

Women's Perceptions of Support System for Leadership Development

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ABSTRACT

This empirical study investigates various forms of support systems designed to foster women's leadership in Sabah, Malaysia. Data was collected through a survey questionnaire from a sample of 282 professional women working in Sabah's public and private sectors. The research evaluates the existing support mechanisms and analyses gender sensitivity and pathways for women to assume leadership positions. Using quantitative analysis, the study assesses the effectiveness of support systems for leadership development, including training programs, study leave incentives, equal opportunities provisions, gender sensitivity initiatives, governance structures, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 and SDG 8 agenda. The findings reveal a nuanced view of the support systems available to women in Sabah. Respondents acknowledged the presence of initiatives promoting gender equality and supporting women's advancement within organisations. However, the analysis indicates that these support systems are insufficient in addressing the diverse needs of women in Sabah's professional environment.

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and women's leadership are global priorities that contribute significantly to sustainable development. However, despite these international goals, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions remains a persistent issue in many regions, including Sabah, Malaysia. In Sabah,

This empirical research embarks on a journey to shed light on this issue and explore the support systems for women's leadership within the unique socio-cultural context of Sabah.

The path to achieving gender balance in leadership positions requires implementing comprehensive support systems that address systemic and individual barriers. Therefore, this

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study aims to evaluate the essential support systems organisations and the government provide for women to become leaders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frameworks

Several theoretical approaches contribute to understanding the role of women in decision-making processes. Firstly, *Women's Human Rights Theory* places importance on upholding and safeguarding women's rights as fundamental human rights. It advocates for gender equality, stressing that women should enjoy the same rights and freedoms as men, free from discrimination based on gender (Ackerly, 2001). This theory addresses a range of dimensions in women's lives, including education, employment, healthcare, political engagement, and protection from violence and discrimination. Secondly, the *Critical Mass Theory* suggests that achieving a critical mass of individuals from marginalised groups is pivotal for instigating significant change within organisations or decision-making bodies (Sarah & Mona, 2008). Specifically, when enough individuals from underrepresented groups, such as women, assume influential positions, their collective presence is believed to reshape group dynamics, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment. Thirdly, concerning policymaking, the *Theory of Congresswomen's Impact on Women's Issues* centres on the influence of women legislators on policy debates and decisions about women-specific issues. It underscores the necessity of women's representation in legislative bodies, to ensure that women's perspectives, experiences, and interests receive due consideration in policymaking processes (Ilesanmi, 2018). This theory acknowledges the potential divergence between women's and men's experiences and concerns, emphasising that women's participation in decision-making is essential for crafting policies that cater to the diverse needs of society.

Women's underrepresentation in leadership

Globally, there has long been a problem with women's underrepresentation in leadership roles across many industries. Many previous studies have been conducted on the underrepresentation of women in various domains, including politics, academia, business, and leadership roles. In addition to being a question of social fairness, achieving gender parity in leadership is crucial for utilising the variety of viewpoints and experiences that inspire creativity and inclusive decision-making.

Elder (2004) sheds light on the underrepresentation of women as political candidates compared to men. The research identifies several contributing factors, such as political gender role socialisation, low political confidence, familial obligations, and the scarcity of prominent female role models in politics, collectively influencing women's reluctance to pursue political office. A study by Teele, Kalla, and Rosenbluth (2018) demonstrated that voters and legislators generally do not disregard female candidates and exhibit a preference for them over male candidates. However, they reserve their highest esteem for women who can successfully fulfil both political duties and traditional roles as wives and mothers. Given that voters typically favour representatives with conventional family structures, women face the challenge of persuading the public that they can effectively manage both responsibilities. In other words, female candidates are expected to embody exceptional capabilities, while male candidates often have the luxury of outsourcing family responsibilities (Gimenez et al., 2017). In practice, this suggests that bias against women in politics may persist despite similar evaluations of candidate qualifications across genders. Eden and Gupta (2017) suggest that while gender equality in the workplace is on the rise, especially in affluent nations, it remains a persistent challenge in the poorest nations.

Surprisingly, rather than diminishing, the gap between wealthy and impoverished nations in terms of gender equality seems to be widening.

