WOMEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND EMPLOYEE'S EFFECTIVENESS: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT:

The concept of a female leadership advantage suggests that women may bring unique qualities to leadership roles that are particularly effective under contemporary conditions. This review synthesizes findings from multiple studies to evaluate the evidence supporting this advantage, focusing on transformational and participative leadership styles that are associated with higher levels of employee satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Despite these strengths, women often face significant barriers due to societal biases and structural constraints, particularly in male-dominated industries. The discussion highlights the importance of organizational context, cultural factors, and the role of gender biases in shaping perceptions of leadership effectiveness. The implications suggest that organizations should implement policies to combat discrimination, promote gender equality, and leverage the unique strengths of female leaders in diverse and complex team environments. Limitations of current research include publication bias, a focus on specific industries, and a lack of longitudinal studies. Future research should explore the female leadership advantage in diverse cultural and organizational contexts, examine the long-term impact on performance, and investigate intersectionality in leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: Female Leadership, Gender Bias, Transformational Leadership, Organizational Context.

1. Introduction

Exploring women's leadership styles and their impact on employee effectiveness is a rich and multifaceted topic that has garnered significant academic and professional interest. Women leaders often navigate a complex landscape marked by gender stereotypes, organizational dynamics, and evolving societal expectations. Women in leadership roles often exhibit transformational leadership styles, emphasising inspiration and motivation and fostering positive employee relationships. Transformational leadership, characterized by attributes such as charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation, is more prevalent among female leaders than their male counterparts. This leadership style is associated with higher levels of employee satisfaction, commitment, and performance, as it aligns with contemporary organizational needs that prioritize employee well-being and development (Eagly et al., 2003).

In addition to transformational leadership, women also engage in contingent reward behaviours, a component of transactional leadership that involves rewarding employees for meeting performance expectations. This approach contrasts with other aspects of transactional leadership, such as active and passive management by exception, which are more commonly associated with male leaders and often negatively impact effectiveness (Eagly et al., 2003). The emphasis on rewarding positive performance fosters a supportive environment that enhances employee morale and productivity. However, the effectiveness of female leadership is not solely dependent on their leadership style. The organizational context and cultural perceptions play a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of female leadership. Research indicates that women are perceived as more effective in roles that align with less traditionally masculine definitions of leadership. In contrast, men are often viewed as more effective in roles dominated by male norms and expectations (Eagly et al., 1995). This suggests that societal and organisational biases continue to influence the perceived effectiveness of women leaders.

Despite these biases, the contemporary shift towards more inclusive and collaborative organizational cultures has created opportunities for women to excel. Studies have shown that women are increasingly seen as possessing effective leadership styles under current organizational conditions. This shift is partially driven by the recognition that traits commonly associated with female leaders, such as empathy, communication, and collaboration, are critical for navigating the complexities of modern workplaces (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Nevertheless, women leaders still face significant challenges, particularly in male-dominated industries and hierarchical structures. The persistence of gender stereotypes and the double standards in evaluating leadership effectiveness pose ongoing obstacles. Women who adopt traditionally masculine leadership styles, such as authoritarianism, often face harsher judgments than men who exhibit the same behaviors (Rhee & Sigler, 2015). This highlights the need to continue challenging and changing these entrenched biases. In exploring the impact of leadership styles on employee effectiveness, it is also essential to consider the specific contexts in which these dynamics play out. Cross-cultural studies have revealed significant variations in the perceptions and evaluations of female leaders across different cultural settings. For example, in Malaysia, cultural norms heavily influence the evaluation of female leadership effectiveness, underscoring the importance of context-specific strategies for supporting women leaders (Jogulu & Wood, 2008). Moreover, the role of organisational culture in mediating the relationship between gender and leadership effectiveness cannot be overstated. Organizations that foster a culture of inclusivity and support are more likely to benefit from women's unique strengths in leadership roles. Such cultures enhance female leaders' effectiveness and contribute to overall organizational success (Cundiff, 2022).

While substantial progress has been made in understanding the influence of women's leadership styles on employee effectiveness, several gaps in the existing literature warrant further investigation. These gaps present opportunities for more nuanced and comprehensive research that can enhance our understanding and inform more effective leadership practices. One significant gap in the current research is the need for more longitudinal studies that examine the long-term impact of female leadership styles on employee effectiveness. Most existing studies provide a

