


Chapter 15


Breaking Barriers: The Evolving Role of Women in Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality and the representation of women in leadership positions are becoming more and more important topics in the worldwide discourse on leadership. Despite advances, a number of institutional, cultural, and sociological impediments still prevent women from rising to leadership roles. This study examines the changing landscape of women in leadership, examining the obstacles women encounter in achieving or succeeding in leadership positions as well as the ways gendered attitudes affect leadership efficacy. The study focuses on important topics such as the leadership styles that are ascribed to women, institutional frameworks that support or impede women leaders, and social biases. This chapter outlines the persistent difficulties and possible solutions to increase the participation of women in leadership roles, drawing on an abundance of secondary data from earlier studies. Ultimately, it seeks to offer guidance on creating a more successful and inclusive leadership environment in a variety of industries.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been a notable shift in the worldwide discourse on leadership, especially in relation to gender representation. Women have always been underrepresented in leadership posts due to institutional norms and cultural frameworks that frequently assign them to lower-level jobs. Nonetheless, women in leadership positions in a variety of fields, including as politics, industry, academia, and public service, have been more visible in recent years. Important conversations on the possibility of gender equality in leadership roles and the importance of varied leadership viewpoints have been spurred by this change in representation (Nadda, et al., 2024a; Nadda, et al., 2024b; Sharma et al., 2024a; Ansari et al., 2024; Prakash et al., 2024; Maheshwari et al., 2024; Berry et al., 2024; Sharma et al., 2024b; Nuong et al., 2024). Although this development is admirable, it is also evident that there are still significant obstacles in the way of women achieving leadership roles and succeeding well once they are in them. The enduring gendered perspective of leadership itself is a major factor in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Effective leadership behaviors and attributes are frequently determined by traditional gender standards; male leaders are generally thought to possess traits like competitiveness, decisiveness, and aggressiveness (Singh, 2022; Singh & Singh, 2022; Singh et al., 2024a; Singh et al., 2024b; Singh & Bathla, 2023; Sharma & Singh, 2024a; Singh & Singh, 2024; Singh & Hassan, 2024a; Singh, 2024a; Singh, 2024b; Singh, 2024c; Singh & Kumar, 2022; Singh & Hassan, 2024b, Singh & Kumar, 2021). . These qualities are frequently seen as necessary for effective leadership, particularly in settings that are extremely hierarchical and competitive. On the other hand, skills that are commonly associated with female leaders, such empathy, teamwork, and flexibility, are usually underestimated or disregarded in leadership settings. As a result, women are often held to a different standard and must balance fulfilling the expectations that are imposed on them as women with upholding the stereotypically masculine characteristics that are expected of effective leaders. The evolution of leadership theory and practice is significantly impacted by this gendered view of leadership. Although the characteristics typically associated with male leaders might have worked well previously, more inflexible organizational structures, the evolving nature of contemporary organizations calls for a more inclusive, wide approach to leadership. Organizations nowadays are looking for leadership styles that prioritize cooperation, inclusivity, and group empowerment in order to handle the more complicated and dynamic difficulties they encounter. The transformative leadership style, which is frequently linked to women, is highly compatible with these objectives. Building solid relationships with followers, empowering people, and developing their potential are all top priorities for transformational leadership, and they all help to create productive and encouraging work environments (Supina &

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