Women are the backbone that empowers the country's development and progress agenda. Thus, looking at the importance of women as drivers of national progress and development, the government has initiated efforts by setting a policy of at least 30 per cent involvement of women at the decision-making level through the 2018 Budget. This policy gives an impression of how the government is determined to increase the participation of women as policy and decision-makers systematically and effectively—however, efforts to empower women as decision-makers are still lagging. The persistent underrepresentation of women in ministerial and deputy ministerial positions is a concerning issue in Sabah, with statistics indicating that less than 10 per cent of these roles are held by women as of 2024 (New Straits Times, 2023). The recent composition of the Sabah State Legislative Assembly illustrates this disparity, with only eight per cent of the assembly members being women out of a total of 79, highlighting a significant gender gap in political representation. Similarly, at the federal level, only three out of 25 Sabah members of Parliament are women, further underscoring the limited presence of women in decision-making positions within the political landscape of Sabah.

Gender expert Associate Professor Dr Jamaluddin Aziz said that although important positions in Malaysia are filled by women, there is still a gap in statistical differences and perceptions of Malaysians regarding women's involvement locally in a particular field. He said only eight or 18 per cent of the 43 highest government positions, such as Secretary General ministry or director of a ministry, filled in this country are held by women. Meanwhile, Senior Aid Organization Advocacy Officer Wanita (WAO), Rusni Tajari said women still face stereotypes burdened by those whose duties and roles are limited to women at home. He said 'toxic masculinity', which is a male-oriented culture of leadership, is also still prevalent, and society thinks only men can do it, be the leader of an organisation or country (Utusan Borneo, 2021).

To shed light on the various approaches taken to resolve this imbalance, this literature review looks at the crucial support systems created to enable and advance women leaders in a variety of sectors.

Women's leadership support systems

Empowering women's leadership is crucial for achieving gender equality (Princy, 2023; Ebron & Andenoro, 2023). Women's leadership roles have historically faced barriers like prejudice and lack of support, but efforts are being made to provide mentoring programs, leadership development opportunities, and flexible work schedules to support women's advancement. Women's empowerment involves increasing self-worth, decision-making abilities, and influencing change. Enabling women in leadership positions benefits women and their families and communities, reducing poverty, hunger, and conflict while strengthening democracy and human rights. To support gender equality, it is essential to create inclusive healthcare systems, enhance women's participation in public decision-making roles, and provide equal opportunities for women in various sectors (Smith & Sinkford, 2022; Langer et al., 2015).

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping future leaders. Research indicates that encouraging girls and women to pursue education, particularly in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), significantly impacts their leadership potential (Hill et al., 2010). Initiatives promoting leadership and soft skills training for women have also demonstrated positive outcomes (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Alwazzan and Al-Angari (2020) suggested that gender balance influences the measure of women's leadership in leadership roles. They further noted

that institutional prerequisites such as research output and educational qualifications acted as obstacles to the emergence of women in leadership positions.

Mentorship and sponsorship programs are increasingly recognised for advancing women's careers. Mentorship involves experienced leaders offering guidance and support to emerging talent, while sponsorship entails senior leaders actively advocating for women's career advancement (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009). These programs not only provide crucial networking opportunities but also enhance visibility within organisations. Singh and Vanka (2020) emphasise that integrating sponsorship into mentoring programs can impact women's career progression. More recently, Pifer, Logsdon, Ibarra, and Gardner (2024) highlighted that mentorship with exceptional mentors or senior professionals boosts women's productivity and career development.

Legislation and governmental policies play a crucial role in advancing gender equality in leadership. Numerous countries have implemented legal mandates, such as quotas for women on corporate boards, resulting in improved representation, as highlighted by Sojo, Wood, Wood, and Wheeler (2016). Studies consistently highlight the importance of implementing policies and practices that ensure equal pay for equal work (Blau & Kahn, 2017). However, Alwazzan and Al-Angari (2020) noted that the implementation of policies was lacking, which further hindered women's ability to enact leadership roles. Achieving gender equality in pay and opportunities is foundational to women's advancement into leadership roles. Additionally, policies related to flexible work arrangements, such as remote work and flexible hours, are essential in accommodating women's diverse needs, including family responsibilities (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). These arrangements reduce the barriers that often hinder women's career progression.