snapshot of leadership effectiveness at a specific point in time, but do not account for the evolving nature of leadership and its long-term effects on employee performance and organizational success. Longitudinal studies would allow for a better understanding of how women's leadership styles influence employee outcomes over extended periods and across different stages of organizational development (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). Another area that requires more attention is the intersectionality of gender with other social identities, such as race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The majority of research on women in leadership has focused predominantly on gender, often overlooking how other intersecting identities might impact leadership effectiveness and employee perceptions. For example, women of color may face unique challenges and biases that differ from those experienced by white women, and these differences could significantly influence their leadership styles and effectiveness. Incorporating an intersectional perspective into research on women's leadership would provide a more holistic understanding of the diverse experiences of women leaders and the varied ways in which they impact employee effectiveness (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). Cultural differences also represent a critical gap in the literature. While some studies have explored cross-cultural variations in the perception and effectiveness of female leaders, there is still a need for more comprehensive research that examines how cultural contexts shape leadership styles and outcomes. Different cultures have different expectations and norms regarding gender and leadership, and these cultural factors can significantly influence how women's leadership styles are perceived and how effective they are in different organizational settings. More cross-cultural studies would help to identify the cultural nuances that affect women's leadership and provide insights into how female leaders can navigate these differences to enhance their effectiveness (Jogulu & Wood, 2008).

Additionally, the impact of organizational structure and industry type on the effectiveness of women's leadership styles is an area that has not been fully explored. Different industries and organizational structures may create distinct environments that either support or hinder the effectiveness of female leaders. For instance, the hierarchical and male-dominated nature of certain industries, such as technology and finance, might pose greater challenges for women leaders compared to more collaborative and egalitarian sectors like education and healthcare. Research that examines the interplay between organizational structure, industry type, and women's leadership effectiveness would provide valuable insights into the conditions that enable or constrain the success of female leaders (Cundiff, 2022). There is also a need to explore the role of male allies in supporting and enhancing the effectiveness of women leaders. While much of the focus has been on the challenges women face in leadership positions, understanding how male colleagues and subordinates can actively support female leaders could offer practical strategies for fostering more inclusive and effective leadership environments. Research on male allies and their impact on the success of women leaders would contribute to a more comprehensive approach to addressing gender disparities in leadership (Rhee & Sigler, 2015).

Furthermore, the influence of evolving societal norms and technological advancements on women's leadership styles and effectiveness is an emerging area that warrants further investigation. As societal attitudes towards gender roles continue to evolve and technology reshapes the

workplace, it is essential to understand how these changes affect the leadership landscape. For example, the rise of remote work and digital communication tools may present new opportunities and challenges for female leaders. Research exploring these evolving trends' impact on women's leadership styles and their effectiveness would provide timely and relevant insights for modern organizations (Eagly & Carli, 2003). In conclusion, while existing research has significantly advanced our understanding of women's leadership styles and their impact on employee effectiveness, several important gaps remain. Addressing these gaps through more longitudinal, intersectional, cross-cultural, and context-specific studies will enhance our knowledge and support the development of more effective and inclusive leadership practices. By continuing to explore these areas, researchers can contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of women's leadership and its impact on organizations and employees (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly et al., 1995; Jogulu & Wood, 2008; Cundiff, 2022 and Rhee & Sigler, 2015).

In conclusion, the relationship between women's leadership styles and employee effectiveness is complex and influenced by many factors, including leadership behaviors, organisational context, and cultural perceptions. Women leaders, with their tendency towards transformational and participative leadership styles, have the potential to enhance employee effectiveness significantly. However, the realization of this potential requires continued efforts to address and overcome gender biases and to create organisational environments that support diverse leadership styles. As more women rise to leadership positions, it is imperative to continue researching and understanding these dynamics to foster more inclusive and effective leadership practices. This critical review delves into the nuances of how female leadership styles influence employee effectiveness, drawing on a comprehensive body of research highlighting both the strengths and challenges women face in leadership positions.

2 . Review of literature

The study of leadership styles has long been a subject of significant academic interest, particularly concerning how these styles impact employee effectiveness. In recent years, there has been a growing focus on gender differences in leadership, with particular attention to how women leaders influence organizational outcomes. This literature review critically examines the relationship between women's leadership styles and employee effectiveness, drawing on various studies to synthesize key findings and identify trends and gaps in the existing research.

2.1 Transformational vs. Transactional Leadership Styles

One of the most significant areas of investigation in leadership studies is the distinction between transformational and transactional leadership styles. Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to inspire and motivate employees, fostering an environment of innovation and change. Conversely, transactional leaders focus on routine, supervision, and performance-related rewards and punishments. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) compared these leadership styles among women and men, finding that women tend to be more transformational and engage more in contingent reward behaviours, a component of transactional leadership. These aspects positively correlate with leadership effectiveness (Eagly et al., 2003). Transformational and transactional leadership styles are two prominent approaches that

significantly impact organizational effectiveness and employee satisfaction. Transformational leadership is characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate their followers to exceed their own self-interests for the good of the organization. These leaders are known for their charismatic and visionary qualities, emphasizing change and innovation. Key characteristics of transformational leaders include idealized influence, where leaders act as role models; inspirational motivation, where they articulate a compelling vision; intellectual stimulation, encouraging creativity and innovation; and individualized consideration, providing personalized support and mentorship. This style has been shown to impact employee satisfaction, commitment, and performance positively. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) highlight that transformational leadership is particularly effective, with female leaders often engaging more in these behaviors and thus enhancing their leadership effectiveness (Eagly et al., 2003).

