

## Challenges of Women Leaders at the Workplace: An Empirical Study

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### Abstract

This abstract examines the difficulties experienced by female leaders in the workplace, emphasizing the ongoing gender discrepancies and how they affect professional advancement. Despite tremendous strides in the direction of gender equality, women still face particular challenges that limit their capacity to advance professionally and take on leadership positions. The study focuses on topics including gender bias, stereotypes, work-life balance, and restricted access to networks and mentorship as it investigates the institutional, cultural, and human elements that affect these challenges. It also looks at the intersectionality of women's experiences, taking into account how barriers might be made worse by things like color, ethnicity, and age. The abstract also examines the negative effects of these issues, such as the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and the missed chances for organizations to gain from the different perspectives and skills of their workforce. The importance of tackling these issues through organizational policies, cultural change, leadership development initiatives, and the creation of inclusive workplaces that empower and support female leaders is emphasized in the last section. Organizations may build more equal cultures that encourage the development and success of women leaders, thereby assisting both people and the larger community, by acknowledging these barriers and actively working to overcome them.

**Keywords:** Women, Leadership, Leader, Organization, Skills

### Introduction:

Although people around the world have made great strides in the workplace, women still face several obstacles when it comes to leadership. Although there has been improvement recently, there is still a gender disparity in leadership roles, despite the fact that women have historically been underrepresented in these posts. Even when they do, women still confront a special set of obstacles that their male counterparts do not. In this essay, we'll look at some of the difficulties that women leaders have at work and discuss solutions.

Gender bias is one of the main obstacles for women in leadership roles. Despite the advancements made in the area of gender equality, many people still have preconceived notions and biases against women in positions of leadership. These prejudices can take many different forms, such as the belief that women are less capable or that their emotions prevent them from making good leaders. These biases may be covert or overt, but either way, they can have a big impact on how women are seen and treated at work.

The balance between work and life is another difficulty that women in leadership roles encounter. Women are frequently required to juggle their job and home commitments, which can be especially difficult for those in leadership roles. Women may find it challenging to combine their work and personal life due to the demanding nature of leadership positions, which sometimes involve long hours and frequent travel. This may cause them to feel stressed out and burned out, which could affect how well they perform at work.

The absence of role models and support systems is another issue that women in leadership positions must deal with. In positions of authority, women frequently work alone and have few female coworkers or mentors to whom they can turn for guidance and support. Because of this, it may be challenging for women to meet the demands of leadership and acquire the abilities and knowledge required for success.

Finally, women frequently experience a lack of respect and credit for their accomplishments. Despite their achievements, women may not be given the same opportunities or promotions as males, or their efforts may be neglected or underappreciated. This may result in feelings of animosity and irritation, as well as a lack of will to keep working towards accomplishment.

In conclusion, women in leadership roles confront a variety of difficulties, including discrimination based on gender, finding a work-life balance, and a lack of role models and acknowledgment. To overcome these obstacles and encourage women in leadership positions, actions can be taken. We can contribute to the creation of a more equal and inclusive workplace for everyone by addressing gender bias, establishing supportive work environments, offering opportunities for networking and mentorship, and respecting the achievements of women.

## **Literature Review:**

For many years, researchers have been concerned with and researching the presence of women in leadership positions in the workplace. There are many issues that have been noted as impeding women's advancement and limiting their capacity to lead. The purpose of this

literature study is to investigate the difficulties experienced by female leaders in the workplace. This review tries to provide light on the enduring obstacles that women face in leadership roles by evaluating the existing literature.

**Eagly and Carli (2007)** talk about how stereotypes and gender bias make it harder for women to hold leadership positions. Women frequently encounter discriminatory assumptions, such as the idea that they lack the authority or competence of their male counterparts. Women executives may face obstacles as a result of these biases that can affect judgments about promotions, access to opportunities, and performance reviews. Similarly, to this, **Schein (1973)** contends that gender norms instill unconscious prejudice in people's thinking, causing women to be judged more harshly for their gender than for their skills. Moreover, Gender prejudice has an impact on women's job advancement, promotions, and access to powerful networks, according to **Catalyst (2007)**.

