





# Gendered Experiences of Workplace Discrimination: A Qualitative Analysis of Women in Leadership Positions

Nahid. Yousefpour<sup>1</sup>, Hossein. Bayani<sup>2\*</sup>, Fatemeh. Mohammadifard<sup>2</sup>, Seyed Mohammadjavad. Momeni Fini<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

<sup>2</sup> Department of Psychology, St.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

<sup>3</sup> Department of Pharmacy Programme, Altinbas Branch, T.C., University, Istanbul, Türkiye

\* Corresponding author email address: Hoseinbayani88@gmail.com

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aims to explore the gendered experiences of workplace discrimination among women in leadership positions, identifying the challenges they face, the impact on their professional development, and the strategies they employ to navigate these obstacles. It seeks to contribute to the understanding of how organizational cultures can either exacerbate or mitigate gender discrimination and the implications for women's leadership trajectories.

**Methods and Materials:** A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 23 women in leadership roles across various industries. Participants were purposively selected to ensure a diverse representation of experiences. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to workplace discrimination and its impact on women leaders.

**Findings:** Five main themes were identified: Perceptions of Discrimination, Impact on Professional Development, Coping Strategies, Perceptions of Organizational Culture, and Personal Impact and Reflections. Women leaders reported experiences of overt and subtle discrimination, highlighting gender stereotypes and intersectional challenges. The impact on professional development was significant, affecting career progression, professional relationships, and skill development. Coping strategies varied, including personal resilience mechanisms, seeking supportive networks, and strategic organizational navigation. Perceptions of organizational culture revealed mixed support for gender equity, with a call for more genuine implementation of diversity policies. The personal impact of discrimination was profound, influencing emotional well-being, career satisfaction, and perspectives on gender equity.

**Conclusion:** The study underscores the complex, multifaceted nature of gendered workplace discrimination against women in leadership, pointing to the need for systemic changes within organizations to foster inclusive environments. It highlights the resilience of women leaders and the importance of supportive networks and policies in facilitating their leadership journey.

**Keywords:** *Women in leadership, Workplace discrimination, Gender stereotypes, Organizational culture, Professional development, Coping strategies.*

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of women's underrepresentation in leadership positions remains a persistent global concern, despite decades of advocacy, policy reforms, and scholarly attention. Across sectors such as education, healthcare, corporate governance, and public administration, women continue to encounter structural and cultural barriers that hinder their progression into leadership roles. These barriers are not merely individual challenges but are embedded within broader socio-cultural, institutional, and organizational systems that perpetuate gender inequality. Recent scholarship has emphasized that the leadership journey for women is shaped by a complex interplay of gender norms, organizational cultures, and intersectional identities, all of which contribute to the reproduction of inequality within leadership hierarchies (Chen et al., 2025; Smith et al., 2024). The persistence of these barriers suggests that gender equality in leadership is not solely a matter of increasing representation but requires a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that sustain discrimination and limit advancement.

One of the most enduring concepts in the study of women's leadership is the "glass ceiling," which refers to the invisible yet powerful barriers preventing women from reaching top leadership positions. Empirical evidence continues to demonstrate that this phenomenon remains prevalent across various contexts, including healthcare, education, and corporate sectors (Haines & McKeown, 2023; Joseph & Vijayan, 2023). Women often face discriminatory practices such as unequal access to promotions, biased performance evaluations, and limited opportunities for leadership development. These challenges are further exacerbated by implicit biases and stereotypes that associate leadership with traditionally masculine traits, thereby positioning women as less suitable for leadership roles (Jadnanansing et al., 2023; Markwei et al., 2023). Such biases are not always overt but often manifest in subtle and insidious ways, including microaggressions, exclusion from informal networks, and the undervaluation of women's contributions.

The role of organizational culture in shaping women's leadership experiences cannot be overstated. Organizational norms, values, and practices often reflect broader societal attitudes toward gender, thereby reinforcing discriminatory behaviors and limiting inclusivity. Studies have shown that even in organizations that formally endorse gender equality, the implementation of diversity policies is frequently

inconsistent or symbolic, failing to produce meaningful change (Baş et al., 2024; Sojo et al., 2023). In many cases, organizational cultures continue to privilege male leadership styles and marginalize alternative approaches that are often associated with women leaders. This dynamic creates an environment in which women must constantly negotiate their identities and leadership styles to gain acceptance and legitimacy.