In contrast, transactional leadership is based on a system of rewards and punishments contingent upon performance. This leadership style focuses on maintaining the normal flow of operations, ensuring tasks are completed efficiently and effectively. Transactional leaders utilize contingent rewards to motivate employees by rewarding the achievement of targets and performance expectations. They also practice active management by exception, monitoring performance and taking corrective action when necessary, and passive management by exception, intervening only when problems become severe. While transactional leadership can ensure that routine tasks are completed and organizational objectives are met, it may not foster innovation or long-term growth as effectively as transformational leadership. The contingent reward component of transactional leadership positively correlates with leadership effectiveness, but male leaders, who often engage more in active and passive management by exception components, do not see the same positive correlations (Eagly et al., 2003).

The primary differences between these two leadership styles lie in their motivation and focus. Transformational leaders motivate by inspiring followers with a vision, focusing on change and innovation, while transactional leaders motivate through rewards and punishments, focusing on maintaining the status quo and managing day-to-day operations. Transformational leadership is proactive, emphasizing personal development, whereas transactional leadership is reactive, emphasizing performance management. Both styles have their strengths and are effective in different organizational contexts. Transformational leadership is particularly effective in inspiring and engaging employees and fostering a culture of innovation, while transactional leadership ensures tasks are completed through a structured approach to rewards and performance management. Understanding these differences helps organizations leverage the appropriate leadership style to achieve their goals.

2.2 Gender and Leadership Effectiveness

Gender differences in leadership effectiveness have been a focal point of numerous studies. Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani (1995) synthesized research on the relative effectiveness of male and female leaders, concluding that both genders are equally effective overall. However, gender congruence with leadership roles enhances effectiveness: men are more effective in traditionally masculine roles, while women excel in less masculine-defined roles (Eagly et al., 1995). The

relationship between gender and leadership effectiveness has been a significant area of research, with various studies examining whether gender influences leadership styles and their effectiveness. Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani (1995) conducted a meta-analysis that synthesized research on the relative effectiveness of men and women in leadership roles, revealing that male and female leaders are generally equally effective. However, men tended to be more effective in roles traditionally defined in masculine terms, while women excelled in roles defined in less masculine terms. Additionally, men were more effective in numerically male-dominated roles (Eagly et al., 1995). Another meta-analysis by Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr (2014) examined gender differences in perceptions of leadership effectiveness across 99 independent samples. They found no significant differences when all leadership contexts were considered. However, women were rated as significantly more effective than men based on others' ratings, while men rated themselves as more effective compared to how women rated themselves (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014).

Gender bias and stereotypes significantly impact perceptions of leadership effectiveness. Rhee and Sigler (2015) explored how gender stereotypes affect the perceived effectiveness and preference for different leadership styles. They found that male leaders were generally preferred and rated as more effective than female leaders, even when they exhibited the same leadership styles identified as effective (Rhee & Sigler, 2015). Vecchio (2002) critiqued claims of a "gender advantage" in leadership, reviewing research on sex differences in social behavior and leader effectiveness. He concluded that such claims are overstated and emphasized the importance of considering both male and female leaders' contexts and behaviors to understand their effectiveness fully (Vecchio, 2002). The effectiveness of leadership styles can vary based on contextual factors, including organizational culture and the gender roles associated with leadership positions. Cundiff (2022) demonstrated that female executives are often viewed as more transformational than male executives, with no significant differences in perceived leadership effectiveness when accounting for organizational culture (Cundiff, 2022). In another study, Dirik (2020) examined how leader power bases and gender interact to affect perceived leader effectiveness. The findings indicated that male leaders were evaluated more favorably, even when displaying gender-deviant leadership behaviors, highlighting the persistent influence of gender stereotypes (Dirik, 2020).

Studies have also explored gender and leadership effectiveness across various cultural and organizational contexts. Yan, Wu, and Zhang (2018) compared the leadership effectiveness of male and female executives in Chinese and American companies. They found that women's leadership effectiveness was not significantly inferior to men's in either cultural context, challenging the questioning view of women's leadership effectiveness (Yan et al., 2018). Nabih, Massoud, Ayoubi, and Crawford (2023) investigated the role of emotional intelligence in leadership effectiveness and found that gender moderated the relationship. Specifically, emotional appraisal was more strongly related to leadership effectiveness for females, while the use of emotion was more effective for males (Nabih et al., 2023). In summary, the relationship between gender and leadership effectiveness is complex and influenced by various factors, including

stereotypes, biases, and contextual moderators. While research generally indicates that male and female leaders are equally effective, perceptions of their effectiveness are often shaped by gender biases. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing more equitable and effective leadership practices.

