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The Main Behavioural Characteristics that Lead to the Perception that Women are Better Managers than Men

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Abstract

This research examines behaviors that may lead to the belief that women are superior managers to men. This research looks to analyze the relationship between behaviors such as empathy, emotional intelligence, and inclusive communication, as well as transformational leadership and modern organizations, the fit of these behaviors, and the ease with which these behaviors are assessed in management roles. This study utilized a qualitative research design where participants included twelve women managers of diverse sectors, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews that focused on their management styles, work experiences, and challenges. The qualitative data collected were analyzed to identify common work-related behaviors and patterns. The main findings identified that women/s management styles contributed to the creation of inclusive and collaborative environments, and the emotional intelligence which women managers display positively influenced working teams and the organization as a whole. The study acknowledges the presence of challenges and barriers such as gender bias, male-centric workplace cultures, and restricted opportunities to gain formal and informal guidance, which affect the entry of women into management positions. The study shows that addressing the barriers to women managers will allow women to excel in management roles and lead to enhanced performance and innovation for the organization.

Keywords: Women's Leadership, Managerial Attributes, Women's Conduct

Introduction

Most studies on the effectiveness of leadership focus on traits like assertiveness, decisiveness, and dominance (Heilman et al., 2023). Traditionally, traits like these have been viewed as masculine. With the changing nature of work in the global environment (e.g., more knowledge-intensive work), leading an organization has become more challenging. Modern organizations need leaders

who understand interpersonal dynamics and can build and sustain teams and foster creativity and innovation (Budhwar et al., 2023). Emotional, social and relational skills and collaborative communication, which are traits of most women, are essential in leadership, and the current global environment makes them especially critical in leadership (Farazmand, 2022).

These traits frame this concern as critical in the modern workplace. As organizations focus more on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the issue of this paper gains added significance (Brauer et al., 2024). Pursuing an understanding of the traits and characteristics that women possess as managers can improve the construction of policies supporting women in organizations. This will be done by avoiding the biased policies that impede women's advancement in the workplace that are based on the false notion that women need protection from predatory capitalist workplace policies (Haakenstad et al., 2022). In fact, in the context of today's turbulent and unpredictable world, which is characterized by continuous changes, the roles and the leadership behaviors that are typical of the women stereotype may offer a competitive advantage. By tackling this issue, we are extending the discourse on the evolution of leadership and the possible contribution of diverse management styles to the success of organizations in today's global marketplace (Hariram et al., 2023).

Most studies of male and female leadership have shown that the primary focus of these studies is on male and female leadership style (Fuller et al., 2022). Few studies provide an understanding of the specific behavioral traits that are the grounds for the increasing belief that women are very effective managers in the current workplace (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). There is also very limited research on how the specific traits that women possess and that are, in fact, very effective in the current workplace are aligned and evenly matched to the demands of modern organizations, and that provide the barriers that prevent organizations from fully employing these traits (Nowiński et al., 2017). There is an abundance of research that shows that women leaders build and sustain more cohesive and satisfied teams (Bhattacherjee et al., 2019). Yet, women are underrepresented in many organizations at the most senior levels. This perpetuates the marginalization of women and indicates that the barriers are embedded in the structures of organizations as well as the biases against women (Puntoni et al., 2020). The underlying problem is the structure of organizations. They are not constructed to value women's emotional and relational skills that they bring to the workplace (Amis et al., 2019). The results of this research provide considerable value to academia and practice alike. Identifying behavioral competencies that lead to success for female managers enables organizations to create new developmental, evaluative and diversity frameworks that eschew traditional male-centric constructs. Identification of specific obstacles empowers policymakers to devise specific interventions aimed at narrowing the gender leadership gap.

Objectives

- To examine the primary elements of behavior that lead to the impression that women are more successful managers.
- To evaluate how these elements of behavior influence the success of management in different organizational contexts.
- To analyze the ingrained, systemic attitudes that obstruct acknowledgement of women's leadership skills.