Employers who emphasise *diversity and inclusion* frequently see gains in employee engagement and innovation. Cox and Blake (1991) found that diversity training, inclusive policies, and a supportive culture foster greater representation of women in leadership roles. More recently, research by Sales, Galloway Burke, and Cannonier (2020) highlights that individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds face a variety of workplace experiences that shape their views on leadership and empowerment, underscoring the value of inclusive practices. Building on these findings, Soñta (2023) argues that organisational culture and initiatives should address inequities by fostering fair recognition of achievements and implementing transparent systems for tracking individual contributions, ensuring all employees feel valued for their efforts.

Vidyakala (2019) suggests that businesses should prioritise establishing both *formal and informal networks* to facilitate greater social support for women leaders. Their strategy for career advancement involves promoting collaborative work styles, adopting interactive leadership approaches, and gaining experience in line management. Women's leadership networks and forums provide safe spaces for women to connect, share experiences, and access resources. These networks empower women by fostering collaboration, mentoring relationships, and mutual support (Murphy et al., 2024; List & Sorcinelli, 2018). Leadership development programmes positively influenced women's enactment of leadership and cultures. Additionally, involvement in local communities and backing grassroots efforts can empower women from various backgrounds to aspire to leadership positions, as emphasised by Kabeer (2008). Active participation in communities cultivates leadership abilities and nurtures self-assurance. Additionally, Brue (2018) emphasises the importance of internal and external support networks for women in leadership positions, highlighting women's diverse approaches in integrating or segregating their work and non-work obligations.

Specialised leadership development programs allow women to acquire the knowledge and skills essential for excelling in leadership roles, as noted by Dobbins and Platz (1986). These initiatives often allow women to engage in distinctive projects or tasks that enhance their leadership experience. A more recent study by Embassey (2023) revealed that women need to acquire skills and competencies to advance to higher positions in the workplace. Continuous development, networking, and connecting with fellow women leaders for mentoring, sponsorship, and guidance are essential for effective leadership. Additionally, it is noteworthy that male mentors played a significant role in the professional advancement of many women, aiding in the elimination of biases and garnering increased support from male colleagues. Meanwhile, according to Sullivan (2024), interactions with women in leadership roles and whether they aided in progress are significant elements that impact women's career advancement.

Women-friendly *workplace facilities* such as baby and childcare centre facilities, flexible working hours, and appropriate periods of maternity leave are important to enable women to work quietly. With an increase in the number of female workers who have young children and parents' awareness of the importance of stages of preschool, then childcare services are necessary. In addition, a safe and respectful environment for sex between the sexes at the workplace without any behavioural or speech disorders as well emphasises that women's right to work is protected and respected (Abu Bakar, 2009). Meanwhile, according to Hodges (2017), women's relationships with self, others, place and work are key influencers in how they perceive and experience leadership. More recently, continued advocacy for workplace flexibility is among several recommendations aimed at overcoming challenges and advancing the role of women in accounting and auditing (Ebirim et al., 2024).

The *media* plays a substantial role in moulding views on women's leadership. According to Wood (1994), positive representations of women leaders in media and popular culture can disrupt stereotypes and inspire the next generations. The true measure of success for women in politics will be when media scrutiny focuses on their policies rather than their personalities. While some women are indeed making significant contributions, their achievements often go unnoticed by the media (Ross, 2004). On the other hand, women's ability to organise around their needs, interests, and rights is most likely to lead to public recognition of their rights as workers, as women, and as citizens (Kabeer, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a survey-based research design, with a sample of 282 employed women between the ages of 30 and 59, all working as decision-makers in management roles across both public and private sectors within Sabah. This age group, often balancing significant personal and professional responsibilities such as family care, career advancement, and personal development, can provide a unique perspective on leadership support systems. In addition, their insights are particularly valuable for informing organisational policies and leadership programs, as their experiences reflect the career goals and challenges faced by a large portion of the workforce. This demographic context allows the researchers to study the effectiveness of leadership support systems in aiding women through these balancing acts.

The data collection method employed an online approach, utilising Google Forms for survey administration, which enabled increased participation and accessibility for potential respondents. The survey link was distributed to the human resource departments of diverse organisations, encompassing central and state government ministries, departments, agencies, corporate entities, and government-linked companies. This study adopted a quantitative approach,

analyzing the collected data using percentages. The sampling method utilised was purposeful sampling, involving the deliberate selection of female employees who met predetermined criteria.