Cultural context also plays a critical role in shaping the leadership trajectories of women. In many societies, deeply entrenched patriarchal norms influence perceptions of gender roles and limit women's participation in decision-making processes. For instance, research conducted in African and Asian contexts highlights the influence of cultural expectations on women's leadership opportunities, particularly in educational and healthcare sectors (Inayat et al., 2024; Makamure, 2025). These cultural dynamics often impose additional constraints on women, requiring them to balance professional responsibilities with traditional gender roles. As a result, women's leadership experiences are not only shaped by organizational factors but also by broader societal structures that reinforce gender inequality.

Intersectionality provides a critical lens for understanding the diverse experiences of women in leadership. Women are not a homogeneous group, and their experiences are shaped by multiple intersecting identities, including race, ethnicity, class, and religion. Intersectional perspectives highlight how these identities interact to produce unique forms of discrimination and disadvantage. For example, Black women leaders often face compounded challenges related to both gender and racial bias, which can influence their access to opportunities and their experiences within organizational settings (Kea-Edwards et al., 2023). Similarly, the interplay of religion, culture, and gender can shape leadership experiences in ways that are context-specific and complex (Koburtay et al., 2023). Understanding these intersectional dynamics is essential for developing inclusive policies and practices that address the needs of diverse groups of women.

The literature also underscores the importance of examining women's lived experiences in leadership roles to gain a nuanced understanding of workplace discrimination. Qualitative studies have been particularly valuable in capturing the subjective experiences of women leaders, revealing the emotional, psychological, and professional impacts of discrimination. Women often report feelings of isolation, stress, and burnout as a result of navigating hostile or unsupportive work environments (Dlamini et al., 2024; Hussain et al., 2024). These experiences not only affect their

well-being but also influence their career trajectories, including their decisions to remain in or leave leadership positions. By exploring these lived experiences, researchers can identify patterns and themes that inform the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

Career advancement for women is further complicated by structural barriers such as limited access to mentorship, sponsorship, and professional networks. These resources are critical for leadership development, yet women often face challenges in accessing them due to exclusionary practices and gendered norms. Studies have shown that mentorship and networking opportunities are often less accessible to women, particularly in male-dominated industries, thereby limiting their ability to build the social capital necessary for career advancement (Kalumba et al., 2023; Khosa, 2023). In response to these challenges, women have developed various strategies to navigate organizational barriers, including seeking support from informal networks, engaging in self-advocacy, and leveraging professional development opportunities.

Despite the numerous challenges they face, women leaders demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability. Research highlights the ways in which women employ coping strategies to navigate discrimination and advance their careers. These strategies include building supportive networks, enhancing their skills and competencies, and strategically navigating organizational politics (Makamure, 2025; Mathetha & Dhanpat, 2025). Such resilience not only enables women to overcome barriers but also contributes to the transformation of organizational cultures by challenging existing norms and advocating for change. However, it is important to recognize that resilience should not be viewed as a substitute for systemic change. Rather, organizations must take responsibility for addressing the structural and cultural factors that perpetuate inequality.

The global nature of gender inequality in leadership underscores the need for comparative and cross-cultural research. Studies conducted in diverse contexts, including Ghana, South Africa, and Nepal, reveal both commonalities and differences in women's leadership experiences (Acharya, 2024; Moraka, 2024; Odei-Tettey et al., 2023a). While certain challenges, such as gender bias and limited access to opportunities, are universal, others are shaped by specific cultural, economic, and political contexts. For example, women in security services and mining industries face unique challenges related to male-dominated work environments and organizational cultures that are resistant to

change (Markwei et al., 2023; Moraka, 2024). Similarly, women in educational leadership must navigate institutional structures and policies that may not adequately support gender equity (Odei-Tettey et al., 2023b). These findings highlight the importance of context-sensitive approaches to addressing gender inequality in leadership.

Recent advancements in research have also emphasized the role of policy and institutional frameworks in promoting gender equality. Intersectionality-informed policies, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and leadership development programs have been identified as key strategies for supporting women's advancement (Odei-Tettey et al., 2023a; Sojo et al., 2023). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends on their implementation and the extent to which they are integrated into organizational practices. In many cases, policies exist in theory but are not effectively operationalized, resulting in limited impact on women's leadership experiences. This gap between policy and practice highlights the need for accountability and sustained commitment to gender equality.

