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## Examining Gender and Management Decisions: A Focus Group Study on Gender and Decision Behavior in Donald Trump's *The Apprentice*

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### Authors' contributions

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Authors DAM and SMC designed the study, wrote the protocol, conducted the statistical analyses and literature searches for the study. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### ABSTRACT

Management decisions are a key factor in driving management's control of valuable resources. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of gender and its role in termination decisions. This research is the result of a four-year study on management decisions on termination in Donald Trump's *The Apprentice*. This crosstab analysis was conducted with three independent focus groups using *The Apprentice*. This study is a continuation of a pilot study conducted on *The Apprentice* [1]. For conducting the focus group studies, a two-phase protocol was implemented to examine the role of gender on termination decisions. A sample of ( $N=299$ ) participants were used for the focus groups. The participants viewed various episodes of *The Apprentice* and were administered a survey based on their observations and decisions. The research design used an independent sample *t*-Test, cross tabulation and ANOVA. The results indicate there were some significant gender differences with firing individuals based on viewing the television show. Between males and females, male participants' mean and standard deviations were higher. Furthermore, the crosstabs analysis indicated a significant correlation between gender and termination decisions use.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gender disparities in business and education, particularly in the area of management decision-making, are still considered thought provoking and fascinating. Are there gender disparities between males and females in terms of decision-making? This question guided the development of this study. The gender disparities between males and females are not limited to the business world. This disparity also extends to many other sectors such as the education sector, particularly in the academic environment.

*The Apprentice* is a business reality show featuring real estate mogul, Donald Trump. The show was created to depict business and management decision-making situations. One interesting aspect of the reality is attributed to the success of the show is the management and team dynamics. *The Apprentice* often acts as a case study in the management of teams and the termination decisions in business situations.

This research is the result of a four-year study on *The Apprentice*. This study extends the prior research on the television show by using a focus group approach with a survey. The participants in the study were working professionals and MBA students. The participants were selected by the researchers to examine the termination decisions in television show. The study used the reality television show for the focus group. The researchers used a focus group approach for examining *The Apprentice*.

The purpose of this study was to determine if gender is an influence on management decisions between males and females using the reality show, *The Apprentice*. The researchers wanted to determine if gender is an influence and contribute to their termination decision behavior. In this study we seek to extend the prior research on *The Apprentice* by trying a new approach compared to the prior research by examining gender and management decision behavior. The study investigates the influence of gender on management decisions in three areas: (1)

Industry type, (2) Task type, and (3) Focus group type. In addition, interrelationships among the variables are examined.

The article is structured as follows: First, there is a review of the literature and prior research. Second, the research methodology is presented on data analysis, research design, techniques are discussed. Third, the results of the study are presented. Fourth, a discussion of the findings is presented. Lastly, the article concludes with the conclusion, summary of the article, implications, limitations and directions for future research.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Prior Studies on Gender Differences

Limited research exists on gender differences in decision-making. Other studies on gender and decision-making suggest that women are more concerned with uncertainty, doubts, and the dynamism that are involved in the decision [2], [3]. Females are more aware of the constraints on the setting and close persons put on them; their emotions are more important to them in the decision process. Conversely, males assign more importance to the analysis of the information required to carry out the decision and to the definition of the goals or purposes of the decision. They are more motivated during the process and also feel more intensely the pressure from all the work-related aspects [2]. In terms of decision processes, job application decision processes may vary depending on applicant characteristics such as gender. Women were found to be more sensitive to the opinions of significant others [3].

In terms of financial decisions and when compared to men, women are significantly more risk averse, tend to be less overconfident, and behave less competitively oriented. Furthermore, women behave differently in these three domains, which are highly important in the financial industry as risk taking, confident decision-making, and tough competition [4]. The existence of gender differences in *multiple-*

*choice performance* might be due to the test area, instruction/scoring condition, and item difficulty [5]. In terms of study of reactions to ambitious decision makers and followership, female decision makers are not perceived to be as *self-seeking* compared to male decision makers; so decisions made by females are less likely to be rejected [6].

