

Gender and Management: Women's Leadership, Structural Barriers, and Social Dynamics

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ABSTRACT– This article analyses female leadership in organisations by highlighting the structural barriers, gender stereotypes, and social dynamics that shape their career paths. Based on qualitative literature studies, this research examines works in organisational and gender sociology, social psychology, and management studies published over the past two decades. Thematic analysis was used to synthesise findings regarding unequal access to strategic positions, biased assessment processes, and the subjective experiences of female leaders in negotiating their professional identities. The results show that seemingly neutral organisational structures contain formal rules and informal practices that favour masculine leadership figures, including through recruitment, promotion, project assignment, and work arrangements that assume unlimited availability. Stereotypes about women's competence and commitment, particularly those related to motherhood and family work, result in double standards in the assessment of their leadership styles and reduce their opportunities to gain strategic support. Theoretically, this article reinforces the argument that the gender gap in leadership is the result of multiple interactions between structure, culture, and agency. Practically, these findings indicate the need for a transformation of human resource policies, work design, and evaluation practices that explicitly challenge gender bias and open space for the expression of diverse female leadership.

Keywords: gender, women's leadership, management, organizational sociology, stereotypes, structural barriers, social dynamics.

A. INTRODUCTION

Changes in modern work structures show an increase in the number of women entering

managerial and decision-making positions in various sectors. However, complex gender dynamics continue to play a role, as seen in the challenges of work-family balance in the era of hybrid work, where unequal domestic burdens and social norms can exacerbate pressure on women in careers (Warin, 2021; Irfan et al., 2023). Gender distribution in leadership positions still shows a striking imbalance, especially at the middle and top levels. Various studies show that the barriers faced by women are not merely explicit restrictions, but operate through subtle mechanisms rooted in gender norms, organizational culture, and social expectations that bind the behavior of men and women differently (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In a sociological framework, this is related to how social structures regulate access to resources, power, and symbolic recognition. Research on women's leadership in organizations therefore requires a sensitive reading of language, everyday work practices, and the subjective experiences of women leaders in interpreting and responding to the dynamics of their work environment.

At the organizational level, female leaders often face long-established structures that tend to concentrate authority in male figures. Acker (2006) describes organizations as regimes of inequality that produce and maintain hierarchical relationships through recruitment, promotion, performance evaluation, and division of labor procedures that appear neutral but in practice benefit certain groups. As a result, women who enter managerial positions often face double standards they are expected to demonstrate leadership competencies that are considered assertive while maintaining a feminine image that meets social expectations. The social dynamics of discrimination such as this not only affect career paths but also have a direct impact on the psychological well-being of individuals who must constantly negotiate in a biased environment (Udjari et al., 2021). This

tension creates additional psychological and emotional burdens, as women need to negotiate their professional identities between organizational demands and gender narratives that are deeply rooted in society.

Sociologically, this pattern is closely related to how society constructs masculinity and femininity as categories that carry normative consequences. Ridgeway (2011) explains that gender functions as an interpretive framework that influences how individuals assess the competence and authority of others. In organizations, this framework manifests itself in the assumption that ideal leadership is closely associated with characteristics attributed to men, such as being rational, dominant, and task-oriented. The characteristics often attributed to women, such as empathy and relational orientation, are often considered less suitable for mainstream leadership standards. This condition creates an arena in which female leaders must constantly prove their worth, even when they have qualifications and performance that are equal to or higher than their male counterparts (Issalillah et al., 2022).

At the individual experience level, female leadership in organisations raises complex identity issues. Ely et al. (2011) show that leadership development programmes that ignore the gender dimension often fail to meet the specific needs of female leaders, as they do not recognise the stereotypes and social expectations that limit their mobility. This oversight can create a dissonance between the formal skills being taught and the informal, gendered challenges women leaders face in practice, leaving them to navigate these obstacles without adequate institutional support or a cohesive framework for understanding their unique position.

Experiences such as having one's authority questioned, opinions ignored, or being labelled as emotional when responding assertively can lead to psychological fatigue and layered coping strategies, such as changing communication styles, re-regulating emotional expression, and choosing safe arenas for interaction. An interpretive sociological approach helps to reveal how female leaders interpret these experiences, negotiate the meaning of work, and construct narratives about their career journeys in an environment that remains masculine-oriented.

