of female representation in organizational leadership positions. By contrast, presence of gender differences in developmental opportunities afforded to males over females was more discontinuous in nature such that any amount of disparity considerably decreased the percentage of females in leadership. In addition to affecting promotion rates, both factors contributed to gender stratification by impacting the rate at which simulated female employees turnover.