In an experiment conducted by [7], participants had to select cards from decks that offer high initial losses if they are to eventually make a profit. The results, according to [7], showed that males, who tend to be high impulsive sensation seekers, learned to select cards more quickly from advantageous decks than female high impulsive sensation seekers. Gender differences were significant when it came to deciding how much money respondents were planning to withdraw from the balances in their banks or financial institutions to get the family ready for Y2K arrival [8,9].

Other studies have shown that women showed less *confirmation bias* when the decision concerned them and their mate (interdependent decision) compared to a decision concerning only them (independent decision). However, men showed less confirmation bias when they made an independent compared to an interdependent decision [10]. In another study, [11] concluded there were gender differences in behavior present in stressed participants but not control; according to the researchers, stress led to greater reward collection and faster decision speed in males but less reward collection and slower decision speed in females.

In terms of ethical decision-making, males and females may reason with different orientations. Consequently, gender may be related to the learning of ethical decision making. Researchers found out that systematic gender differences between male and female HR practitioners' scores on ethical decision making, indicated changes in current HR professionalism training practices seems to be warranted to address gender specific needs [12].

In a study of gender differences in the hotel industry, the findings indicate there are potential gender differences in ethical decision-making and have a significant impact towards the daily operation in hotel industry [23]. In another study, [14] that ethical decision-making aligned with three human qualities: (a) Autonomy or self-ownership, (b) Connectedness or establishing a

network of relationships, and (c) Transcendence or striving for excellence in the profession. The aforementioned qualities align with [13] assertions that female practitioners tended to be more sensitive and more concerned on the process of ethical decision-making when compared to their male counterparts who were more concerned on the results of their decision when there was an ethical dilemma raised.

Within the field of education, the discussion on gender differences in decision-making could be a reflection on the promotion of women into the higher echelons. In a study conducted by [15], there was a review of the American Council on Education reporting of an increase of female college presidents from 9.5 to 21.1% between the periods of 1986-2001. According to those findings, "Of these women, 26.8 percent led two-year institutions; 18.7 percent led baccalaureate schools; 20.3 led comprehensive universities; and only 13.3 percent headed doctorate-granting schools; with the remaining 14.8 percent guiding specialized schools" [15].

Issues of cracking the glass ceiling in K-12 public education exist for women and minorities at the superintendency level as well. While current research is limited, the percent of women superintendent between 1910 and the 1990s dropped from 8.9% to 4.9% respectively [16]. In those percentages, there is an underrepresentation of minorities in those positions according to Keller. What is interesting is that there are a greater percentage of women who are principals as well as in district central offices, 57% of the professionals are women [16]. Five years later, in a study sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, [17] reported that 13% of the superintendents in public education were women. In 2007, the American Association of School Administrators reported that out of 13,000 superintendents, there is a national average of 17% of them being women [18].

Women in the superintendent's position are still facing stereotypes that question their ability to lead, even though evidence shows that women in these positions appear to be more dedicated in ensuring that the position is not tainted with concerns over their competencies; hence, they work harder. In addition, [19] observed, ". . . academic careers, ostensibly open to women, remain based on a patriarchal model of intellectual labor that assume indefatigable devotion to one's institution (and hence no or few

familial obligations)". Based on this argument alone, one could conclude that the decision-making capabilities of a woman might be a factor; furthermore, [20] believed that "narrow definitions of leadership based on male models or theories need to be expanded to include women's values, beliefs and experiences", especially when comparing gender termination decisions.

## 2.2 Prior Studies on *the Apprentice*

There has been limited research conducted on *The Apprentice*. Many university MBA programs around the country have used the television show to teach general business and management practices in the classroom [21]. There were some interesting research and findings. The University of Washington developed a business course based on the television show [21]. However, we found two gaps in the prior research. First, there were no prior studies that used *The Apprentice* as focus group study and collected data. Second, none of the prior research on the reality show conducted any empirical research. To fill these gaps, the researchers wanted to extend the prior research on *The Apprentice* and try a new approach by conducting a focus group and empirical study on the reality show.