Research Questions

1. What are the key behavioral attributes that lead to the impression that women are better managers than men?
2. How do these attributes of behavior impact the effectiveness of management in different organizational contexts

3. What are the systemic factors and behavioral barriers that restrict the acknowledgement and application of the skills exhibited by women in leadership positions within organizations?

Methodology

Research Philosophy and Design

Considering that reality is socially constructed, and that reality is best perceived via the subjective accounts of people, this study is positioned within the interpretative research philosophy. The study used an exploratory, qualitative approach to gain a deep and rich understanding of the leadership skills and competencies that women managers believe are crucial to their practices. A cross-sectional time horizon meant data were gathered at a single point in time.

Sampling

The Sample comprised 12 women managers with leadership positions in management, and the Sample was drawn using a purposive, non-probability sampling approach. The Sample was drawn from a cross-section of the financial, health, education, and technological sectors.

Data Collection

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires were the main modes of data collection. Following a comprehensive review of the literature on the subject, the instruments contained queries on challenge-based leadership and empathy, and on the inclusive, ethical, and communicative decision-making styles, as well as the problems that are peculiar to women executives.

Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data and involved the analysis and reporting of the prevalence of particular ideas and themes within the participants' responses. This was done using open coding on the interview transcripts to capture responses, and then clustering the codes into major ideas supporting the grappling themes of the study, e.g. empathy, communication, and barriers.

Ethical Considerations

The highest level of ethics was maintained. Informed consent was obtained. Participation included full disclosure of the study's aim and the option of leaving the study with no consequence. The study's purpose and the right to withdraw at any moment without consequence were given to the participants. The data were made anonymous, and all responses were recorded in a locked storage facility that used transit encryption. The Office of Research provided permission to continue in the pertinent Institutional Review Board before data were collected.

Results

Key Behavioral Attributes Leading to the View of Women as Superior Managers Compared to Men

These findings have pinpointed four key attributes of women managers' leadership styles. They are empathy and emotional attunement, inclusive communication, transformational leadership, and ethical leadership with integrity. Empathy and emotional attunement were the first to be identified. The female leaders interviewed for this research placed an importance on the need to 'know' the emotions, needs and concerns of employees, as this would help with the resolution of conflicts, overall enhancing the loyalty of the team and helping tackle issues before they become major problems. The leadership style helped promote the well-being of employees and increased

productivity in the organization. The next of the common themes was described as inclusive communication. The participants placed an importance on clear lines of communication to encourage all team members to communicate and promote collaborative and innovative teamwork and positively impact both the satisfaction and performance of employees.

The results of the research identified a general inclination to transformational leadership in women managers. Respondents discussed motivating employees to work toward a common vision, to be inspired to work during adverse conditions and to encourage employees to work beyond the limits of what was expected of them. Managers could inspire and lead by example to create a positive outcome from a challenging situation.

The last of the desired management skills was described as ethical leadership with integrity. The participants discussed the importance of having an honest and fair approach to higher standards of ethics. These were the cornerstones for trust and cohesion within a team, which helped facilitate a positive working climate within the organization and healthy, positive relationships with all stakeholders.