The first prominent issue is the persistence of structural barriers faced by women, despite

various formal policies promoting equal opportunities. These barriers are reflected in the scarcity of women in top positions, wage gaps, and promotion paths that are less accommodating to reproductive and caregiving responsibilities. Acker (2006) asserts that organizational structures often conceal gender bias behind seemingly neutral procedures, such as demands for long working hours and unlimited availability, which are more easily met by individuals who do not bear a heavy domestic workload. For women leaders, these conditions create a more difficult career path and reduce the space for sustainable leadership capacity development.

The second issue relates to gender stereotypes attached to female leaders. Eagly and Carli (2007) argue that when traditional gender norms clash with organizational expectations of leaders, a discrepancy arises that place women in a double dilemma. If they display an assertive leadership style, they risk being perceived as aggressive or unpleasant. Conversely, if they display a style that is too relational, they are labeled as indecisive and their managerial capacity is questioned. These stereotypes are not merely a matter of image, but influence the performance appraisal process, the granting of trust, and promotion opportunities, thus having a real impact on the sustainability of female leaders' careers.

The third issue arises in the social dynamics of the workplace that shape informal support networks and opportunities. Ridgeway (2011) shows that gender bias influences who is invited to discussions, given strategic information, or invited to important decision-making forums. In many organizations, informal networks and exclusive clubs tend to be male-dominated, making it difficult for women to access the social capital that is important for career advancement. Ely et al. (2011) highlights that without structural support and a gender-conscious organizational culture, female leaders often find themselves isolated, so that their efforts to rise to higher positions take place in a less supportive arena.

Research on women's leadership from a sociological and managerial perspective is highly relevant in the contemporary workplace, which is characterized by demands for transparency, accountability, and diversity. Public and private organizations in various countries face normative and regulatory pressure to demonstrate their commitment to

gender equality at all levels. Although corporate regulations and policies are increasingly explicit in supporting women's participation, various empirical reports show that representation gaps and career barriers persist in more subtle forms. Sociological analysis is needed to explain how structures, cultures, and daily interactions in organizations continue to produce inequalities, even though official documents claim equality.

The development of gender and organizational studies over the past two decades offers a rich theoretical framework for examining the relationship between social structures, individual agency, and institutional change. Discussions about diversity and inclusion often focus on quantitative indicators, such as the number of women in certain positions, while the dynamics of stereotypes, power relations, and the subjective experiences of women leaders receive less attention. Research that places women's experiences as a source of knowledge, while linking them to patterns of inequality at the organizational level, can contribute to the development of organizational sociology theory and management practices that are more gender-sensitive.

This research aims to systematically analyze how structural barriers, stereotypes, and social dynamics in organizations affect the careers of female leaders using the lens of gender sociology and organizational sociology. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich our understanding of the mechanisms of gender inequality in modern work structures. Practically, the results of this research are expected to provide a basis for the development of policies and managerial practices that are more sensitive to the experiences of female leaders, so that efforts to encourage the presence of women in strategic positions do not stop at representation figures, but are reflected in the quality of access to power, recognition, and career development opportunities.

B. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative literature study design that focuses on searching, assessing, and synthesizing scientific works on gender, leadership, and organizations. Literature studies are positioned as a method capable of producing theoretical mapping and structured conceptual arguments through a process of selection and critical reading of relevant sources (Booth et al., 2016; Snyder, 2019). The

databases used include Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The search process was carried out in stages, starting with the identification of key articles that were frequently referenced, then continuing with the snowballing technique to find additional publications that were thematically related to the research focus.

Inclusion criteria were established to select articles and books that were highly relevant to the issues of women's leadership, organizational structure, gender stereotypes, and sociological analysis of the world of work. Publications included had to be from reputable journals or academic publishers, present a clear theoretical basis, and contribute to the understanding of gender relations in organizations. Conversely, popular publications, reports without scientific references, or writings that do not contain explicit sociological analysis were excluded from the corpus. The selection process followed the stages of identification, screening of titles and abstracts, and full-text assessment as recommended in the systematic review guidelines (Snyder, 2019). To assess methodological quality and clarity of reporting, this research adapted a critical appraisal checklist that emphasized precision of purpose, clarity of methods, consistency of findings, and coherence between data and interpretation.