Communication skills are critical to success in contemporary American business in *The Apprentice* [22]. The conclusions of their study were: (a) Leadership skills and interpersonal skills were the most frequent subjects of criticisms, far outnumbered comments of praise; (b) Effective leadership and interpersonal skills were essential *must haves*; a lack of them is a fatal flaw; and (c) Leadership and interpersonal skills were critical to success. In contrast to [22] findings based on an examination of the leadership styles witnessed on *The Apprentice*, [23] concluded that the tournament-style promotion observed with the announcement of the winner did not necessarily create an altruistic leader. When there is a tournament or a tournament theory of promotion, Wright concluded that the following behaviors become more apparent: (a) High levels of ambition, (b) Confidence, (c) Energy, (d) Intelligence and (e) Opportunism as well as arrogance.

One researcher conducted a semester-long game called, *The Cartographic Apprentice*, which simulated Donald Trump's business tactics to engage students, create competition and

mediate group dynamics [24]. The conclusions of the study were: (a) Most students reported a satisfaction of group participation and learning; and (b) It did force students to evaluate and critically analyze their maps and the work of their peers. A researcher asserted that *The Apprentice* is imbued with market values and seeks to validate the absolute worth of capitalist business whatever the human cost; most obviously the arduous testing of candidates in the show in order to reveal the fittest, although much more serious than that in terms of the complex structures of exploitation perpetuated by global capitalism is no secret [25].

Lastly, in another study on *The Apprentice*, when examining female decision behavior, researchers concluded that females tended to frame their decisions somewhat differently. Hence, the research suggests that women are more attentive to the responsibility of the project manager rather than the team member in reality show [26].

## 2.3 Objectives of the Study

This study used focus groups to measure participants' perceptions with termination decision behavior in *The Apprentice*. This study investigates and measures the participants' perceptions in focus groups. The research questions guiding the investigation are as follows:

- 1) Using Donald Trump's *The Apprentice* as a focus group study, are there gender differences in terms of **decision behavior**?
- 2) Are there gender decision differences based on **industry type**?
- 3) Are there gender decision differences based on **task type**?
- 4) Are there gender decision differences based on **focus group type**?

The primary objectives of this study were to: (a) investigate behavioral and gender differences in termination decisions, (b) determine gender decision differences based on industry type, (c) determine gender decision differences based on industry type, (d) determine gender decision differences based on tasks type, and (e) determine gender decision differences based on focus group type.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Subjects

The respondents consisted of three focus groups: (a) Marketing, (b) Management, and (c) Other (Business). The focus groups were conducted with ten to fifteen participants in each group, respectively. The focus groups' participants engaged in numerous sessions. The groups consisted of 150 males and 149 females. The focus groups primarily were in the age groups of 35– 45 and 46 – 55. All participants were industry professionals and MBA students in graduate programs; the researcher moderated each of the focus groups.

#### 3.2 Data Collection and Measurement

To collect data, 299 surveys were obtained from the participants of the three focus groups as well as those who attended workshops using showings of *The Apprentice*. This study used an instrument containing structured questions to help collect data from the various participants of the focus groups as well as those who attended the workshops. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale. Due to the time constraints and one-hour episodes, there was limited time for administering the survey. Given these constraints, the participants only responded to five questions (see Table 1). For the study, three focus group sessions were conducted.

**Table 1. Survey questions used in focus groups**

Q. no.	<i>The Apprentice</i> focus group questionnaire
1	What is your gender?
2	What is your ethnicity?
3	Who do you think should be fired?
4	Did you agree with Trump's decision?
5	Did you enjoy this case study ( <i>The Apprentice</i> )?