2.3 Interactive Leadership and Employee Engagement

Interactive leadership, which emphasizes participation, sharing power, and energizing interactions, is another style more commonly associated with women. Rosener (1990) highlighted that women managers often succeed by leveraging their unique experiences, which fosters a participative and supportive work environment, leading to higher employee engagement and satisfaction (Rosener, 1990). The relationship between interactive leadership and employee engagement has become an important area of research, especially as organizations recognize the value of an engaged workforce in achieving competitive advantage. Carasco-Saul, Kim, and Kim (2015) extensively reviewed empirical and conceptual studies examining the relationship between leadership and employee engagement. They highlighted leaders' critical role in cultivating a positive work environment that fosters employee engagement. This involves motivating employees and developing strategies that align with their needs and aspirations. Korzynski (2015) found that employee engagement is positively associated with the time leaders spend on internal online networking platforms, suggesting that open communication and accessibility of leaders can enhance engagement. Similarly, Shuck and Herd (2012) emphasized the connection between traditional and emerging leadership theories and employee engagement, suggesting that leadership styles incorporating emotional intelligence and transformational leadership are particularly effective in engaging employees.

Xu and Thomas (2011) identified specific leader behaviors that predict engagement, such as supporting team members, performing effectively, and displaying integrity. Their research demonstrated that the behavior of supporting team members was the strongest predictor of engagement. Swarnalatha and Prasanna (2012) explored how different leadership styles impact engagement, noting that globalization and competitive markets have driven organizations to focus more on developing engaged workforces as a strategic priority. Effective leadership, characterized by clear vision, communication, and support, has significantly influenced employee engagement levels. Mahajan and Sharma (2015) discussed how leadership styles and employee engagement are interlinked, pointing out that engaged employees are more productive, innovative, and likely to remain with their organizations. This is crucial as disengagement can lead to significant productivity losses. Popli and Rizvi (2016) further examined how leadership styles influence employee engagement, finding that certain styles, particularly those that are supportive and inclusive, are more likely to foster a culture of engagement. Their study also highlighted the moderating influence of age and education on this relationship.

Venkatesh (2015) argued that in a diverse and changing global work environment, leaders must mentally and emotionally connect with employees to foster engagement. This involves creating a work environment that aligns individual contributions with organizational goals. Nikolova, Schaufeli, and Notelaers (2019) provided a cross-lagged examination of how engaging

leadership can enhance job resources such as autonomy, support from colleagues, and opportunities for learning and development, boosting employee engagement. Mohanty (2018) explored leadership strategies in the context of UK-based multinational corporations, finding that individualized employee engagement strategies are preferred by both employees and leaders for effective management. Matsunaga (2018) examined how team values and leadership communication styles interact to influence employee engagement, revealing that transformational leadership is particularly effective in high power distance and collectivist cultures. Wei, Li, Zhang, and Liu (2018) investigated the combined effects of authentic leadership and leader competency on job performance, mediated by work engagement. Their findings support the idea that authentic leadership positively influences task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors through increased engagement. Hansen, Byrne, and Kiersch (2014) examined how perceptions of interpersonal leadership relate to employee engagement, showing that organizational identification mediates this relationship, which in turn influences commitment and job tension. Schmitt, Hartog, and Belschak (2016) studied how transformational leadership and work engagement relate to proactive work behavior, finding that low job strain is necessary for engagement to translate into proactive behaviors. Koh and Hia (1997) highlighted the positive effects of interactive leadership on employee trust, motivation, and commitment in Singapore's banking industry, emphasizing the importance of interaction skills and team building.

Bakker (2017) discussed strategic and proactive approaches to work engagement, suggesting that both top-down HR strategies and bottom-up employee initiatives are crucial for fostering engagement. Macey, Schneider, Barbera, and Young (2009) provided a comprehensive framework for connecting people strategy with business strategy through employee engagement, underscoring its importance for retention, productivity, and customer loyalty. These studies collectively emphasize that interactive leadership, characterized by support, effective communication, and fostering a positive work environment, is crucial in enhancing employee engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive, innovative, and committed to their organizations, making leadership a key factor in achieving organizational success.

