

Identifying Barriers for Professional Women in the Agricultural Industry

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INTRODUCTION

- A large body of literature suggests there are many barriers to women in the workplace due to gender bias and a narrowly defined behaviors deemed acceptable for women leaders (Lips, 2009).
- For years, women have dealt with implications to obtaining leadership positions; this results from male-dominated fields and extreme expectations placed upon them by society (Merchant, 2012).
- How women dress and talk, as well as their executive presence and leadership style, all contribute to their credibility in the workplace (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013).
- The study was designed to help identify the success factors and barriers women face in advancing in their careers within the agricultural industry.

KEY LITERATURE

- For this study, three key pieces of framework were utilized: second-generation bias, the glass cliff phenomenon, and gender-stereotyping.
- Second-generation bias is a type of bias associated with female leaders (Larwood & Gutek, 1987), and it creates barriers for women as it relates to cultural assumptions (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013).
- Research has shown women are under-represented in higher career positions and, therefore, experience gender inequality (Haslam & Ryan, 2008).
- When women are given a leadership role to act upon, it has been proven that stereotypes act as constraints on how they lead and respond (Powell, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

- The instrument was modified from the Cline, Rosson & Weeks (2019) study. Cognitive interviews were conducted, and the instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts.
- The original intent of this study was to survey at the 2020 [State] Women in Ag Conference; due to the pandemic, plans changed quickly. The snowball technique was utilized.
- A total of 32 women completed the survey, distributed through Qualtrics for a 78% response rate.
- Data was analyzed using frequency, percentages, and means. Open-ended responses were analyzed using basic interpretive qualitative methodology to identify common themes. The two primary researchers conducted independent reviews of the transcripts and then performed a joint analysis of common themes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collect detailed information about respondents' journeys as leaders in the agricultural industry in order to further direct training efforts in collegiate programs.
- Future studies should build upon this study to develop a list of barriers faced by women in agricultural organizations in order to drive training programs and collegiate agricultural professional development courses to prepare women for future leadership positions.
- Offer education and training to women specifically addressing barriers caused by second-generation bias, the glass cliff, and gender-stereotyping.
- Duplicate the study with males in the agricultural industry to compare their experiences and barriers with those identified by women.

KEY FINDINGS

"Sometimes I feel that if I was a man, I would have advanced faster."

(n = 14)

46.67%

of the participants were discouraged to seek a career in the agricultural industry.

(n = 21)

67.74%

of survey respondents perceived their organization to have more men than women employed.

(n = 15)

50%

of survey respondents experienced barriers to the advancement of their careers in the agricultural industry as a result of gender.

"I believe I have had to 'prove' that I am capable of leadership through examples of my work and work history where my male colleagues are given roles based on their 'perceived' potential."

"If a man takes time for his family, he is a great dad and family man but, if a woman takes time for her family it is seen as a liability and a hindrance to her focus. This is never said out loud but, is a subconscious perception."