For female leaders, the difficulty of juggling work and home obligations is frequently more severe. According to **Powell and Greenhaus (2010)**, balancing a profession while caring for a family is a "double burden" for women. This difficulty may impede professional advancement and reduce prospects for leadership positions.

**Ibarra, Carter, and Silva (2010)** contend that the difficulties faced by female leaders are a result of the absence of mentoring and sponsorship possibilities. Finding senior executives who are willing to mentor and encourage women in their career progression may be difficult for them. Their access to important networks and resources required for career progress may be restricted by this lack of sponsorship and guidance.

The difficulties women leaders have in balancing work and family are examined by **Shockley et al. (2017)**. Women may find it more difficult to juggle work and family obligations, which can lead to increased work-family conflict. This conflict may make it more difficult for women to invest the necessary time and effort in their leadership responsibilities, thus restricting their possibilities for progress.

The glass ceiling is a concept that **Morrison, White, and Van Velsor (1987)** address, underlining the institutional impediments that prevent women from reaching senior leadership positions. Women's career advancement may be hampered by issues like gender bias in hiring and promotion decisions, a lack of access to powerful networks, and a lack of representation in senior leadership positions.

The term "stereotype threat" was first used by **Steele (1997)** to describe the anxiety associated with feeding unfavorable stereotypes about one's social group. Women in leadership positions may feel threatened by stereotypes, which can cause self-doubt and a decline in self-assurance. Women's willingness to take chances and assert their leadership successfully may be hampered by this self-perception issue.

Women leaders frequently struggle with a lack of sponsorship and mentoring, which can impede their ability to advance professionally. According to **Ragins and Cotton (1999)**, women are less likely than men to have mentors at work, which restricts their access to important professional chances and advice. **Kram (1985)** emphasizes the value of sponsorship, in which powerful people support and advocate for women leaders, but she also points out that women are frequently underrepresented in these partnerships.

For female leaders, finding work-life balance continues to be a difficulty. Women leaders frequently suffer work-family conflicts, which can raise stress and job unhappiness. **Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton (2000)** examine these conflicts. The effort to maintain a healthy work-life balance may be exacerbated by cultural expectations that women manage both their career and personal commitments.

Women leaders continue to face major obstacles as a result of gender discrimination. **Vinnicombe and Singh (2002)** draw attention to the challenges women experience in obtaining high-level leadership roles, which frequently stem from prejudice and discriminatory practices within organizations. **Eagly and Karau (2002)** address the "think manager-think male" phenomena, in which the connotation of masculinity with leadership feeds prejudice.

The underrepresentation of women in positions of high leadership presents many difficulties for female leaders. According to **Ely and Padavic (2007)**, this underrepresentation can cause a feeling of marginalization and tokenism, which lowers the visibility and power of women leaders within organizations. The lack of female role models at higher levels, according to **Rosener (1990)**, may also impede the aspirations and advancement of women in leadership roles.

## Objective of the Study

To measure the challenges of women leaders at the workplace

## Methodology

This study utilized a structured questionnaire to conduct a survey, and statistical methods such as mean & t-test were used to analyze the responses from 200 participants. The sampling method used in this research was convenience sampling, where individuals were selected based on their accessibility & willingness to participate.

**Table 1 Challenges of women leaders at the Workplace**

<b>Serial No.</b>	<b>Statement of Survey</b>	<b>Mean Value</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
1	Women leaders often face gender bias and stereotypes in the workplace, which can hinder their advancement.	4.23	9.396	0.000
2	The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions creates a unique challenge for women leaders.	4.35	10.290	0.000
3	Women leaders may face challenges in accessing the same opportunities for career growth and advancement as their male colleagues.	4.37	10.271	0.000
4	Balancing professional responsibilities with personal and family obligations is a significant challenge for many women leaders.	4.02	5.243	0.000
5	Women leaders may face higher scrutiny and are held to different standards compared to men.	3.71	2.222	0.014
6	Women leaders may face challenges in finding sponsors or advocates who can champion their career progression.	4.47	11.576	0.000
7	Women leaders frequently face challenges related to pay and compensation disparities.	4.07	7.068	0.000
8	Unconscious biases and discrimination can pose significant challenges for women leaders.	4.14	8.777	0.000
9	The lack of flexible work arrangements and support for parental leave can hinder their career progression and limit their ability to fully engage in leadership roles.	3.89	5.090	0.000