Data synthesis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach that utilized initial coding steps, grouping codes into themes, and reviewing themes to ensure they were in line with the research objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thomas & Harden, 2008). First, the results and discussion sections of each article were read repeatedly to identify text passages related to structural barriers, gender stereotypes, social dynamics in organizations, and the experiences of female leaders. Second, key quotations were given open codes describing their conceptual content, and these codes were then consolidated into broader thematic categories. Third, the initial themes were compared across sources to examine consistency, variation, and possible relationships between themes. This procedure was accompanied by reflective note-taking to monitor the researcher's assumptions and maintain interpretive accuracy. To increase reliability, the coding and theme formation processes were repeatedly reviewed with reference to the

research objectives and the theoretical framework of gender sociology and organizational sociology (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Booth et al., 2016).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural Barriers and Gender Stereotypes in Women's Leadership Careers

Modern organizational structures are often presented as meritocratic, yet research shows that there are patterns of work arrangements that systematically favor men in leadership paths. Oakley (2000) identifies various structural barriers such as recruitment and promotion processes that rely on informal networks, strategic project assignments that tend to be given to men, and performance evaluation systems that are insensitive to gender bias. In many organizations, career paths to top positions are closely linked to experience in certain functions, such as finance or operations, which have historically been dominated by men. The availability of long working hours, demands for geographic mobility, and norms of physical presence become an unbalanced filter for women who bear greater domestic responsibilities. Structural barriers are thus not merely explicit discriminatory rules, but rather a series of work arrangements that cumulatively narrow women's opportunities to reach senior leadership positions (Oakley, 2000; Linehan & Scullion, 2008).

One key mechanism that explains the slowdown in women's careers is the theory of "role congruity" proposed by Eagly and Karau (2002). They argue that feminine gender stereotypes, which emphasize warmth and compliance, are considered less consistent with leadership stereotypes that emphasize assertiveness and dominance. This incongruity leads to negative assessments of women when they attempt to fulfill the demands of leadership roles. Heilman (2001) shows that women who succeed in fields considered masculine are often perceived as less likable, even when their performance is high, because they are seen as violating gender expectations. Consequently, female leaders face a double dilemma: if they demonstrate strong competence, they risk being perceived as unpleasant; if they are warmer, they are judged as less competent. This situation directly influences promotion decisions, the assignment of important projects, and managerial trust.

Social psychology and management research confirms that gender stereotypes operate through seemingly objective assessment mechanisms. In an experimental study, Heilman (2001) showed that when performance information is ambiguous, evaluators are more likely to doubt the competence of women than men for leadership positions. Hoobler, Wayne, and Lemmon (2009) found that managers who believe women are less committed to their careers due to family responsibilities tend to assign leadership development tasks to male employees. This stereotype of "lack of commitment" often arises unconsciously, even before women actually have children or request flexible work arrangements (Sayuti et al., 2023). These stereotypes not only harm individuals but can also hinder organisational effectiveness by narrowing the pool of available leadership talent and ignoring the potential contributions of half the workforce (Darmawan, 2024). Stereotypes thus act as an initial filter that places women on a narrower career path, resulting in far fewer women with a track record that qualifies them for promotion to top positions.

Structural dimensions and gender stereotypes are also evident in the division of tasks attached to managerial positions. Hoyt (2010) shows that women in leadership positions are often directed toward "supporting" fields, such as human resources or communications, while men tend to dominate the "core" functions of the organization, such as finance or operations. This division has long-term consequences, as experience in core functions is often seen as a prerequisite for occupying the highest executive positions. Ryan and Haslam (2005) add that when women do attain top positions, it often occurs in situations where the organization is in crisis, a phenomenon they call the glass cliff. The chances of success are smaller and the risk of being blamed for failure is greater, making female leaders even more vulnerable (Haslam & Ryan, 2008).

Another aspect that reinforces structural barriers is the way organizations interpret and regulate work related to family. Correll et al. (2007) point to the existence of a "motherhood penalty," which is a decline in the assessment of competence and commitment of women who are mothers compared to women without children and men. The research shows that female candidates who identify as mothers tend to receive lower salary offers and have fewer

opportunities to be called for interviews. Kossek et al. (2017), through a meta-analytic research, show that family-friendly work policies are often not accompanied by changes in values among managers, so that the use of these policies sometimes creates stigma for employees, especially women, who are considered less serious about their careers. In the realm of leadership, this stigma can hinder female leaders' access to strategic projects that require long working hours or intensive travel, while reinforcing the assumption that they are less suited to hold the highest responsibilities.