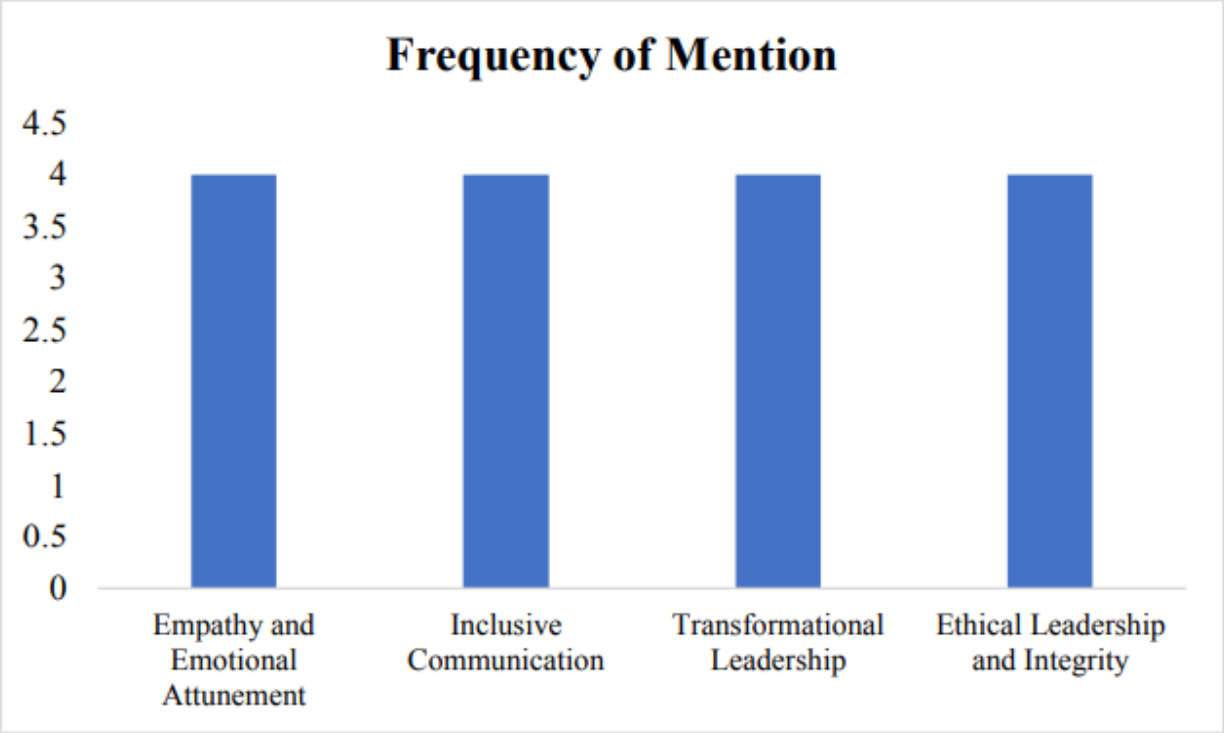


Figure 1: Key Behavioral Attributes Referenced by Respondents

Impact on Managerial Effectiveness in Different Organizational Contexts

This research aims to identify the impact of various behavioral attributes on managerial effectiveness in different organizational contexts. The researcher interviewed female leaders and identified how the previously mentioned behavior styles (empathetic/inclusive communication, transformational/ethical leadership) affect results in the workplace. The interviewed female leaders highlighted how these behaviors elevate managerial effectiveness in their respective industries.