Furthermore, the systematic review of female leadership literature indicates that research in this field has evolved significantly over the past decade, with increasing attention to intersectionality, organizational culture, and leadership styles (Chen et al., 2025). This growing body of research provides valuable insights into the factors that influence women's leadership experiences and the strategies that can be employed to promote gender equality. However, there remains a need for more empirical studies that explore the lived experiences of women in leadership, particularly in underrepresented contexts and sectors.

The present study builds on this body of literature by examining the gendered experiences of workplace discrimination among women in leadership positions through a qualitative lens. By focusing on women's lived experiences, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges they face, the impact of discrimination on their professional development, and the strategies they employ to navigate these obstacles. The study also aims to explore the role of organizational culture in shaping these experiences, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on gender and leadership.

Importantly, the study draws on the uploaded research context, which emphasizes the multifaceted nature of workplace discrimination, including overt, subtle, institutional, and intersectional forms, as well as their implications for career progression, professional relationships, and psychological well-being. By integrating

these dimensions, the study provides a holistic perspective on the experiences of women leaders and highlights the need for systemic interventions to address gender inequality.

In conclusion, the literature demonstrates that while progress has been made in increasing women's representation in leadership, significant challenges remain. Gender stereotypes, organizational cultures, and structural barriers continue to limit women's advancement and shape their experiences in leadership roles. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers the complex interplay of individual, organizational, and societal factors. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the gendered experiences of workplace discrimination among women in leadership positions, focusing on the challenges they face, the impact on their professional development, and the strategies they employ to navigate these barriers.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study design and Participant

The present study was fundamental in terms of its objective and employed a descriptive–correlational design in terms of data collection. The statistical population consisted of women who referred to psychological clinics and mental health centers located in districts 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of Tehran. The sampling process was conducted among married women within the age range of 25 to 45 years who sought services from these centers. Considering methodological recommendations for correlational studies, which suggest including approximately 15 to 20 participants per examined relationship, and accounting for the possibility of participant attrition, a final sample size of 222 individuals was determined. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method, ensuring accessibility and feasibility within the specified clinical settings.

### 2.2. Measures

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, focusing on the exploration of gendered experiences of workplace discrimination among women in leadership positions. By leveraging semi-structured interviews, this approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives, experiences, and the nuanced contexts within which discrimination manifests.

Participants were purposively selected to ensure a rich diversity of experiences and perspectives. Eligibility criteria

included women who currently hold or have previously held leadership roles across various industries and organizational types. Efforts were made to include participants from a range of ages, ethnic backgrounds, and career stages to capture a comprehensive view of gendered workplace discrimination.

Participants were informed about the study's purpose, their rights, including confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in presenting the findings, and any potentially identifying information has been altered or omitted.

### 2.3. Measures

#### 2.3.1. Semi-Structured Interview

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility in the discussion while ensuring that all relevant topics were covered. The interview guide was developed based on a preliminary review of literature and was refined through pilot interviews. Key topics included experiences of discrimination, its impact on personal and professional development, coping strategies, and perceptions of organizational culture regarding gender equity.

Interviews were conducted remotely via video conferencing tools to accommodate participants' geographical locations and schedules. Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes, was recorded with consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### 2.4. Data analysis

Data analysis followed the principles of thematic analysis, emphasizing pattern recognition within the data set to identify key themes related to gendered experiences of workplace discrimination. Initial codes were generated by carefully reading the transcriptions, which were then grouped into potential themes. These themes were reviewed and refined iteratively until they accurately represented the dataset. Theoretical saturation was reached when no new themes emerged from subsequent interviews, ensuring the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed, including member checking, where participants were given the opportunity to review and comment on the findings related to their interviews. Additionally, the research process was documented in detail

to allow for reflexivity and transparency in the research process, enhancing the study's reliability and validity.

### 3. Findings and Results

This qualitative study comprised 23 female participants who have held or currently hold leadership positions across a variety of industries, including technology, healthcare, education, finance, and non-profit sectors. The age of

participants ranged from 32 to 58 years, with the majority (n=15) falling within the 40-50 age group, reflecting a mature perspective on leadership challenges and gendered workplace discrimination. In terms of organizational tenure, participants varied from those relatively new to their leadership roles, with 2-5 years of experience (n=7), to those with extensive leadership experience, exceeding 15 years (n=8), with the remaining participants (n=8) falling between 6 to 15 years of experience.