At the managerial decision-making level, bias against female leaders often manifests in subtle ways that are difficult to prove formally. Hoobler et al. (2014) found that supervisors who assume women are more focused on their families tend to give them lower leadership potential ratings, regardless of their actual performance. This results in fewer opportunities to participate in advanced leadership training and career acceleration programs. Ibarra et al. (2013) highlight that female leader are often excluded from strong sponsorship networks that can pave the way to the top of the organization. They may have mentors, but rarely have influential sponsors who actively advocate for promotions and important assignments. The combination of perceptual bias and weak structural support makes women's career paths to senior positions much more winding.

Informal networks and subtle exclusionary practices in the workplace also contribute to reinforcing structural barriers. Linehan and Scullion (2008), in their research on female managers in international assignments, show that decisions about who is sent abroad are often made through informal discussions among male managers, leaving women behind in terms of information flow and opportunities. Hoyt (2010) adds that important networking forums, such as after-hours business meetings, sporting events, or exclusive clubs, are often accessible only to men. This reduces the opportunities for female leaders to build the social capital necessary to access strategic information and political support. With the reduced efficiency of informal networks, it is more difficult for women to obtain the support they need to compete at the highest levels.

From a psychosocial perspective, these stereotypes and structural barriers have the potential to create a tense work environment

for female leaders (Ramle & Mardikaningsih, 2024). Hoyt's (2010) research shows that exposure to negative stereotypes about women's leadership abilities can trigger what is called stereotype threat, a condition in which individuals worry about confirming negative stereotypes directed at their group. In this situation, women may experience decreased self-confidence, increased anxiety, and suboptimal performance, especially when in highly visible tasks such as strategic presentations or important negotiations. In the long term, repeated experiences of being questioned or belittled can cause female leaders to avoid certain situations, reduce their aspirations for promotion, or even leave organizations that they perceive as unsupportive.

In aggregate, these empirical findings indicate that the career barriers faced by female leaders cannot be understood as solely a matter of individual choice. Oakley (2000) has long emphasized that narratives of women's "lack of ambition" often obscure the fact that organizational structures and gender stereotypes narrow the available options. More recent studies reinforce that even when women demonstrate high performance, invest in self-development, and express aspirations to occupy top positions, their opportunities remain smaller than those of men with similar profiles (Hoobler et al., 2014; Kossek et al., 2017). This indicates that gender inequality in leadership is rooted in power relations embedded in formal rules, informal procedures, and biased assessment schemes. A sensitive reading of social structures and the symbolic meaning of gender is crucial to uncovering how these barriers work.

At the organizational narrative level, discussions about women's leadership are often reduced to discourses about "extraordinary women" who have broken through the glass ceiling through personal perseverance. Such narratives risk placing the responsibility for change entirely on individual women, as if organizational structures were neutral and the main obstacle were psychological resilience. In fact, sociological studies show that individual success does not erase the patterns of inequality experienced by many other women in similar career paths. An approach that highlights inspirational stories without critiquing structures can cause organizations to ignore the need for change in promotion, assignment, and performance appraisal systems, as well as ignore the voices

of women who experience more subtle marginalization in their daily work lives.

At the subjective experience level, female leaders who face structural barriers and stereotypes often develop complex adaptation strategies to maintain career sustainability. They adjust their communication style, carefully manage their emotional expressions, and choose the organizational social arena they consider safest to negotiate their leadership identity. Although these strategies can help them survive, the constant burden of self-management increases emotional exhaustion and reduces the space to explore more authentic forms of leadership. This picture confirms that analysis of structural barriers and gender stereotypes cannot be separated from the experiential dimension, as both intersect in the daily lives of female leaders who must constantly navigate overlapping organizational demands and social expectations.

Social Dynamics, Identity Strategies, and Women's Leadership Experiences in Organizations

Social dynamics within organizations shape spaces of interaction that greatly influence how women leaders negotiate authority and acceptance. Ely and Meyerson (2000) show that gender operates as a subtext in communication patterns, division of labor, and ways of assessing daily competence, through spontaneous comments, jokes, or subtle disregard for certain proposals. Female leaders often report being interrupted more frequently, having their ideas taken over by male colleagues, or having their contributions only recognized after being re-voiced by colleagues with stronger symbolic positions. This situation is not merely a matter of interpersonal ethics, but is related to the way organizations organize meeting spaces, set rules for speaking, and interpret assertiveness as something that is valid when it comes from men, but is considered excessive when expressed by women (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Ely & Thomas, 2001). Within such a framework, female leadership is formed through repeated negotiations with unwritten norms that determine who is worthy of being heard.