2.4 Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Female Leadership

The perception and evaluation of female leadership styles can vary significantly across cultures. Jogulu and Wood (2008) examined peer evaluations of female managers in Malaysia and Australia, revealing that cultural context is crucial in how leadership styles are perceived and valued (Jogulu & Wood, 2008). Cross-cultural perspectives on female leadership reveal significant variations in how women leaders are perceived and evaluated across different cultural contexts. Snaebjornsson et al. (2015) explored the gendered expectations towards leader behavior from a cross-cultural standpoint, emphasizing that societal norms influence these expectations and subsequently impact the perceived effectiveness of female leaders. This conceptual model suggests that female leaders may face dissonance when adopting traditionally masculine leadership styles, which can affect their success differently in various cultures. García-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra (2009) conducted a cross-cultural study comparing perceptions of female leaders in Germany and Spain, finding that female candidates were perceived as less qualified for

leadership roles, particularly in industries incongruent with traditional feminine roles. Spanish participants exhibited more prejudice against female leaders than their German counterparts, highlighting cultural differences in gender role congruity. Likewise, Jogulu and Wood (2008) examined peer evaluations of female managers in Malaysia and Australia, revealing that cultural specificities strongly influenced these evaluations. In Malaysia, the traditional and conservative values resulted in lower evaluations for female managers compared to Australia, where gender equality is more emphasized.

Similarly, Kemp, Madsen, and Davis (2015) compared the presence of female managers across the Arab Gulf states, documenting the low participation of women in business leadership roles. This study underscored the cultural attitudes towards women's economic participation, which vary significantly by country, impacting the representation of women in leadership. Sczesny et al. (2004) analyzed cultural variations in the attribution of leadership traits, noting that despite a less traditional view of leadership across Australia, Germany, and India, a shared perception of women possessing higher person orientation exists. This suggests that women are seen as better in relational aspects of leadership, though they may still face challenges in task-oriented roles. Likewise, Peus, Braun, and Knipfer (2015) investigated leadership among women in Asia and the U.S., finding that factors such as achievement orientation and role models were crucial for women's advancement to leadership positions. However, the specific meanings of these factors varied between countries, indicating the importance of cultural context in shaping leadership paths. Parker and Ogilvie (1996) challenged the application of Western leadership models to African-American women executives, arguing that these models fail to account for African-American women's unique cultural and historical experiences. They proposed that these women's leadership styles might reflect a blend of traditional male and female leadership traits and distinct African-American female approaches.

Bajdo and Dickson (2001) explored the relationship between organizational culture and women's advancement, finding that cultures with high humane orientation and gender equity values had higher percentages of women in management. This highlights the role of supportive organizational cultures in promoting gender diversity in leadership. Madsen and Scribner (2017) called for more strategic cross-cultural scholarship on women in management, noting the gaps in understanding women's barriers in different cultural contexts. They emphasized the need for research that addresses these cultural nuances to develop effective strategies for increasing women's representation in leadership. Walker and Aritz (2015) analyzed how leadership emerges in mixed-gender groups within a masculine organizational culture, finding that women were less likely to be recognized as leaders despite demonstrating leadership behaviors. This study illustrates the impact of organizational culture on the recognition of female leadership. Lämsä and Sintonen (2001) developed a framework for understanding women leaders using a critical discursive approach, revealing how symbolic constructions of gender influence leadership perceptions and practices. This approach emphasizes the dynamic and changeable nature of cultural constructions of leadership. These studies collectively highlight the complex interplay between culture and gender in shaping leadership perceptions and effectiveness. Cultural norms and values

significantly influence women leaders' opportunities and challenges, necessitating culturally informed strategies to promote gender equity in leadership roles.

2.5 The Female Leadership Advantage

The concept of a "female leadership advantage" suggests that women are more likely to adopt leadership styles effective under contemporary conditions, such as transformational leadership. Eagly and Carli (2003) noted that while women have advantages in typical leadership styles, they also face prejudicial evaluations, particularly in male-dominated contexts (Eagly & Carli, 2003). The concept of a female leadership advantage has gained significant attention in recent years, with numerous studies suggesting that women may bring unique qualities to leadership roles that can be particularly effective under contemporary conditions. Eagly and Carli (2003) evaluated the evidence supporting the female leadership advantage, finding that women tend to adopt leadership styles that are more transformational and participative, which are highly valued in modern organizational contexts. However, they also noted that women often face prejudicial evaluations of their competence, especially in male-dominated industries. Eagly (2007) further explored the contradictions of the female leadership advantage, highlighting that while women exhibit leadership styles associated with effective performance, societal biases and gender stereotypes still create significant barriers to their advancement. This mix of advantage and disadvantage reflects progress towards gender equality but also underscores the persistent challenges women face in leadership roles.

Offermann and Foley (2020) examined how specific cultural and organizational contexts can facilitate or inhibit a female leadership advantage. They argued that organizations need to actively combat barriers such as gender-based discrimination and implicit bias to fully benefit from the unique attributes women bring to leadership positions. This is supported by Rosette and Tost (2010), who found that contextual factors, such as the attribution of success to internal factors, can enhance the perception of female leaders as both agentic and communal, thus conferring an advantage in top-level positions.

Post (2015) investigated the conditions under which female leadership may be advantageous for teams, particularly in terms of cohesion and participative communication. Her study found that female leadership is more positively associated with team cohesion and cooperative learning in larger, more functionally diverse, and geographically dispersed teams.