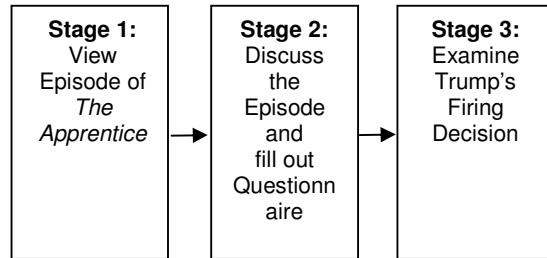
(N = 299)

#### 3.3 Procedures of the Study

The researchers and an assistant facilitated the focus groups. To accomplish the objectives of the study, a two-stage approach was used to conduct research on the focus groups. Three focus group sessions were conducted using the television show as an observation (see Fig. 1).

#### 3.3.1 Stage 1. Viewing Episode of *The Apprentice*

During this stage, the participants in the focus groups viewed a one-hour episode of *The Apprentice*. The participants observed the two teams competing in the show. The first stage of this study served as the basis for administering a survey questionnaire.



**Fig. 1. Conceptual framework and procedure of the study**

#### 3.3.2 Stage 2. Discussion of the episode and questionnaire

During this stage, the video was stopped after observing the boardroom scene in *The Apprentice*, where Trump discusses the issues of the losing team and the project manager. The video was stopped before the Trump's firing decision was made in the episode. Next, a focus group discussion was conducted in the workshop sessions. The moderators (researchers) discussed the reasons why both teams won and lost with the participants. Next, after the discussion the participants were asked to fill out the survey question, "Who do you think should be fired?"

#### 3.3.3 Stage 3. Examining Trump's Termination Decision

During this stage, the video was resumed and the participants viewed Trump's firing decision in the episode. Next, after viewing the firing decision, the participants were asked to complete the survey and answer the questions, "Did you agree with Trump's decision?" and "Did you enjoy this case study (*The Apprentice*)?" The workshop session was concluded and the surveys were collected from the participants.

### 4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A total of 299 individuals participated in the focus groups study. Table 2 shows the demographics of the sample were as follows: (a) 50.2% were

males and 49.8% were females; (b) 61.6% of the industries in the focus groups were in manufacturing sector; and (c) In terms of ethnicity, 67.6% of the participants were Hispanic. Table 3 shows the cross tabulations of gender differences with focus group types in *The Apprentice*. The results of the data were as follows: (a) 58.3% of the males were in the marketing focus groups; and (b) 54.7% of the females were in the management focus group.

The results from the cross tabulations of the gender decisions in *The Apprentice* focus groups are shown in Table 4. Examining the question, (V3) *Who Should Be Terminated*, 54.6% of the males chose the project manager should be fired; (b) 53.6% of the males chose the team member should be fired compared to 46.3% of the females. However, 41.0% of the females chose both the project manager and the team member should be fired compared 59.0% of the males. Examining the question, (V4) *Did You Agree With Trump's Decision*, 61.0% of the males disagreed with Trump's decision compared 39.1% of the females. However, 58.6% of the females strongly disagreed with Trump's decisions compared to 41.3% of the males.

**Table 2. Demographics of gender differences in *The Apprentice***

Demographic variables	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Males	150	50.2
Females	149	49.8
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Asian	4	1.3
Black	22	6.7
Hispanic/Latino	202	67.6
White	68	22.7
Other	5	1.7
<b>Industries</b>		
Manufacturing	131	44.0
Retail trade	101	34.0
Services	25	8.4
Other industry	42	14.0
<b>Focus group types</b>		
Management	167	56.0
Marketing	113	38.0
Other/Business	19	6.4

(N = 299)

Table 5 illustrates the means and standard deviations of the focus groups. When examining (V2) *ethnicity*, males had a higher standard deviation ( $M = 3.45, SD=1.072$ ) compared to females ( $M = 3.48, SD = .941$ ). When examining

(V3) *Who Should Be Terminated*, females had a higher mean ( $M = 1.95, SD = 1.106$ ) compared to males ( $M = 2.08, SD = .995$ ), however males had a higher mean compared to females. When examining (V4) *Did You Agree With Trump's Decision*, when comparing males ( $M = 2.69, SD = 1.496$ ) to females ( $M = 2.68, SD=1.585$ ) they were nearly equal. There were minimal significant gender differences in this data.