10	Male-dominated industries or social expectations can create barriers to building influential connections, which can impact their ability to access resources and opportunities.	4.41	11.952	0.000
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Table1 demonstrates the mean values for each of the statement of the study done on the “challenges of women leaders at the workplace”, examining the average scores, the statement that obtains the highest mean score can be described as “Women leaders may face challenges in finding sponsors or advocates who can champion their career progression”, which has the mean score of 4.47, Looking at the next statement which is “Male-dominated industries or social expectations can create barriers to building influential connections, which can impact their ability to access resources and opportunities” the mean score is found to be 4.41. Looking at the mean value of 4.37 for the statement “Women leaders may face challenges in accessing the same opportunities for career growth and advancement as their male colleagues” shows that unequal access to opportunities is also responsible for the women leaders at the workplace. Looking at the other aspect of women leaders at the workplace is, “The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions creates a unique challenge for women leaders” which displays the mean score of 4.35, and the statement “Women leaders often face gender bias and stereotypes in the workplace, which can hinder their advancement” showcase the mean value of 4.23. Then the statement “Unconscious biases and discrimination can pose significant challenges for women leaders” obtains mean value of 4.14 and the statement “Women leaders frequently face challenges related to pay and compensation disparities” has 4.07. The statement “Balancing professional responsibilities with personal and family obligations is a significant challenge for many women leaders” showcase the mean value of 4.02. Therefore, the last two statements fall within the lowest category or level, “The lack of flexible work arrangements and support for parental leave can hinder their career progression and limit their ability to fully engage in leadership roles” mean value of 3.89, the statement “Women leaders may face higher scrutiny and are held to different standards compared to men” has 3.71. The significance of the t-value for each statement in the investigation on the challenges of women leaders at the workplace is significant. The t-value statements were positive, and their significance value was less than 0.05, indicating a significant relationship between the two variables.

## Conclusion:

In conclusion, women leaders still encounter a variety of obstacles at work that impede their advancement and diminish the potential value they could bring to organizations. For women who want to hold leadership positions, the pervasive gender biases and preconceptions provide substantial challenges. The pervasive gender imbalance that persists in many companies is one of the biggest challenges women executives faces. Women frequently experience unfair treatment, including salary disparities, barriers to advancement, and exclusion from decision-making processes. It is challenging for women to advance and succeed in leadership roles because of these structural hurdles. In addition, women leaders frequently lack access to mentorship and support. Women who lack female mentors and role models may feel alone and unsure about their job choices. Their ability to advance professionally may be hampered by a lack of mentorship and helpful networks. The difficulty of juggling obligations to one's family and at work is a big additional difficulty. Women bear a disproportionate amount of the stress of caring for others and juggling difficult occupations due to social expectations and established gender norms. These difficulties are further exacerbated by the lack of suitable work-life balance regulations and flexible work schedules, making it difficult for women leaders to maintain their professions and realize their full potential. In addition, bias and stereotypes frequently attack the authority and credibility of women leaders. Because of their gender, they may encounter opposition and skepticism from coworkers, subordinates, and even superiors. Their ability to make sound decisions and to lead successfully may be compromised by these prejudices. It takes a coordinated effort from organizations, leaders, and society at large to address these issues. Mentorship opportunities, inclusive and supportive work cultures, and the implementation of gender equality regulations can all assist to break down barriers and level the playing field for female leaders. In the end, utilizing women's leadership potential to its fullest benefits not only organizations but also society at large. By tackling these issues, we can develop workplaces that value diversity, advance gender equality, and unlock the skills and leadership perspectives of women, resulting in more creative and prosperous organizations.

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