

Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

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Career experiences of women in business

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This research study explores within the context of the current German legally binding gender quota debate what catalysts and barriers to success women on their career path to top positions in the German Automotive Industry experience.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The design draws on data analysis and findings from 16 interviews completed by female and male managers in top leading positions from the German automotive industry. The applied methods have been considered by looking at the world as a social constructionist. The interview consisted of two parts: a) a biographical narrative and b) their vantage point of perceived supporting people or factors, barriers, embedded images experienced and a legally binding quota to create a power shift. The data from the transcripts was analysed via thematic analysis resulting in a cross-tabulation and subsequent stories and drawings.

Findings: The study enables an understanding for the managers in leading positions involved in this research study and what the interviewees perceived as supporters and barriers on their career path to top leadership positions.

Research limitations: The research study has been situated within a specific business context and has only been able to draw on a limited number of participants.

Practical implications: Being aware of the implications certain power dynamics, embedded images and perceptions towards mentor relationships might have for women on their career path to top positions in the German Automotive Industry, means being able to partly influence and change circumstances in its favour.

Originality/value: It presents an extreme case for the exploration of power dynamics, embedded images and the gender-related perception of mentoring as a key influence on gender diversity for women as female leaders in management positions.

Key words: power dynamics, embedded images, mentoring, career advancement.

Paper type: PhD research study.