

# Research on the Development Process and Current Situation of Female Leadership in the World

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## ABSTRACT

With the continuous improvement of women's social status in recent years, women's role in promoting the development of the international community has become an indisputable fact. In the new complex and volatile international context, more and more countries recognize that women play a key role in maintaining world peace and promoting economic development. Therefore, the way to guarantee the equal status of women more equitably and fully tap the potential of women has become an urgent task to promote global human development. This paper, through a method of literature review, aims to analyze the significance of the development of women's leadership by exploring the developing process and current situation women's leadership in the world. The paper finds that the international status of female leadership is not very impressive now, but it is much better than before. Women can be respected and women's rights are being valued. A number of outstanding talents have emerged in female leadership. Although prejudice still exists, women prove their ability with strength.

**Keywords:** Female leadership, Political participation ability, Economic power, International development

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Women are a great force in creating human civilization. The promotion of gender equality and the protection of women's rights and interests not only concern the vital interests of women, but also play a vital role in the full play of human creativity and the full liberation of social productivity.

Leadership is effective and profound, and the sender of leadership should not be bound by gender. We break the traditional ideology and give women the right status in leadership positions. When it comes to taking on leadership roles from the perspective of gender, women show their unique personality and behavioral characteristics, which are vividly displayed in their work. These characteristics, which are in sharp contrast to the negative cognition in the past, become the basis for the new era to attach importance to and hire female leaders.

Researchers in this field are studying women's leadership in the political field, economic field and academic field, but most of them have not pointed out how to solve the existing problems and help women's leadership progress. This research not only involves many fields, but also puts forward related problems and

solutions. This study intends to adopt the literature review method, and pays attention to current events to investigate and study the development and changes of female leadership from ancient times to the present.

It hopes the paper will make the contributions of enhancing women's empowerment in the United Nations, and the current situation of women's political participation and economic empowerment more evident to the public, and contribute to the research in this field.

## 2. PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AS LEADERS

The advantages of any woman in leadership style may be offset by the disadvantages brought by prejudice and discrimination against women leaders. Prejudice is an unfair evaluation of a group of people. It is based on rigid judgment rather than the behavior or qualification of individual members. When people hold stereotypes about a group, they expect the members of the group to have characteristics and behaviors consistent with these stereotypes. Perceivers then tacitly assimilate information to their gender-stereotypic expectations [1] and spontaneously fill in unknown details of others' behavior to conform to those expectations [2]. These stereotypic inferences yield prejudice against individual

group members when stereotypes about their group are incongruent with the attributes associated with success in certain classes of social roles. This incongruity tends to produce discrimination by lowering evaluation of such group members as potential or actual occupants of those roles.

This explanation is based on the gender differences and similar social behaviors of eagle's social roles. The theory asserts that the activation of faith affects the gender factors of men and women. People perceive individual women as public but not very agentic, and agentic but not very public and individual men [3].

Consistent with the role disharmony theory, stereotype research shows that people do believe that men are more subjective than women, and women are more public than men [4]. Besides, the common characteristics that people associate with women, such as enthusiasm and selflessness, are different from the subjective characteristics of successful leaders. In contrast, men are considered to have the main subjective initiative similar to the qualities required to succeed in high-ranking occupations, including most management occupations [5].

### **3. THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP**

#### ***3.1 The United Nations' dedication to promote women's leadership***

Since the founding of the United Nations, as one of its Millennium Development Goals, gender equality is not only a basic human right, but also the cornerstone of building a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. In order to eliminate gender discrimination in all fields and fully protect the legal and equal rights and interests of women, the special agencies of the United Nations have set up special topics on gender to promote women to play a greater role in social development from the political, economic, social, cultural and security levels.

##### ***3.1.1 Equality in education, science and technology***

The United Nations, founded in 1945, has always focused on "gender equality." In the 1990s, issues such as "how to achieve equitable education for boys and girls in the classroom", "how can boys and girls have equal access to science and technology" and "women's human resource development" became the focus of discussions at UNESCO. At the World Education Forum held in Senagardakar in April 2000, 164 countries agreed on a commitment, the Dakar Programme of Action. In this programme it is clearly stated to eliminate gender inequalities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to achieve gender equality in education by 2015. To set role models for women around the world, UNESCO is committed to empowering women in science,

technology, engineering and mathematics and improving measures of gender equality in STEM. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics also has a special theme of "Gender and Education", which provides statistical data on the progress of achieving gender equality in education in various countries and regions, and provides scientific and quantitative basis for assessing the degree of gender equality.

