



WIN Newsletter October2020

DID YOU KNOW?

Women score higher than men in most leadership skills, but lack confidence in themselves until they are older.

by Adela Laverick

At WIN we are all working towards supporting more women into implant dentistry. In order to do this, we need to better understand the reluctance of our young female dentists to take on additional training and leadership roles in this field. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research in this area within dentistry; however, there are many articles written from a business perspective to which we can look for comparative information.

This month, I'm sharing some interesting facts from an article published in 2019 in the Harvard Business Review by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman titled *Research: Women Score Higher Than Men In Most Leadership Skills*.

The authors draw on previous research from 2011; in 2019 they revisited over 7,000 leaders from a full range of private and public companies including the domestic (USA) and international markets. Using 360-degree evaluations they explored 16 leadership competencies and compared how men and women scored.

What did the research reveal?

- They found that women rated higher than men in 12 out of the 16 assessed competencies and that women in leadership positions are perceived as being just as competent, if not more competent, than their male counterparts.
- That consistent with traditional stereotypes, female leaders do excel at 'nurturing competencies' such as developing others and building relationships.
- BUT, women's advantages were not confined to 'traditional women's strengths.' At every level, women were rated by their work colleagues as being better overall leaders. This included two traits previously thought to be 'male strengths': taking initiative and driving for results.

Despite this, at a senior level, the majority of leaders are still men. There is a lack of women in high seniority positions within business. This mirrors the situation in dentistry where the majority of our 'leaders' are male.

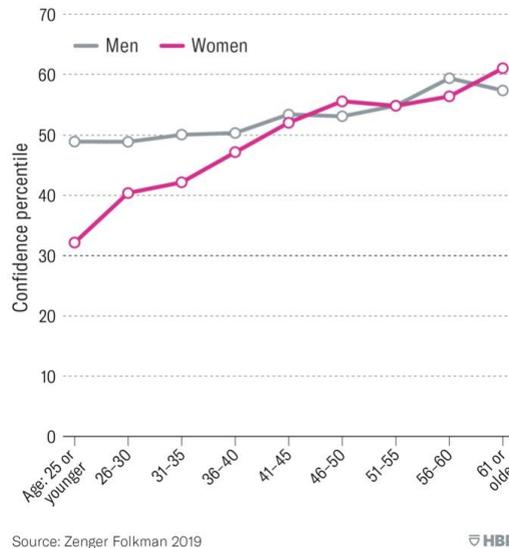
What is holding our competent women back?

The authors admit that there is a broad cultural bias against women and that unfortunately, stereotypes die slowly. There is also possible unconscious bias.

They also identified another key factor: low female confidence before the age of 40 years. When they compared confidence ratings for men and women, they saw a large difference in those under 40, and a hugely significant difference of almost 20% at 25 years or below. They concluded that it is highly probable that those younger women are far more competent than they think they are, while the male leaders are overconfident and are assuming they are more competent than they are. At age 40, the confidence ratings merge and, interestingly, by age 60 years women are more confident than men.

Women Rate Themselves as Less Confident Than Men Until Their Mid-40s

Data on 3,876 men and 4,779 women since 2016 shows that women's gains in confidence are more than three times that of men — but only because of a massive gap at the beginning of their careers.



Is the low self-confidence of our young female dentists affecting their career choices?

In dentistry women *have to choose* to take on post-graduate studies - unlike a career in business, they are not looking *to be promoted* into a higher position. So, if we consider this alongside the fact that women in the younger age groups are less confident, AND, if that is the time they would naturally choose to progress their career in dentistry, then, fewer women will take on the challenge of further studies.

Whilst this argument appears to make logical sense, it does not explain why women seem happy to progress within some post-graduate fields, such as orthodontics, but avoid others, including dental implant-related specialties such as oral surgery and prosthodontics. The situation is clearly complex, but perhaps women feel less intimidated by some postgraduate fields than others, and/or are better supported and encouraged into fields where there are already more female role models.

This is where WIN and our supporters can help - we have a collective professional responsibility to assure our young female dentists of their competence and to encourage them to pursue career progression in the field of implantology. To act as role models, to provide support and guidance, and to educate them that implant dentistry is rewarding and fulfilling and that it can be part of a healthy work-life balance.

Colleagues, let's join together and support our talented young women into implant dentistry.