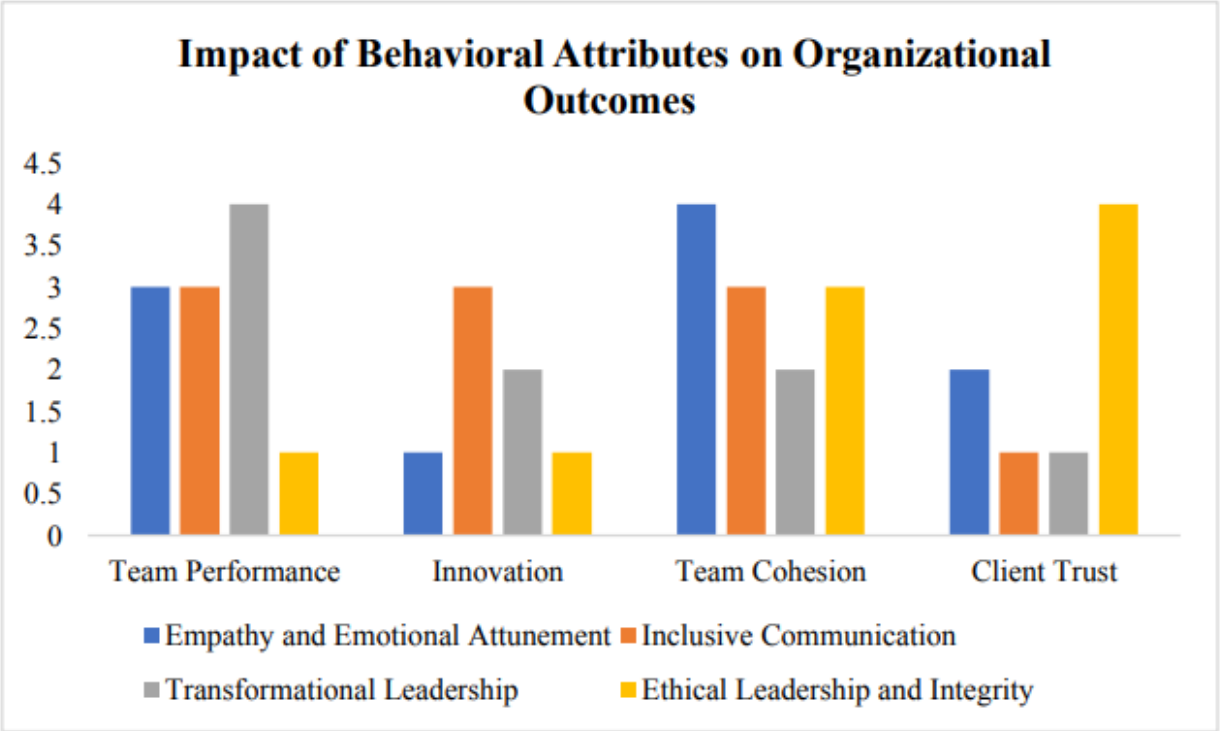


Figure 2: Effects of Behavioral Traits on Business Results

The research concluded that empathy, **inclusive communication,** and **transformational leadership** had significant positive correlations with managerial effectiveness among female leaders. Empathy allows leaders to identify their team's emotional and career-related needs, which can lead to more effective conflict management, a decrease in workplace friction, and an increase in the overall productivity of the team. The evidence indicates the success of resolution increases with the effective management of higher levels of conflict and stress. **Inclusive communication** is a model that increases innovation, engagement, and diversity while aiding in the completion of informed decisions. This is because every team member is heard and appreciated. **Transformational leadership** increases employees' willingness to work toward a common goal by providing a vision. This leadership style increases productivity and positive work perception, while decreasing employee turnover. This also promotes innovation and improves the perception of the organization in the marketplace.

Ethical Leadership and Integrity

The results underscore ethical leadership and integrity as critical factors in improving women's managerial effectiveness. Participants stated that trust, teamwork, and collaboration result from the high ethical standards of women leaders. They said that ethical conduct enhances the reputation and increases the business opportunities and trust of an organization's clients. Integrity promotes compliance and decreases the operational risks of an organization, improving the long-term sustainability of an organization. Since clients trust women leaders with ethical conduct, ethical conduct in leadership is even more critical. Conclusively, ethical leadership is vital for women's managerial effectiveness, the success of an organization, and the sustainable relationships of an organization.