In a work environment that is highly dependent on teamwork, the experience of women in a numerical minority position presents its own challenges. Ely and Thomas (2001) found that the configuration of work group membership

influences experiences of participation, psychological safety, and the likelihood of voicing dissenting views. When women are merely token members in a male-dominated group, their every action tends to be interpreted as representing the entire gender group, rather than as an individual expression. Kanter, although her work is older, has shown that token positions encourage excessive scrutiny, stereotypical expectations, and pressure to conform to dominant norms; these findings have been reconfirmed by recent studies examining women on boards of directors and in top management (Sealy & Singh, 2010; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014). In such situations, female leaders need to manage their presence strategically, while bearing the burden of symbolic representation that their male colleagues do not experience.

In the realm of everyday interactions, female leaders face what Rudman and Phelan (2008) refer to as “backlash,” which is a negative reaction to women who exhibit agentic behaviors such as assertiveness, competitiveness, or dominance. Their experimental research shows that women who exhibit strong leadership styles are often perceived as less likable, less friendly, or “too ambitious,” even when their performance is good. The pressure to conform within a group often becomes a social mechanism that reinforces this negative reaction, as individuals or groups tend to enforce prevailing norms by sanctioning deviant behaviour (Özkaya, 2022). Rosette and Tost (2010) add that assessments of female leaders are greatly influenced by the frame of reference: when an organization has a long history of male leaders, any unfamiliar deviations in style are more easily criticized. In the long term, such interpersonal judgments shape a social climate that encourages women to restrain strong leadership expressions in order to avoid social sanctions, which in turn hinders them from demonstrating their full potential in the managerial arena.

The dimension of identity is an important field in the leadership experience of women. Ibarra and Petriglieri (2016) argue that leadership development is always related to the process of “identity work,” which is an individual's reflective and performative effort to answer the question of who they are as a leader. For women, this identity work takes place under the shadow of stereotypes about the ideal leader, who tends to be masculine, so they must bridge the gap between their self-image, gender

expectations, and the image of a leader valued by the organization. Karelaia and Guillén (2014) show that women who are able to combine their professional and gender identities into a coherent narrative tend to have higher self-confidence and resilience. The process of achieving this coherence is not automatic; it requires space for reflection, social support, and recognition that leadership styles that emphasize empathy and relational work have legitimate value.

The relationship between leadership style and social acceptance of female leaders is evident in research on transformational leadership. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) found that women tend to use transformational styles and reward-oriented transactional behaviours more often than men. Kark and Eagly (2010) expanded on these findings by showing that transformational styles open up space for closer follower identification and strong emotional support.

Perceptions and acceptance of this leadership style cannot be separated from the ever-changing social constructs of masculinity and femininity in society, which frame expectations of the behaviour of female and male leaders (Negara & Khayru, 2022). However, the application of transformational leadership by women is not always automatically accepted, as positive perceptions remain dependent on the extent to which the organisational environment values this quality as part of the definition of legitimate leadership. In highly hierarchical organisations, women's transformational leadership style is sometimes seen as lacking assertiveness, while their directive style is criticised as being too harsh, so that judgements remain tied to prevailing gender meanings.

Social relationships formed outside formal hierarchical lines greatly influence female leaders' opportunities to gain strategic support (Infante & Darmawan, 2022). Perrewé and Nelson (2004); Kumra and Vinnicombe (2010) show that professional women often face double demands they are expected to demonstrate high competence while also engaging in image management and organizational politics to gain recognition. Gender norms that negatively judge selling oneself make women reluctant to use strategies that are as aggressive as those used by men in building networks and highlighting achievements. Sealy and Singh (2010), in a study of women on boards of directors, show that access to elite networks still largely depends on

informal relationships that flow through masculine social circles. This creates a paradox: organizations claim to seek "the best talent," but informal selection mechanisms continue to flow along paths that are less open to women.

Formal and informal social support through mentoring and sponsoring are important resources in career navigation. O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) show that women who reach top positions often have a history of strong mentoring relationships, but the form of support they receive tends to differ from that of men. Women more often receive support in the form of advice, feedback, and psychological reinforcement, while men receive more instrumental support in the form of direct recommendations for strategic assignments. Vinkenburch et al. (2011) add that senior leaders' preferences for successor candidates are often biased toward styles that are considered "visionary" and "assertive" according to masculine patterns, making it easier for sponsors to promote men as natural heirs. This imbalance means that female leaders must work harder to transform mentoring relationships into concrete support in the form of promotions and access to high-value projects.