##### ***3.1.2 Equality in global issues***

Recognizing the importance of gender equality in promoting economic, political, cultural and information development, some agencies encourage Member States and members to consider gender-related policies in their reviews and to ensure that this principle is followed. It can be argued that the implementation and implementation of "safeguarding gender equality", as a priority issue of concern to some United Nations agencies, is having a direct impact on the implementation and development of the solutions to various global issues.

In the 1970s, with the rise of the international feminist movement, the United Nations General Assembly declared 1975 the International Women's Year, and the first World Conference on Women was held in Mexico. At the request of the Conference, the General Assembly subsequently declared the period 1976-1985 a United Nations Decade and established a voluntary fund for the Decade. Five years after the Mexico conference, the Second World Conference on women officially opened in Copenhagen. The programme of action resulting from the conference called for the strengthening of national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property. The Third World Conference on women was officially held in Nairobi in 1985. Its basis was to review and assess the achievements of the United Nations Decade for women. Recognizing that the objectives of the Mexico City Conference had not been fully achieved, 157 participating governments adopted the Nairobi forward looking strategy for the advancement of women by the year 2000 for the first time. As a programme of action for member States to eliminate gender discrimination, the strategy not only outlines specific operational options for future action, but also recognizes for the first time that the root cause of all problems lies in women's issues and confirms the central place of women's issues in United Nations development.

In addition to convening and deliberating world conferences on topics related to women, the United Nations has also carried out commemorative activities to appeal to the world on the importance of promoting global gender equality. The United Nations International Day for women's rights and peace and the international day for the elimination of violence against women are the most representative activities. At its thirty second session, held in 1977, the United Nations General Assembly invited states to proclaim any day of the year as the

United Nations International Day for women's rights and peace in accordance with their history and national customs. The United Nations commemorates International Women's Day on March 8 every year since the international Women's Year in 1975. Considering the universal fact that women are victims of violence, the United Nations designated November 25 as the international day for the elimination of violence against women at the general assembly in 1999, and invited governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to organize activities on this day to raise public awareness of this issue. Moreover, since 1981, women activists have designated 25 November as "anti violence day".

As can be seen from the convening and consideration of the periodic meetings and the designation of commemorative days, the promotion of gender equality is becoming an important element of United Nations development that cannot be ignored.

### ***3.2 Female leadership in corporate management***

Before delving into women's strengths and weaknesses, we note that women's leadership in business and politics is rising. In 1972, women accounted for only 18% of management and administrative positions in the United States, and by 2002, the proportion had risen to 46% [6]. Moreover, in the Fortune 500, the proportion of women among senior executives (15.7%) and chief executives (1.4%) of all companies reached an all-time high [7]. Similarly, although women make up only 14 per cent of the United States Congress and 12 per cent of governors, 42 per cent of women serving in the Senate are current senators and 26 per cent of governors [8]. In addition, 43 of the 59 female presidents or prime ministers took office after 1990 [9]. Despite these changes, men often hold positions with more decision-making power and the ability to influence the remuneration or promotion of others than women [10].

The increase of female leaders is accompanied by the changes of leadership theory and practice. In the past, leaders' authority was mainly based on their access to political, economic or military power, while in the post industrial society, leaders shared power and established many cooperative relationships [10]. Therefore, the view of contemporary excellent leaders encourages teamwork and emphasizes the ability to empower, support and attract employees [11]. Industry books urge managers to support commitment, engagement, active pursuit of vision, and healthy and productive working relationships through the use of "building a resonant style" [11].

### ***3.3 Women's political participation***

Female participation in politics refers to the political behavior of women participating in national political life and managing social and public affairs. Undoubtedly,

female participation in politics is of great significance in democratic politics, protection of women's rights and interests and social progress, but it also faces many embarrassing realities. This reality can be summed up in two aspects: first, despite the openness of political participation, the proportion of women in politics, especially in leadership positions, is very low compared to men; Secondly, the status and role of women in the process of public decision-making are still in a weak position, and there is a phenomenon of "marginalization".