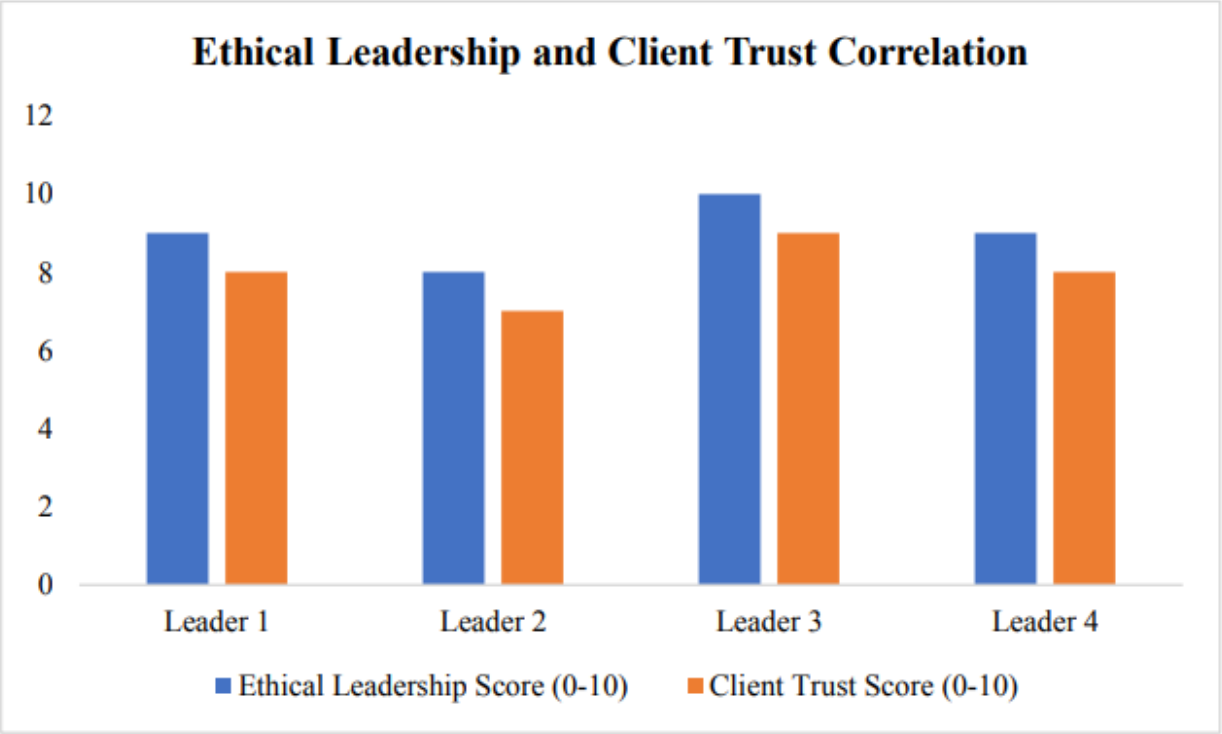


Figure 3: Ethical Leadership and Client Trust Correlation

Challenges in Acknowledging and Leveraging Attributes of Female Leaders

The investigation concentrated on the obstacles to the acknowledgement and harnessing of female leadership attributes in businesses and discovered a number of them. **Systemic bias and gender stereotypes** entail women being branded inferior as leaders, which creates fewer promotion opportunities and erodes self-confidence. There are a number of **practices in organizational cultures** that can create gaps in leadership, such as exclusion from informal networks, organizational inflexibility, and weak diversity policies. There is a low **supply of mentors and role** models, which results in weak sponsorship and low career mobility. Furthermore, **work/life asymmetries** (inflexible working hours and demanding domestic responsibilities such as being the primary caregiver) present barriers to women aspiring for leadership positions.