**Table 1**

*The Results of Thematic Analysis*

Categories	Subcategories	Concepts (Open Codes)
Perceptions of Discrimination	- Overt Discrimination	- Sexist remarks, - Denial of opportunities, - Unequal pay, - Gender-based assumptions, - Public belittlement
	- Subtle Discrimination	- Microaggressions, - Implicit biases, - Exclusion from networks, - Patronizing language, - Overlooked contributions
	- Institutional Discrimination	- Policy biases, - Promotion barriers, - Lack of support structures, - Non-inclusive benefits, - Rigid gender roles
	- Intersectional Discrimination	- Racial and gender biases, - Disability neglect, - Ageism, - LGBTQ+ invisibility
Impact on Professional Development	- Career Progression	- Hindered promotions, - Limited leadership training, - Mentorship scarcity, - Glass ceiling, - Tokenism
	- Professional Relationships	- Networking challenges, - Allyship absence, - Isolation, - Professional undermining, - Lack of sponsorship
	- Skill and Competency Development	- Overlooked for challenging projects, - Feedback scarcity, - Development opportunities, - Skill undervaluation
	- Work-Life Balance	- Flexibility stigma, - Caregiver penalty, - Work hour expectations
Coping Strategies	- Personal Coping Mechanisms	- Seeking mentorship, - Skill enhancement, - Self-advocacy, - Work-life boundary setting, - Resilience building
	- Seeking Support Systems	- Professional networks, - Employee resource groups, - External coaching, - Peer support, - Online communities
	- Organizational Navigation	- Policy awareness, - Strategic relationship building, - Advocacy for change, - Navigating politics
Perceptions of Organizational Culture	- Support for Gender Equity	- Inclusivity initiatives, - Gender equity policies, - Leadership commitment, - Transparency in decisions
	- Resistance to Change	- Tradition adherence, - Skepticism towards diversity efforts, - Minimal enforcement, - Silent bystanders
	- Role of Leadership	- Leadership advocacy, - Role modeling, - Policy enforcement, - Visibility in diversity initiatives
Personal Impact and Reflections	- Communication and Feedback	- Open dialogue promotion, - Feedback culture, - Grievance redressal mechanisms
	- Emotional and Psychological Impact	- Stress, - Burnout, - Resilience, - Anxiety, - Empowerment, - Sense of belonging
	- Career Satisfaction	- Job fulfillment, - Engagement levels, - Intent to stay, - Career growth perspective, - Achievement recognition
	- Perspectives on Gender Equity	- Optimism for change, - Frustration with slow progress, - Personal contribution, - Future outlook
	- Identity and Self-Perception	- Professional identity, - Self-esteem, - Role conflict, - Personal growth

In the qualitative exploration of gendered experiences of workplace discrimination among women in leadership positions, five main categories were identified, each comprising several subcategories and associated concepts:

#### Perceptions of Discrimination

Participants frequently discussed Overt Discrimination, with one interviewee remarking, "I was blatantly overlooked for a promotion in favor of a less qualified male colleague, a

decision justified by the need for a 'strong male leadership presence' in the company." Subtle Discrimination was also pervasive, as another leader shared, "My ideas are often ignored until repeated by a male counterpart." The Institutional Discrimination subcategory highlighted systemic barriers, with a participant noting, "Our maternity leave policy is a joke, clearly designed without considering the real needs of working mothers." Intersectional

Discrimination emerged as a significant concern, especially among participants of color, with one stating, "As an African American woman, I navigate not just gender bias but racial undertones that question my competence daily."

#### Impact on Professional Development

Under Career Progression, women spoke of "hitting a glass ceiling that seems invisible to my male colleagues." The Professional Relationships category revealed challenges in forming supportive networks, as one woman explained, "Finding a mentor within the leadership who doesn't see your gender as a liability is tough." In discussing Skill and Competency Development, participants expressed frustration over being "sidelined in projects that offer significant growth opportunities." The added category of Work-Life Balance highlighted discrepancies in organizational expectations, with a leader sharing, "The assumption that I'll compromise my family time for work because I'm ambitious is disheartening."