The results from the independent sample *t*-Test are shown in Table 6. Statistically, there were significant differences between three variables: (a) (V6) *task type*, ( $t=1.867, df =297, F=14.567, p<.000$ ); (b) (V5) *focus group type*, ( $t = -2.152, df = 297, F = 6.077, p<.014$ ); and lastly a slight significance with (c) (V2) *ethnicity*, ( $t=.607, df=198, F=4.673, p<.031$ ) (see Table 6). These results indicate there were some significant differences between these variables.

Lastly, the researchers wanted to see if there were variance differences in the data, so an ANOVA was conducted. The results demonstrated there were some differences between males and females with the variable, V3 - *Who Should be Terminated*,  $F(1, 4.81) = 4.355, p<.038$ . The mean values with higher scores indicated that the firing decisions between the groups were significantly different prior to examining Trump's firing decision. When comparing to the variable, V4 - *Did you agree with Trump's Decision*, the mean values resulted in lower scores ( $M=4.81$ ). Thus, were not significant,  $F(1, .031) = 4.631, p<.861$ . Lastly, for the variable, V5 - *Focus Group Type*, the mean values resulted in lower scores ( $M = 1.57$ ).

## 5. REGRESSION MODELING

A linear regression was conducted to determine if the independent variable gender was a predictor of the results in dependent variables (management, termination decisions and others). We applied linear regression models to test how the gender influences management decisions. Table 7 shows the results of the regression of the focus groups. We used gender as a predictor variable and the questions as the dependent variable in the research on *The Apprentice*. In the regression analysis, none of the regression assumptions are violated. The results of the regression model showed that gender was moderately significant with V3-*Who should be terminated* ( $p<.038$ ) and V5-*Focus Group Type* ( $p<.032$ ). The regression results did not show gender as a significant influence as a predictor variable in the data (see Table 7).

**6. DISCUSSION**

This purpose of this study was to investigate the role of gender on management and termination decisions in *The Apprentice* with Donald Trump.

This study is one of the first that used *The Apprentice* as focus group study that demonstrates the effect of gender on management decisions. The previous research on *The Apprentice* had a central focus on observational research. Some of the prior

research tended to focus on three areas such as leadership, interpersonal skills and group dynamics. We found a gap in the prior research. Interestingly, neither of the prior research conducted any focus group nor empirical research on *The Apprentice*. To fill the gaps in the prior research, we extended the prior research on reality show by trying a new research approach by experimenting with a focus group study. The main contribution of our study is that we empirically examined the relationship between gender and management decisions.

**Table 3. Cross tabulation of gender differences with focus group types in *The Apprentice***

Descriptive crosstab and variable percentages (N = 299)				
Focus group type	Marketing	Management	Other/Bus	
Male	59.3	44.3	47.3	
Female	40.7	55.6	52.6	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Industry type	Manufacturing	Retail trade	Services	Other indus
Male	55.7	41.5	68.0	43.0
Female	44.3	58.4	32.0	57.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Males (n = 150) Females (n = 149)

**Table 4. Cross tabulation of gender differences with decisions in *The Apprentice***

V3 - Who should be terminated? Crosstab percentages (N = 299)						
Gender	Project manager	Team member	Neutral	Both PM. & Team Mem.	Total	
Male	47.3*	35.0	6.0*	12.0*	100.0	
Female	39.6*	30.2	13.0*	17.4*	100.0	
V4 - Did You Agree With Trump's Decision? Crosstab Percentages						
Gender	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Male	33.3	18.0	14.0	19.0*	16.0*	100.0
Female	33.6	32.0	10.1	12.1*	23.0*	100.0

Males (n = 150) Females (n = 149) Note: \*Denotes significance in data and noteworthy