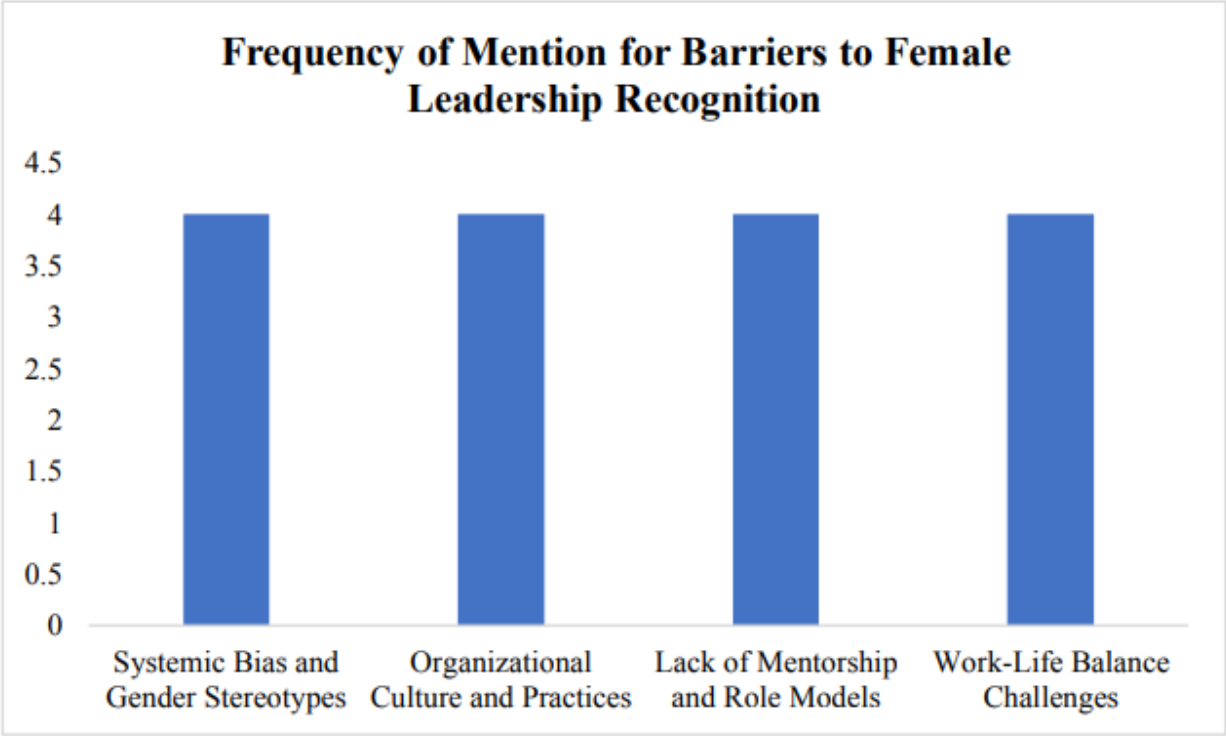


Figure 4: Frequency of Mention for Barriers to Female Leadership Recognition

Driving Organizational Success with Transformational Leadership

The results suggest that transformational leadership positively impacts success in organizations. Female leaders in the framework of transformational leadership inspire and energize, leading to the completion of work and projects and better synergy within the organization. Data from team members indicated that teams under women's supervision experienced successful outcomes, such as the launching of a product and improved work performance and presence. Transformational leadership stimulates innovativeness by establishing a positive and supportive work climate that favors and encourages cooperation and creativity. Considering the above, the female transformational leaders are pivotal to the growth of an organization, the fulfillment of objectives, the participatory nature of employees, as well as the competitiveness of the organization in the long run.



Figure 5: Key Impact Areas of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Success

Discussion

Results show that when women are perceived as effective managers, it is mainly because of their empathetic nature and their emotional social intelligence, inclusive communication, transformational and ethical leadership. These traits are congruent with leadership theories and modern studies that emphasize the role of positive relations and valued collaborative leadership in determining the effectiveness of an organization. The findings contradict the traditional leadership theories that focus on command, control, and a rigid hierarchy of decisions, and show that the leadership models of women leaders are becoming more relevant. Results emphasize the role of empathy and emotional social intelligence in managerial effectiveness. Participants articulated the need to understand employees' emotions, provide support, and help foster and maintain positive workplace relationships. The result supports recent findings that emotionally intelligent leaders promote strong employee engagement, increase employee satisfaction, and improve team relationships (Ameen et al., 2022). The studies of Brown et al. (2020) show that women frequently attain higher scores in leadership areas of relationship, integrity, initiative, and employee motivation. The current findings support the emerging belief that empathy is not simply a trait but is a leadership capability that is strategic in nature and has positive implications for the performance of an organization. Another notable aspect discussed in the study focused on the communication styles of women leaders and how they differ from men leaders. Female leaders showed a lot of traits regarding motivation of team/individuals, supporting the empowerment of team/individuals through creativity, and most importantly supporting the expression of diverse opinions. This is similar to many studies showing the significance of psychological safety, employee voice, and participatory decision-making within the organization to help in the growth of innovation and organizational performance (Bakker et al., 2022; DíAz et al., 2019). This type of communication creates a workplace environment of trust, respect, and value to all employees (Kraus et al., 2021). This is even more important in the fast-changing, diverse contemporary

organizations that are constantly under pressure to remain competitive and achieve high performance from their teams.