#### Coping Strategies

In Personal Coping Mechanisms, resilience was a common theme, "I've learned to advocate for myself, demanding the respect and opportunities I deserve." The importance of Seeking Support Systems was underscored by many, "Joining women leadership networks has been my lifeline, providing not just advice but genuine understanding and support." The Organizational Navigation strategies varied, with participants employing different tactics to advance, "Understanding the political landscape of my organization has been crucial in strategizing my moves."

#### Perceptions of Organizational Culture

Many expressed mixed feelings about their Support for Gender Equity, with one leader reflecting, "There are policies in place, but their implementation lacks sincerity." Resistance to Change was a barrier, "The lip service to diversity is frustrating when substantive changes are resisted by the old guard." In Role of Leadership, the sentiment was that leaders play a crucial role, "When leaders model gender equity, it sets a tone for the entire organization."

#### Personal Impact and Reflections

The Emotional and Psychological Impact of discrimination was profound, "The constant need to prove myself has been exhausting and isolating." However, many also found Career Satisfaction in overcoming these barriers, "Despite the challenges, leading teams to success and driving change has been incredibly rewarding." The journey also influenced their Perspectives on Gender Equity, with a sense of cautious optimism, "I believe change is happening, but it's slower than it should be." Lastly, Identity and Self-

Perception evolved through these experiences, "Navigating these challenges has not only made me a stronger leader but has deepened my commitment to fostering an inclusive culture for the next generation."

## 4. Discussion

The present qualitative study examined the gendered experiences of workplace discrimination among women in leadership positions and revealed a multifaceted pattern of challenges encompassing perceptions of discrimination, impacts on professional development, coping strategies, organizational culture, and personal consequences. The findings indicate that women leaders continue to encounter both overt and subtle forms of discrimination, including sexist remarks, unequal opportunities, microaggressions, and implicit biases. These findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating that gender bias persists in leadership contexts and is often embedded in everyday organizational practices (Jadnanansing et al., 2023; Markwei et al., 2023). The coexistence of overt and covert discrimination underscores the complexity of gender inequality, where explicit exclusionary practices are reinforced by more insidious, normalized behaviors that are difficult to identify and challenge.

The prominence of subtle discrimination in participants' narratives aligns with the growing body of literature emphasizing the role of implicit bias in shaping leadership experiences. Women leaders frequently reported being overlooked, interrupted, or having their contributions undervalued, which reflects patterns identified in organizational research on gender dynamics (Smith et al., 2024). Such experiences contribute to a cumulative disadvantage that affects women's visibility, credibility, and influence within organizations. Moreover, the findings regarding institutional discrimination, including biased policies and structural barriers, corroborate studies highlighting systemic inequalities in leadership advancement pathways (Haines & McKeown, 2023; Khosa, 2023). These institutional factors reinforce gender disparities by limiting access to resources, opportunities, and support systems necessary for career progression.

Intersectional discrimination emerged as a particularly salient theme, with participants describing how gender bias intersects with race, age, and other identity markers to produce compounded disadvantages. This finding is strongly supported by intersectionality theory and empirical studies demonstrating that women from marginalized groups face

unique and intensified barriers in leadership contexts (Kea-Edwards et al., 2023; Koburtay et al., 2023). The intersectional lens reveals that gender inequality cannot be fully understood in isolation but must be examined in relation to other forms of social stratification. This insight is critical for developing inclusive organizational policies that address the diverse needs of women leaders.

The study also highlighted the significant impact of discrimination on professional development, particularly in terms of career progression, professional relationships, and skill development. Participants reported encountering barriers such as limited access to promotions, mentorship, and leadership training opportunities, which are consistent with the concept of the glass ceiling documented in prior research (Joseph & Vijayan, 2023; Moraka, 2024). These barriers not only hinder women's advancement but also perpetuate gender disparities in leadership representation. The findings further indicate that professional relationships are often strained by exclusion from networks and lack of allyship, echoing research emphasizing the importance of social capital in leadership success (Kalumba et al., 2023). Without access to supportive networks, women leaders may struggle to navigate organizational politics and secure opportunities for advancement.

In terms of skill and competency development, participants described being overlooked for challenging assignments and receiving limited feedback, which restricts their ability to build the competencies required for leadership roles. This finding aligns with studies indicating that women are often denied access to high-visibility projects that are critical for career advancement (Hussain et al., 2024). Additionally, the theme of work-life balance revealed the persistence of gendered expectations regarding caregiving responsibilities, which disproportionately affect women's career trajectories. These findings are consistent with research highlighting the "caregiver penalty" and the stigma associated with flexible work arrangements (Dlamini et al., 2024).