**Table 5. Means and standard deviations results: Group means and standard deviations**

Gender groups	Means and standard deviations and n	V2 - Ethnicity	V3 - Who should be terminated?	V4 - Did you agree with Trump's decision?	V5 - focus group type	V6 - Task type	V7- Industry type
Males	Mean	3.45	<b>2.08*</b>	2.69	<b>2.76*</b>	1.05	<b>6.47*</b>
	Std. Dev.	<b>1.072*</b>	<b>.995*</b>	<b>1.496*</b>	<b>.600*</b>	<b>.318*</b>	<b>.995*</b>
	n	150	150	150	150	150	150
Females	Mean	3.48	<b>1.95*</b>	2.68	<b>2.69*</b>	1.08	<b>6.35*</b>
	Std. Dev.	<b>.941*</b>	<b>1.106*</b>	<b>1.585*</b>	<b>.565*</b>	<b>.226*</b>	<b>2.068*</b>
	n	149	149	149	149	149	149
Total	Mean	3.41	1.83	2.66	2.61	1.11	6.23
	Std. Dev.	1.007	1.058	1.539	.586	.277	1.981
	n	299	299	299	299	299	299

Note: Bold\*. Denotes critical differences in mean/standard deviation coefficients. (N =299)

**Table 6. Independent sample t-Test results: Group means and standard deviation statistics**

Independent Sample t-Test		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Mean Difference	Confidence Lower	Interval Upper
V2 – Ethnicity	Equal variances ass.	4.673	<b>.031*</b>	.607	297	.071	-.159	.300
	Equal variances not ass.			.608	292.583	.071	-.159	.300
V3 – Who Should Be Terminated?	Equal variances ass.	2.869	.091	-2.087	297	-.254	-.493	-.014
	Equal variances not ass.			-2.086	293.314	-.254	-.493	-.014
V4 – Did You Agree With Trump’s Decision?	Equal variances ass.	1.326	.250	-.175	297	-.031	-.382	.320
	Equal variances not ass.			-.175	295.784	-.031	-.382	.320
V5 – Focus Group Type	Equal variances ass.	6.077	<b>.014*</b>	-2.152	297	-.145	-.278	-.012
	Equal variances not ass.			-2.152	296.196	-.145	-.278	-.012
V6 – Task Type	Equal variances ass.	14.567	<b>.000*</b>	1.867	297	.060	-.003	.122
	Equal variances not ass.			1.870	269.100	.060	-.003	.122
V7 – Industry Type	Equal variances ass.	1.511	.220	-1.061	297	-.243	-.694	.208
	Equal variances not ass.			-1.061	294.258	-.243	-.694	.208

Note:  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ . Bold\* denotes significance in the coefficients. (N = 299)

**Table 7. Linear regression using gender as a predictor variable**

Dependent variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	95% CI	
V3 - Who should be terminated?	.254	.122	.120	.038	.014	.493
V4 - Did you agree with Trump's decision?	.031	.178	.010	.861	-.320	.382
V5 - Focus group type	.145	.067	.124	.032	.012	.278
V6 - Task type	-.060	.032	-.108	.063	-.122	.003
V7- Industry type	.243	.229	.061	.289	-.208	.694

\*Note: Used V1- gender as a predictor variable. \*\*\* $P < .01$ . \*\* $P < .001$  (N=299)



## 6.1 Summary of Findings

Our results reveal there were some significant gender differences in decision behavior. The findings from the research revealed that when examining the question, (V3) *Who Should Be Terminated*, more males felt the project manager should be fired and the team member should be fired compared to females. However, females tend to think that both the project manager and the team member should be fired compared to males. Furthermore, when examining the question, (V4) *Did You Agree With Trump's Decision*, males tended to disagree with Trump's decision compared to females. However, more females strongly disagreed with Trump's decisions compared to males. In summary, the findings revealed males tended to focus on the project manager for termination while female tended focus on both the project manager and team for termination. This is an interesting finding.