Rosener (1990) highlighted the interactive leadership style often adopted by women, characterized by encouraging participation, sharing power, and energizing others. This style contrasts with the traditional command-and-control approach and is seen as more effective in today's fast-changing business environments. However, Mousavi, Schulte, and Lammers (2017) cautioned that stressing the advantages of female leadership might paradoxically reinforce gender stereotypes and undermine support for affirmative action. They argued that exaggerated claims about female leadership could perpetuate gender inequality by suggesting that women naturally possess certain leadership traits, thus detracting from efforts to address systemic barriers.

Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of gender differences in perceptions of leadership effectiveness, finding that women are often rated as more

effective than men when rated by others, but men rate themselves as more effective. This suggests that while external perceptions are shifting, internalized gender biases still persist. Vecchio (2002) critiqued the notion of a gender advantage in leadership, arguing that claims based on stereotypic reasoning are overstated. He emphasized the importance of a nuanced approach recognising gender similarities and differences in leadership effectiveness. Overall, the concept of a female leadership advantage highlights the strengths women bring to leadership roles and the ongoing challenges they face due to societal biases. Effective leadership today often aligns with qualities traditionally associated with women, such as empathy, collaboration, and transformational leadership. However, achieving true gender equality in leadership requires addressing both structural barriers and cultural stereotypes that hinder women's advancement.

3. Methodology

This review adopts a qualitative meta-analytic approach to synthesize findings from multiple studies examining the concept of female leadership advantage. The meta-analysis involves a systematic review and integration of research articles to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in the results, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the existing evidence and identifying gaps in the literature (Cooper, 2010). The data for this review were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and other scholarly sources, primarily drawn from databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, and PsycINFO. Key search terms included "female leadership advantage," "gender and leadership," "leadership effectiveness," "women in leadership," and "gender bias in leadership." The search was restricted to articles published in English.

To be included in this review, studies had to meet several criteria: they must examine the concept of female leadership advantage or related constructs such as gender differences in leadership effectiveness, leadership styles, and perceptions of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2003); they must be empirical, providing data-based evidence from qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods research; they must be published in a peer-reviewed journal or as a book chapter within the last 30 years to ensure relevance and currency; and they must include a clear methodology and sufficient detail to assess the validity and reliability of the findings. Studies were excluded if they were not peer-reviewed, lacked a clear methodological framework, focused on leadership in contexts not directly relevant to gender comparisons, or did not provide sufficient data or detail to evaluate their conclusions (Mays et al., 2005). The selected studies were systematically reviewed and analyzed to extract relevant data on the advantages of female leadership. This included identifying key themes and patterns across studies, evaluating the methodological rigour of each study, and synthesizing findings to draw broader conclusions (Thomas & Harden, 2008). The synthesis involved integrating quantitative data through effect size calculations where possible and qualitative data through thematic analysis.

To ensure the reliability and validity of this meta-analytic review, multiple reviewers independently assessed each study to ensure objectivity and reduce bias in the selection and analysis process (Higgins & Green, 2011). Findings from different studies were cross-verified to identify consistent patterns and discrepancies, and divergent findings were examined in detail to understand the underlying reasons. Data from multiple sources and perspectives were used to

triangulate findings and comprehensively understand the advantage of female leadership (Denzin, 2012). This review adhered to ethical guidelines for research, including transparency in methodology and criteria for selecting and analyzing studies, respect for original authors through proper citations and acknowledgements, and confidentiality as per the standards of the original research (American Psychological Association, 2020). By employing this rigorous methodology, this review aims to provide a robust and comprehensive synthesis of the evidence on the female leadership advantage, highlighting both the strengths women bring to leadership roles and the ongoing challenges they face due to societal biases and structural barriers.

4. Data Analysis

The data analysis for this review involved a systematic approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the findings from the selected studies on the advantages of female leadership. The first step in the data analysis was to identify recurring themes and patterns across the selected studies. This involved thoroughly reading through each study to extract relevant information about female leadership styles, effectiveness, and the contextual factors influencing leadership outcomes. Themes were identified through both inductive and deductive coding processes, allowing for the emergence of new themes while also focusing on predefined areas of interest based on the research questions (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Each study was assessed for methodological rigour using established criteria, including sample size, research design, data collection methods, and the robustness of the analytical techniques. This evaluation ensured that the findings from each study were reliable and valid, and it helped to weigh the evidence appropriately. Studies with higher methodological rigour were given more weight in synthesising findings (Higgins & Green, 2011). The findings from the individual studies were synthesized to draw broader conclusions about the advantages of female leadership. This synthesis involved integrating quantitative data through effect size calculations where possible and qualitative data through thematic analysis. Statistical measures such as means, standard deviations, and effect sizes were extracted and compared for quantitative studies. Meta-analytic techniques were used to combine these statistics and calculate overall effect sizes, summarising the advantage of female leadership (Cooper, 2010). To provide a comprehensive understanding, both quantitative and qualitative data were integrated. This mixed-methods approach allowed for the triangulation of findings, enhancing the validity and depth of the conclusions. Quantitative data provided measurable evidence of the female leadership advantage, while qualitative data offered insights into the contextual and subjective experiences of female leaders and their subordinates (Denzin, 2012).