Social dynamics are not uniform across all sectors (Nalin, 2021). Sabharwal (2015), who researched women from minority groups in the public sector, found that the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and minority status exacerbates experiences of exclusion. Women from racial minority groups reported higher frequencies of experiences of being doubted for their competence, compared to women from majority groups and minority men. Fitzsimmons et al. (2014) showed that social class background and family education also influence how women interpret the "unwritten rules" in organizations. Those from families with high cultural capital find it easier to understand unwritten codes of communication and corporate etiquette, while others need more time to adapt. These findings show that women's leadership experiences are not singular, but are influenced by complex intersections of identity within social structures.

Interaction with other women in high positions does not always result in automatic solidarity. Derks et al. (2016) discuss a phenomenon called the "queen bee," which is a situation where some women who have risen to high positions distance themselves from other women and adopt dominant norms to maintain their status. They may emphasize that their success is solely

the result of personal effort, while minimizing the structural barriers experienced by other women. Although not all female leaders exhibit this pattern, its existence indicates that the pressure to assimilate with masculine norms and prove oneself as an “exception” can erode the potential for networks of support among women. In the framework of organizational sociology, this phenomenon reflects how individuals sometimes reproduce structures that place their own group in a subordinate position.

From an emotional perspective, social dynamics laden with stereotypes and double standards require female leaders to engage in intense emotional labor. They manage disappointment when their suggestions are ignored, rephrase criticism so as not to be perceived as aggressive, and maintain composure when faced with sexist jokes or belittling comments. This process is often not recorded in job descriptions, but it consumes a great deal of psychological energy. The tension between the desire to maintain personal integrity and the need to secure career continuity drives women to develop various forms of compromise in their interactions. Some choose to develop a more “secure” social persona, while other aspects of themselves are reserved for more limited social spaces.

Ultimately, the identity and social network strategies developed by female leaders can be interpreted as creative efforts to survive in an organizational structure that is not yet fully equitable. They develop a leadership style that combines assertiveness and warmth, nurtures cross-gender alliances, and exploits small loopholes in formal rules to expand their room for maneuver. The burden of constantly interpreting social signals, anticipating stereotypical judgments, and balancing conflicting expectations indicates that women's leadership journey continues to be fraught with hidden obstacles. This picture underscores the need for a sociological reading that links everyday micro-experiences with patterns of inequality in the structural realm.

D. CONCLUSIONS

This research shows that women's leadership in organizations is shaped by the interrelatedness of structural barriers, gender stereotypes, and social dynamics in everyday working life. Seemingly neutral structures contain recruitment, promotion, assignment, and work arrangements that favor men, particularly through assumptions about availability,

mobility, and career paths that are considered “ideal.” Stereotypes about capacity, commitment, and motherhood present double standards for women in leadership positions, so that they often have to prove their worth repeatedly despite their high qualifications and performance. At the interaction level, experiences of interruption, idea appropriation, strict monitoring of communication style, and negative reactions to agentic behavior require women to develop complex ways of acting in order to remain recognized as legitimate leaders. The research findings confirm that gender inequality in leadership cannot be understood solely as an individual choice, but is closely related to organizational structures and the social meanings attached to gender categories.

Theoretically, this research emphasizes the importance of examining female leadership through the lens of gender sociology and organizations that pay attention to power relations, meaning construction, and daily practices in the workplace. The combination of sociology, social psychology, and management literature shows that the obstacles faced by women range from formal rules and informal networks to the identity work they must do to maintain their careers. This opens up opportunities for developing analytical frameworks that are more sensitive to the intersection of gender with other social categories such as class, ethnicity, and minority status. In practical terms, the findings of this research provide a basis for updating human resource policies and procedures, developing promotion and assessment systems that are sensitive to bias, and creating support programs for female leaders that do not assume their career paths are the same as those of men.

First, further research should combine literature studies with empirical data through in-depth interviews, organizational observations, or cross-sector comparative case studies to capture the varying experiences of women leaders in different types of organizations. Second, future research needs to more explicitly incorporate intersectional dimensions by examining how gender intersects with class, ethnicity, age, and family status, so that patterns of inequality specific to certain groups can be identified more sharply. Third, it is necessary to develop studies that examine change practices in organizations that have been relatively successful in reducing gender inequality, so that key principles that can be adapted to other institutions can be

identified. Fourth, collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and human resource practitioners needs to be strengthened to ensure that scientific recommendations are actually translated into fairer work governance for women leaders at various managerial levels.

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