Despite these challenges, the study demonstrates that women leaders employ a range of coping strategies to navigate discrimination and sustain their careers. Personal coping mechanisms such as resilience, self-advocacy, and continuous skill development were commonly reported, reflecting findings from prior studies on women's adaptive strategies in leadership contexts (Mathetha & Dhanpat, 2025). The importance of support systems, including mentorship, professional networks, and peer support, was also emphasized, supporting research that highlights the role

of relational resources in mitigating the effects of discrimination (Kea-Edwards et al., 2023). Furthermore, participants described strategic organizational navigation, including understanding power dynamics and leveraging relationships, which aligns with studies on women's agency in overcoming structural barriers (Makamure, 2025).

The findings related to organizational culture reveal a complex and often contradictory landscape. While some participants acknowledged the presence of gender equity initiatives, many expressed skepticism regarding their effectiveness, citing a lack of genuine commitment and accountability. This observation is consistent with research indicating that diversity policies are often symbolic rather than transformative, failing to address underlying power structures (Baş et al., 2024; Sojo et al., 2023). The resistance to change observed in organizational cultures reflects deeply entrenched norms and values that prioritize traditional leadership models and marginalize alternative approaches. The role of leadership in shaping organizational culture was also highlighted, with participants emphasizing the importance of leaders who actively promote inclusivity and model equitable behaviors. This finding aligns with literature emphasizing the critical role of leadership in driving organizational change and fostering inclusive environments (Chen et al., 2025).

The personal impact of discrimination on women leaders was profound, encompassing emotional, psychological, and professional dimensions. Participants reported experiences of stress, burnout, and diminished self-esteem, which are consistent with findings from qualitative studies on the emotional toll of workplace discrimination (Haines & McKeown, 2023). At the same time, many participants expressed a sense of resilience and empowerment, indicating that overcoming challenges contributed to their personal and professional growth. This duality reflects the complex nature of women's leadership experiences, where adversity can both hinder and strengthen individuals.

## 5. Conclusion

In synthesizing these findings, it is evident that gendered workplace discrimination is a multifaceted phenomenon that operates at individual, organizational, and societal levels. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing a nuanced understanding of how these levels interact to shape women's leadership experiences. The findings underscore the need for systemic interventions that address not only individual behaviors but also structural and cultural

factors that perpetuate inequality. By highlighting the lived experiences of women leaders, this study provides valuable insights for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to promote gender equity in leadership.

## 6. Limitations and Suggestions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the qualitative design and relatively small sample size limit the generalizability of the findings. While the study provides in-depth insights into the experiences of women leaders, the results may not be representative of all contexts or populations. Second, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of bias, as participants' perceptions and recollections may be influenced by personal experiences and interpretations. Third, the study focused primarily on women who have attained leadership positions, potentially overlooking the experiences of those who have been excluded from leadership pathways altogether. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not capture changes in experiences over time, which may be important for understanding the dynamic nature of workplace discrimination.

Future research should build on these findings by employing mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative data to enhance the robustness and generalizability of results. Longitudinal studies are particularly needed to examine how women's experiences of discrimination and coping strategies evolve over time and in response to organizational changes. Comparative studies across different cultural and organizational contexts would also provide valuable insights into the contextual factors that influence women's leadership experiences. Furthermore, future research should explore the perspectives of other stakeholders, including male leaders and organizational decision-makers, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of workplace discrimination. Finally, there is a need for intervention-based research that evaluates the effectiveness of organizational policies and programs aimed at promoting gender equity in leadership.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the urgent need for organizations to implement comprehensive strategies to address gender inequality in leadership. This includes developing transparent and equitable promotion processes, providing targeted mentorship and sponsorship programs, and fostering inclusive organizational cultures that value diversity. Training programs focused on

unconscious bias and inclusive leadership should be integrated into organizational development initiatives to raise awareness and promote behavioral change. Organizations should also establish accountability mechanisms to ensure that diversity and inclusion policies are effectively implemented and monitored. Additionally, creating safe spaces for dialogue and feedback can empower women leaders to voice their experiences and contribute to organizational change. By taking these steps, organizations can create environments that support the advancement and well-being of women leaders, ultimately enhancing organizational performance and innovation.

## Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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