The prerequisite for women's participation in politics is that women's power can be included in the political agenda and that a representative group of outstanding women can play important leadership roles. In reality, although some relevant political management departments have set obstacles to women's development, with the continuous enhancement of women's political decision-making ability, women leaders, as an important political group that cannot be ignored, are becoming an important force influencing local government and even global development and change. According to the latest statistics from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the proportion of women in parliamentarians worldwide has reached 24.9 percent. The percentage of women lawmakers increased by 13.6 percent from 11.3 percent in 1995. In addition to making progress as government lawmakers, women have also made great leaps forward in higher political positions such as head of state.

There are several female leaders around the world. Since 1906, Finnish women were the first to gain the right to vote and stand for election, marking the start of women entering politics. Later, more female leaders appeared in politics, such as Argentina's first elected female president "First Lady" Cristina, who was praised as "Madame Peron of the new era"; Yingluck Shinawatra, the first female head of government in the history of Thailand, is known as the "lightning prime Minister" for her short time from announcing her candidacy to being elected. The paths they have taken are both unique and common. The 2019 Map of The report on women in politics jointly issued by UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union shows that the proportion of women in political decision-making is slowly increasing. Official data show that the proportion of women ministers in the world has reached a record 20.7 percent. That's up 2.4 percent from 2017 (the map is updated every two years), and the number of departments headed by women is also increasing. The numbers reflect the real situation, with more and more women entering the "collar and sleeve", and women as leaders in politics showing a good start, which is deeply encouraging for the public to change the stereotypes about women in leadership.

Female leadership is dominated by transformational leadership style. Transformational leadership is a way of leadership proposed by American political sociologist James McGregor Burns in his classic book on leadership

in the 1980s. The proposition of transformational leadership theory can be summarized as: connecting leaders and subordinates, trying to create a process between them, and improving the completion of organizational tasks by means of influence, encouragement and personalized care. And given women's physical and psychological characteristics, which are often matched by transformational leadership styles, women often see building emotional bonds outside of the job itself as one of the key responsibilities in managing affairs. From the perspective of gender, men prefer to use the guiding and command-and-control style. They use the formal power given by their positions as the basis of influence, perform leadership functions by rewarding good work and punishing bad behavior, while women lead through tolerance. They use personal charm, professional knowledge and interpersonal skills to influence others, and tend to use transformational leadership style to motivate others by transforming employees' own interests into organizational goals. This is also the view of Stephen P. Robbins, who reviewed a large number of studies on gender differences in leadership styles. Transformational leadership presents more flexible attitude on the basis of traditional leadership, and it shows another organizational environment when various behaviors occur in the organization.

### ***3.4 Women's economic empowerment***

Promoting the leadership of women entrepreneurs is critical to promoting women's economic empowerment and achieving gender equality. Unfortunately, if you look at the current gender distribution of executive leadership in companies around the world, it is inevitable that there is a little bit of a gap. Catalyst is a global non-profit organization with a long history of focusing on gender issues in the workplace and helping to build an inclusive culture and promote women's economic leadership. According to the latest data from the group, which has long tracked changes in the distribution of women in management positions, only 6% of chief executives at fortune 500 companies are women. Although their share of board positions has increased to 21%, women still lack leadership skills compared with men. In terms of the basic employee distribution, although the proportion of female employees is 45 percent, there is no doubt that men are still an important force leading the development of enterprises.

The lack of female leadership is bound to affect the economic growth and healthy development of enterprises. According to the International Labor Organization's analysis of data from 186 countries around the world, the increase in the number of women employed in a country is positively correlated with its GDP growth. Based on this premise, the ILO predicts that corporate gender diversity is closely related to a company's success. The

report, women in Business and Management: Why Change is needed, surveyed 13,000 companies in some 70 countries around the world. More than 57 percent of the companies surveyed agreed that adopting gender diversity initiatives would improve their performance. About three-quarters of companies that track gender diversity at the top of their management team report that the presence of women contributes at least 20 percent to profits. Elite women are a powerful talent pool. As long as they are fully utilized by enterprises, these women can not only generate more profits for enterprises, but also achieve real economic empowerment while making contributions to enterprises, and win wide respect from the society.

### ***3.5 Gender digital divide***

In May 2019, the International Telecommunication Union of the United Nations released its inventory report on Data and evidence on Gender equality in Digital Access, Skills and Leadership. It pointed out that there was a serious shortfall in the proportion of women in chief executive officer positions in the telecommunications service industry in 2015, only reaching 9.5%.