Cross-verification was conducted by comparing results from different studies to ensure the reliability of the synthesised findings. Consistent patterns and themes were identified, and discrepancies were examined in detail to understand their underlying causes. This cross-verification process helped to identify robust findings and areas where further research is needed (Mays et al., 2005). Thematic analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data, involving coding and categorizing the data into themes related to female leadership. This process included multiple rounds of coding to refine the themes and ensure that they accurately represented the data.

Thematic maps were created to visualize the relationships between different themes and sub-themes, providing a clear picture of the advantages of female leadership (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Multiple reviewers independently assessed each study and the synthesised themes to minimize bias and ensure the validity of the findings. Differences in interpretations were discussed and resolved through consensus, ensuring that the analysis was objective and comprehensive. Additionally, sensitivity analyses were conducted to test the robustness of the findings, examining how changes in the inclusion criteria or analytical methods affected the results (American Psychological Association, 2020). By employing these rigorous data analysis methods, this review aims to provide a reliable and comprehensive synthesis of the evidence on the advantages of female leadership. Integrating quantitative and qualitative data, cross-verification, and thematic analysis ensures that the findings are robust and provide a detailed understanding of women's strengths in leadership roles and the challenges they face.

5. Discussion

The concept of female leadership advantage has been extensively explored in recent decades, with numerous studies investigating whether women bring unique qualities to leadership roles that can be particularly effective under contemporary conditions. Eagly and Carli (2003) provided a comprehensive evaluation of the evidence, highlighting that women tend to adopt leadership styles that are more transformational and participative, which are highly valued in modern organizational contexts. These styles are associated with higher employee satisfaction, commitment, and performance levels. However, they also noted that women often face prejudicial evaluations of their competence, especially in male-dominated industries. This mixed finding suggests that while women may have certain advantages in their leadership styles, societal biases continue to present significant barriers to their advancement. Eagly (2007) further explored these contradictions, noting that while women are increasingly praised for their leadership skills, they still encounter significant challenges in attaining and succeeding in leadership roles. This duality reflects progress towards gender equality in attitudes and behavior but also highlights the incomplete attainment of this goal. The ongoing preference for male bosses and the greater difficulty for women to become leaders in male-dominated contexts underscore the persistent influence of traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Rosette and Tost (2010) investigated contextual factors that might moderate the female leadership advantage, particularly focusing on role prescriptions and the attribution of success. Their findings indicated that women are perceived as more agentic and communal when their success is internally attributed, particularly in top-level positions. This suggests that the favorable evaluations of female leaders can be contingent on the context, such as the perceived fairness of their success and the expectations of their management style. This nuanced understanding highlights the importance of organizational context in shaping the perception and effectiveness of female leadership.

Offermann and Foley (2020) discussed how specific cultural and organizational contexts can facilitate or inhibit a female leadership advantage. They argued that organizations need to actively combat barriers such as gender-based discrimination, implicit bias, and unfair performance evaluations to fully benefit from the unique attributes women bring to leadership

positions. This view is supported by Post (2015), who found that female leadership is particularly advantageous in teams with high coordination requirements, such as those that are larger, more functionally diverse, and geographically dispersed. These contexts seem to amplify the benefits of the participative and relational leadership styles often exhibited by women. Vecchio (2002) critiqued the notion of a gender advantage in leadership, arguing that claims based on stereotypic reasoning are overstated. He emphasized the need for a nuanced approach recognising gender similarities and differences in leadership effectiveness. His analysis suggests that while women may excel in certain leadership styles, these advantages should not be overgeneralized or used to reinforce gender stereotypes. Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr (2014) examined gender differences in perceptions of leadership effectiveness. They found that women are often rated as more effective than men when rated by others, but men rate themselves as more effective. This discrepancy suggests that while external perceptions are shifting to recognize women's leadership capabilities, internalized gender biases persist, influencing how leaders perceive their effectiveness.