The objectives our study were to investigate four research questions: (a) Are there gender differences in terms of decision behavior; (b) Are there gender decision differences based on industry type; (c) Are there gender decision differences based on task type; and (d) Are there gender decision differences based on focus group type? First, addressing the first research question, our findings reveal there were significant gender differences in decision behavior based on *industry type*. The findings revealed that females had a higher standard deviation that deviated from the mean compared to males. Comparatively, *industry type* showed there were significant differences in the influence of gender in focus groups. Second, in addressing the third research question, our findings reveal there were some significant gender differences in decision behavior based on *task type*. The findings revealed that males had a significant higher standard deviation that deviated from the mean compared to the females. Comparatively, *task type* showed there were significant differences in the influence of gender in focus groups.

Lastly, in addressing the fourth research question, our findings revealed no significant gender differences in decision behavior based on *focus group type*. The findings revealed that groupthink may have contributed to the similarity in the mean and standard deviation scores between the genders. Comparatively, *focus type* has an influence on the decisions differences. If

males and females are in the same focus group, then their management and termination decisions tended to be similar regardless of gender. This is an interesting finding.

Interestingly, our findings were not consistent with some of the prior literature on gender and decision-making. For example, the findings in the study are inconsistent with [2] assertion that female emotions are more important to them in the decision process; or males assign more importance to the analysis of the information required to carry out the decision and to the definition of the goals or purposes of the decision. Nor could we not find any consistency with [6] findings that female decision makers are not perceived to be as *self-seeking* compared to male decision makers. That was supported by the findings that females. Based on the results of our findings, they were not consistent with their studies. Nor we could find any consistency with the findings of the some other studies [4,13,7], [5,10]. The results of our findings could be attributed to our research design (focus groups). But we stand by our findings and believe this study makes a contribution to the field of management and decision behavioral research.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study had some limitations. One key limitation of the study was the methodology; a convenience sampling method was used to recruit the focus groups' participants. The process enabled the selection of a small homogeneous group of participants comprised of industry professionals and MBA students. The homogeneity of the groups may be a limitation to study. The results may or may not likely to be representative of the general population; the results should be taken with caution.

A second limitation was the research design. The research design used a focus group study. There are disadvantages using a focus groups experimental design. Sometimes, Groupthink can be problem in focus group research due to the fact that participants may feel compelled to follow the herd [27]. Also, focus groups present a limitation because of time constraints for conducting the study. The researchers had a limited amount of time to conduct the focus group and collect data. Also, we used a limited item questionnaire. Both of these presented limitation to our research. With the exception of these two

limitations, this study was able to provide some interesting findings.

Future research can explore more gender perceptions of *The Apprentice* with other experimental research designs. For example, further research could take a mixed method approach, encompassing both a quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This would give a more holistic approach to examining gender differences in the focus groups. That could possibly provide some fascinating results. Another research opportunity could focus more on women in management and leadership roles, examining their management and decision behavior. This study could be fruitful and extend the research study and examine women decision behavior in other sectors, beyond the business. Lastly, another research opportunity could focus on the age and management experience. This line of inquiry could be interesting in examining decision behavior in terms of perceptions, attitudes and behavior across different age groups.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to investigate gender differences in the decision-making with terminations in *The Apprentice* with Donald Trump. We can conclude that gender still plays a role in management and termination decisions based on the results of this study. Another conclusion from our study is that males and females tend to focus on different aspects in management decisions when viewing *The Apprentice*. Lastly, in terms of the critical observations of the study, we can conclude the outcome of viewing *The Apprentice* can be subjective based on the individual's experience in a management role.

The major contributions of this study to the existing body of research are twofold. First, this research contributes to the field by attempting a different approach by using a focus group methodology and a reality television show as a tool for measuring gender differences and management decision behavior. Second, this research addresses a gap in the previous research by using a focus group to examine management perceptions in termination decisions. The results of our research have been quite interesting and more research should be conducted on gender differences. Further exploration in the use of focus groups with reality television shows similar to *The Apprentice* as an

experiment for studying management decisions would provide some interesting results.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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