According to 2017 OECD statistics, the proportion of women specialists in INFORMATION and communication technology (ICT) has consistently lagged behind that of men. Especially in engineering and technical occupations, the global percentage of women researchers remains low, ranging from 6 percent to 47 percent. While some countries report that women are close to achieving equal participation in these technology industries (Malaysia, the Philippines, Kazakhstan and Mongolia), the majority of other countries in terms of data remain below 30 per cent. The low participation rate of women in the digital industry means that there is a serious gender gap in the industry. The limited ability of women to exert themselves at the management level leads directly to their inability to influence decision-making and, in the long run, indirectly to the risk of a gender gap within the digital technology industry. How to avoid, the world famous telecommunication company took the lead to make a demonstration. Since 2016, Nokia has trained more than 4,300 leaders and managers on gender equality. The company is also taking concrete steps to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions to 25% by 2020, as well as increasing the proportion of women in its workforce.

At the international level, UN Women and the International Telecommunication Union, in partnership with the African Union Commission, have launched the African Girls Can Code Initiative. The initiative began in 2018 and ends in 2022. Over the course of four years, the program aims to expose young girls to and master digital literacy, coding and personal development skills, while preparing them to become programmers, creators and

designers. Under the leadership of these outstanding women, promote more women in the region to engage in research related to the ICT industry. Developing women's leadership skills is a testament to the potential value that women create for the tech industry. The inclusion of more prominent women's voices in the ICT industry will not only help companies make more diverse decisions, but also make a significant contribution to bridging the digital gender gap within the industry.

#### **4. THE CHALLENGES TO THE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP**

The landscape of women's world and leadership has changed dramatically in modern times. Women's participation in elections was once stigmatized and they were not even allowed to vote. Now, more than half of the country's voters are women, and many women have elected to high office. Only 2% of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies are women. Globally, women's leadership remains weak. This is despite the amazing progress women have made in the past few decades, including the election of women as leaders in some of the most powerful countries in the world. However, only 6 percent of countries are led by women. One of the most important obstacles is the heavy domestic burden on women in the home, which is often the most important factor that limits women's opportunities for advancement in the outside world.

Stereotypes about women and men, like those of other social groups, seem to be easily activated automatically [11]. Although stereotypes are not necessarily activated or applied to biased judgments about individuals, in many cases, they are beneficial to activation and application. Since this is common, we assume that, in general, the perception of individual leaders reflects the perception of leaders and gender. Therefore, the judgment of female leaders usually shows a mixture of public characteristics related to female gender roles and dynamic characteristics related to leadership roles [11]. The typical similarity of the male gender role and leader roles requires no such amalgamation.

For example, A field study of a university Cadet group also showed that when assessed according to objective military performance standards, the judgment of ability and leadership quality was biased against women [11]. Although organizational studies have the advantage of external validity, they are still vulnerable to internal validity criticism, that is, uncontrolled gender differences may lead to obvious bias effects. In order to solve this problem, researchers turned to Goldberg paradigm experiment to equate the objective characteristics of men and women, rather than gender. The experiment was conducted in different environments, and the participants included managers and other employee groups.

#### **5. SOLUTIONS**

First, the United Nations gives full play to its own functions, promotes the development and improvement of women's leadership, and takes various measures to ensure women's leadership. Organize some women's institutions, protect women's rights and encourage more women's leadership development.

Second, internationally, countries are taking steps to protect female leadership. Countries could agree on treaties or mechanisms to protect women in leadership. The country has given women ample opportunities to run for some important positions.

Third, on an individual level, everyone is making full use of their power to create a new era of female leadership for women. Give new connotation to female leadership, and let us work together to push forward female leadership in a broader direction. Based on their own positions and industries, everyone can promote the social reform of female leadership through the role they play in their posts.

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

With more and more authoritative academic research and time investigation, the topic of female leaders has received more and more attention. This paper mainly studies the influence and development of female leadership in the world from ancient times to the present. The paper finds that the international status of female leadership is not very impressive now, but it is much better than before. Women can be respected and women's rights are being valued. A number of outstanding talents have emerged in female leadership. Although prejudice still exists, women prove their ability with strength. However, this paper still has some shortcomings, lacking practical investigation and more modern data analysis. After that, questionnaires and actual census will be done to improve.

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