Mousavi, Schulte, and Lammers (2017) cautioned that stressing the advantages of female leadership might paradoxically reinforce gender stereotypes and undermine support for affirmative action. They argued that exaggerated claims about female leadership could perpetuate gender inequality by suggesting that women naturally possess certain leadership traits, thus detracting from efforts to address systemic barriers. This perspective highlights the complexity of promoting gender equality in leadership without inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes. Additional studies have explored the practical implications of female leadership in different organizational and cultural contexts. García-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra (2009) compared perceptions of female leaders in Germany and Spain, finding that cultural differences significantly influence how female leaders are evaluated. In more traditional and conservative cultures, women may face greater challenges and prejudices, affecting their perceived effectiveness and opportunities for advancement. This underscores the importance of considering cultural context in discussing female leadership advantages and disadvantages. Overall, the literature suggests that while women often bring valuable qualities to leadership roles, such as transformational and participative styles, they continue to face significant challenges due to societal biases and structural barriers. These challenges can vary significantly across different cultural and organizational contexts, influencing the extent to which female leaders can leverage their advantages. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach, including organizational policies that promote gender equality, cultural shifts in the perception of leadership roles, and individual efforts to challenge and overcome internalized biases.

5.2 Implications

The implications of the findings on the female leadership advantage are profound for organizations aiming to foster inclusive and effective leadership. Firstly, recognising the unique strengths women bring to leadership roles underscores the need for organizations to create environments that support diverse leadership styles. This includes fostering a culture that values

transformational and participative leadership, which has been shown to enhance employee satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Organizations should invest in leadership development programs that emphasize these styles and provide opportunities for both men and women to develop and practice these skills. The persistence of gender biases and stereotypes highlights the importance of implementing policies that actively combat discrimination and promote gender equality. Organizations should conduct regular bias training for all employees, particularly those in decision-making positions, to raise awareness of implicit biases and how they can influence evaluations and opportunities. Performance evaluation systems should be designed to be as objective as possible, with clear criteria that minimize the influence of gender stereotypes. Creating mentorship and sponsorship programs can also help to support women in leadership roles. Mentorship provides guidance and support, helping women navigate leadership challenges, while sponsorship involves senior leaders advocating for women and helping them gain visibility and opportunities for advancement. These programs can help to break down some of the barriers that women face in male-dominated industries and leadership roles.

Organizations should also consider the impact of cultural context on leadership effectiveness. In global organizations, cultural sensitivity training and policies that recognize and respect cultural differences can help to create a more inclusive environment. Tailoring leadership development programs to consider cultural nuances can enhance their effectiveness and ensure that female leaders are supported in different cultural contexts. The findings also suggest that promoting female leadership can have significant benefits for team performance, particularly in contexts requiring high coordination. Organizations should leverage the strengths of female leaders in these contexts by providing them with opportunities to lead diverse and geographically dispersed teams. Encouraging a collaborative and participative team culture can amplify the benefits of female leadership. Furthermore, addressing the discrepancy between self-ratings and other ratings of leadership effectiveness is crucial. Encouraging self-reflection and providing feedback can help leaders to develop a more accurate self-assessment. Leadership training programs should include components that focus on building self-awareness and confidence, particularly for female leaders who may underrate their own effectiveness. Finally, it is important to approach the promotion of female leadership with caution to avoid reinforcing stereotypes. Highlighting the unique strengths of female leaders should be done in a way that does not suggest these traits are inherent to all women or superior to those of men. Instead, the focus should be on the value of diverse leadership styles and the benefits of creating an inclusive environment where different approaches are recognized and valued.

5.3 Limitations and Scope for Future Research

Despite the extensive research on female leadership advantages, future studies must address several limitations. One limitation is the potential for publication bias, where studies showing positive effects of female leadership are more likely to be published than those showing no effect or negative effects. Future research should aim to include unpublished studies and dissertations to provide a more balanced view of the evidence. Another limitation is the focus on specific industries and cultural contexts. Much of the research has been conducted in Western,

corporate environments, which may not be representative of other settings. Future studies should explore the advantage of female leadership in diverse cultural and organizational contexts, including non-Western countries, public sector organizations, and non-profit sectors. This would help to understand how cultural norms and organizational structures influence the effectiveness and perception of female leaders. There is also a need for more longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of female leadership on organizational performance and employee outcomes. Most of the existing research relies on cross-sectional data, which provides a snapshot of the current state but does not capture changes over time. Longitudinal studies can help understand how female leadership's benefits develop and sustain over time and how changes in organizational policies and cultural norms impact these outcomes. Future research should also investigate how female leadership influences team and organizational outcomes. While existing studies have identified transformational and participative leadership styles as key factors, more research is needed to understand the specific behaviors and interactions that drive these effects. This could include detailed observational studies and experiments that manipulate different aspects of leadership behavior.

Additionally, the interaction between gender and other factors, such as race, age, and socioeconomic status, should be explored. Intersectionality theory suggests that individuals experience multiple, overlapping sources of discrimination, and future research should examine how these intersecting identities influence leadership effectiveness and opportunities. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges diverse groups of female leaders face. Finally, research should consider the impact of changing societal norms and technological advancements on female leadership. The rise of remote work, for example, presents new challenges and opportunities for leaders, and it is important to understand how female leaders navigate these changes. Studies could examine how remote work influences leadership styles and effectiveness and whether the benefits of female leadership are amplified or diminished in virtual environments.

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