

Abstract

The research described in this report is based on the need for deeper investigation of the potential influential role gender can play in forming perceptions about power. In order to make it both valuable for the academic world as well as for the business world, it was decided to conduct this research within a professional environment. The Global 500 company, Royal Philips N.V., was used as a case study to collect, analyse and interpret data from.

The primary data was retrieved through in-depth semi-structured interviews and the sample group consisted of 21 senior managers, direct reports and peers. Based on the transcripts of these, a thematic analysis was used to form patterns (themes) within the rich qualitative dataset. The qualitative analysis software NVivo 11 Starter was eventually used to reveal relationships among these themes.

Three general themes were identified: Position Power, Personal Power and Potential Influencers. The latter consisted of three sub-themes of which gender was one. Building further on the research aim, the potential influencer “gender” was used to determine if it actually impacted the first two themes and in what matter. The research findings suggest gender indeed plays a role in shaping perceptions and self-perceptions on power in managerial communication. More or less half of the sample group indicated there is unfavourable influence of gender at play in forming these perceptions. On the other hand, equally as many state they believe it only plays a neutral role and has little influence. Although, among the latter, there were quite a few indirectly suggesting throughout their interview, that gender influenced their perceptions and self-perceptions. Besides gender, many other factors were mentioned that could impact perceptions, such as age, culture and management style. However based on the research aim of this study, the thematic analysis and findings, conclusions were only made on behalf of the gender aspect. As such, sufficient proof is given throughout this report to suggest that the gender of the manager communicating, can influence the perception and self-perception of the personal power he/she evokes.