

Title

Personality Assessments in Predicting Performance on the Glass Cliff

Description of the topic of interest

Related to the glass ceiling, the glass cliff phenomenon is a topic of interest to many Industrial Organizational (IO) Psychologists. There is a noticeable gap in the research between the glass cliff and the application of personality assessments. To define the problem, the glass cliff is a phenomenon that occurs when women are put in leadership positions that are likely to fail, and are risky and precarious (Morgenroth et al., 2020; Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Helgesen (1990) found that there is a trend where women are promoted to positions destined to fail, because of soft skills, including empathy, relationship styles, and collaborative styles. On the other hand, men tend to be put into leadership positions of stable companies because of their stereotypical masculine traits such as toughness, competitiveness, and decisiveness (Helgesen, 1990).

In the study of personalities in the workplace, it is important to measure a person's reputation, which is how others will likely describe an individual, rather than identity, which is how you would describe yourself. Measuring a person's reputation is important because it determines how someone is likely to get along, get ahead, and find meaning in life. There are many reliable and validated personality assessments on the market today. Through these various personality assessments, we can study a person's perceived strengths, weaknesses, and values. Combined, this information helps psychologists measure a person's ability to do the job, how they might fail, and what kind of culture they will thrive in. Personality assessments can be used for both selection and development, so not only finding the right person for the job, but also providing key insights for people to grow and develop within their current role or into future positions.

The purpose of this roundtable is to discuss the glass cliff, the personality traits often associated with women put on the glass cliff, and how personality assessments can help select and develop the right

person to take charge of a failing company. This roundtable is targeted to connect with individuals from all different backgrounds as they bring unique perspectives to the discussion.

Proposed Format

A 60-minute timeslot is requested for this session. For the first 5 minutes of the session, the chair will open the session by briefly introducing the glass cliff, the purpose of the session, and session flow. Attendees of this session will be asked to gather around one of the round tables in the conference room (if round tables are not available, participants will be separated in different areas of the conference room). All efforts will be taken by the chair to evenly disperse participants among the groups, all the while following social distancing guidelines.

Round table groups will be encouraged to share their experience, expertise, and thoughts, in order to facilitate a dialogue around creative solutions, business insight, tips and tricks, and lessons learned.

Questions to engage the audience in discussion

1. The “think manager – think male” association underlies many gender equalities in the workplace. It exists when there is a perceived incompatibility between the definition of what it means to be a good manager and what it means to be a female. It’s called “think manager – think male” because there’s a gender discrimination that females cannot be good managers. (Ryan et al., 2011)

How is this “think manager – think male” association related to the glass cliff?
2. Do you have any experience with seeing the glass cliff in your professional life?
3. How can personality assessments help select and develop the right person for taking charge of a failing company? How does gender play into this?
4. How do members of other protected classes such as race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation intersect with gender on the glass cliff?

5. Lastly, I would like to discuss an example of a leader and their company that has fallen victim to the glass cliff and a leader that has been successful in turning their company away from the edge of the glass cliff.

Once the 60 minutes have elapsed, the chair will close the session by facilitating a large group debrief with the last 5 minutes of the session.

References

- Helgesen, S. (1990). *The Female Advantage: Women's Way of Leadership*. New York: Doubleday Currency.
- Morgenroth, Kirby, T. A., Ryan, M. K., & Sudkämper, A. (2020). The who, when, and why of the glass cliff phenomenon: A meta-analysis of appointments to precarious leadership positions. *Psychological Bulletin*, *146*(9), 797–829. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000234>
- Ryan, & Haslam, S. A. (2005). The glass cliff: Evidence that women are over-represented in precarious leadership positions. *British Journal of Management*, *16*(2), 81–90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2005.00433.x>
- Ryan, Haslam, S. A., Hersby, M. D., & Bongiorno, R. (2011). Think crisis-think female: The glass cliff and contextual variation in the think manager-think male stereotype. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(3), 470–484. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022133>