The study also addresses the encouraging elements of women leaders in organizations and how women leaders view employees within the context of a shared vision. Most respondents stated that women leaders helped in the development and improvement of the members of their teams through motivation and innovation. This is in line with the suggestions for women leaders' perception of leadership that focus on inspiration, empowerment, and mentorship (Dwivedi et al., 2020; De Vries et al., 2018). Transformational leadership styles are also connected to the improvement of the overall performance of an organization, and the increased retention of employees and reduced turnover. Transformational leadership behaviors are also shown by recent studies in sectors that require a high demand for specialization and technicality, like healthcare, education, and technology, to enhance leadership effectiveness greatly (Berrey, 2018). Another contributing factor to effective management was ethical leadership and integrity. Respondents identified fairness, honesty, responsibility, and the maintenance of ethical standards as the basis for trust and credibility in an organization. There is a growing academic consensus that ethical leadership improves employee morale, commitment to the organization, and trust of the stakeholders (Sánchez-García et al., 2023). In the modern era, ethical leadership is considered an essential aspect of the long-term success of an organization. The participants' feedback indicated that women leaders positively impacted team cohesion and the trust of the organization, and that women leaders' focus on ethics positively impacted the organization's image (Huang et al., 2022). In spite of the benefits of women in leadership positions, the study identified women in leadership positions' lack of recognition and advancement. Barriers such as Systemic sexism, gender stereotyping, being outside of powerful networks, a lack of mentors, and the balance of work and family responsibilities are ongoing issues for women in leadership positions. Results are consistent with feminist theories of organization and modern studies that show leadership is often, and still very much, equated with masculine attributes (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Amis et al., 2019). Women are often said to be in a 'double bind' situation whereby, if they are self-assured, they are criticized, but if they are self-effacing, they are said to be overly self-assured. The results suggest that empathy, inclusive communication, transformational leadership, and ethical integrity all possess modern relevance and utility as leadership traits. Although they are important to the effectiveness of an organization, stubborn structural and cultural barriers impede women's access to leadership roles. Regarding the methods to bring women to leadership roles and achieve gender equality, organizations should enhance diversity policies, mentorship programs, inclusive cultures and flexible work practices.

Recommendations

Organizations are encouraged to recognize the common leadership characteristics and styles that women demonstrate and to promote these qualities. For example, organizations can implement policies that are diversity-focused, create mentoring programs, apply unbiased performance evaluations, employ women and men equally, and provide leadership training programs. Work schedule flexibility will help eliminate gender barriers and improve the recruitment of women in leadership.

Limitations

The study was mostly secondary and lacked effective perceptions of leadership, which may limit its applicability. Industries, cultures, and organizational distinctions were not thoroughly investigated. Additionally, the lack of institutional restrictions and intersectional limitations that include race, class, age, etc. constricted the perceptions of women in leadership.

Conclusion

The research reveals that women have distinct leadership qualities instrumental in effective management. For instance, empathy, active, inclusive communication, transformational and ethical leadership boost cohesion and engagement in teams and foster innovation and productivity while ensuring the organization sustains its mission. Such qualities enable leadership to navigate the intricate demands of the workplace, which emphasize collaboration and adaptability, in addition to maintaining ethical integrity. Notwithstanding such qualities, leadership opportunities for women are grossly limited. The combination of negative stereotypes, biases and male-dominated cultures in organizations, coupled with scant opportunities for mentorship and difficulty in balancing work and family obligations, impedes the ability to appreciate and harness the leadership potential of women. These hurdles constantly deny many competent women the opportunity to occupy higher, executive management positions. The research demonstrates the need for organizations to adopt leadership models that are more inclusive, strengthen frameworks for diversity and mentorship, and institute more flexible work policies. The recognition and support of women in leading positions make a case for improved performance and sustained innovation, and foster equity and inclusion of women in leadership positions.

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