Among the 282 respondents, the highest group, 64.2%, is between 40 and 55. Most are married women, who represented 73.4% of the sampled population; 55.7% are degree holders, 67.4% have less than four dependents, 48.6% have a monthly income between RM5001-RM10,000 and 90.1% have more than 5 years of service before retirement.

The research outlined seven questions/statements designed to evaluate the presence of support systems that encourage women's aspirations in leadership. Each query prompted participants to evaluate the extent of a specific attribute on a scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The perceptions of the participants are collected according to the following statements:

My organisation provides training programs to prepare women to be competent leaders.

My organisation provides training programs to prepare women as decision makers at the management level.

My organisation provides study leave incentives to women who want to pursue higher education to potentially become leaders.

The organisation's governance system gives rural women fair opportunities to be appointed as organisational leaders.

Management demonstrates gender sensitivity by providing a women-friendly work environment so that more women are involved at leadership levels.

The state government provides many opportunities for local women to become leaders at various decision-making levels.

The state government's efforts through the sustainable development goal agenda at the national level contribute to sensitivity towards gender equality so that opportunities for women are more open at the leadership level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This investigation is guided by the seven statements outlined earlier. Subsequent sections will elaborate on our findings, addressing each question separately.

Table 1. My organisation provides training programs to prepare women to be competent leaders

	N	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	23	8.2	8.2	8.2
Disagree	28	9.9	9.9	18.1
Neutral	85	30.1	30.1	48.2
Agree	90	31.9	31.9	80.1
Strongly agree	56	19.9	19.9	100.0
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows the respondent's perceptions of training programs provided by organisations to prepare women as competent leaders. The quality of the answers falls within the medium

(agree and strongly agree) at a rate of 51.8%. While 30.1% are unsure and 18.1% strongly disagree and disagree that the organisation provides leadership training to qualified female staff. These findings suggest that the organisation is taking steps towards promoting gender diversity and women's leadership development through the provision of training programs. However, further investigation and continuous evaluation may be necessary to ensure the effectiveness and inclusivity of these programs.

A total of 48.2% of respondents express disagreement or uncertainty about the statement. These findings suggest employers' notable lack of emphasis on preparing women for leadership roles. These results may indicate several potential factors contributing to the organisation's shortcomings in supporting female leadership development, such as a lack of the necessary resources to implement comprehensive leadership training programs specifically tailored for qualified female staff, organisational cultures and structures within the organisations may not prioritise gender and lack of awareness due to inadequate communication and visibility of such programs.

Table 2. My organisation provides training programs to prepare women as management decision-makers

	N	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	20	7.1	7.1	7.1
Disagree	31	11.0	11.0	18.2
Neutral	83	29.4	29.4	47.1
Agree	96	34.1	34.1	81.4
Strongly agree	52	18.4	18.4	100.0
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 illustrates perceptions regarding training programs offered by organisations to prepare women for decision-making roles at the management level. The voting quality, at 52.5% (moderate), suggests that over half of the respondents' organisations actively invest in such programs to promote women's advancement in decision-making positions. This trend may signal a positive shift towards gender equality and diversity initiatives within these organisations.

However, while the presence of training programs is encouraging, the percentage also indicates potential for improvement. The findings may also suggest that there may be challenges or limitations in the organisation's current approach to supporting and preparing women for decision-making roles in management. If fewer than half of the respondents' organisations provide these programs, it underscores a gap in efforts towards gender equality in leadership development.

Table 3. My organisation provides study leave incentives to women who want to pursue higher education to potentially become leaders

	N	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	21	7.4	7.4	7.4
Disagree	18	6.4	6.4	13.8
Neutral	73	25.9	25.9	39.7
Agree	100	35.5	35.5	75.2
Strongly agree	70	24.8	24.8	100.0
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 above shows the response to the statement, "My organisation gives study leave incentives to women who want to continue studying to a higher level in order to potentially become A leader." A total of 170 people (60.3%) in the medium category expressed their agreement that their organisations acknowledge the importance of education in preparing individuals for leadership roles. They recognise that advancing to higher levels of education can equip women with the necessary knowledge and skills to excel in leadership positions. Supporting women's educational pursuits through study leave incentives can potentially contribute to building a stronger pipeline of female leaders within organisations. A lifelong learning scheme should be held to improve skills or knowledge among staff. Employers should establish strategic cooperation with universities for related purposes to women's leadership among the highly educated or skilled able to produce. A form of leadership programs such as Women of Substance (WOS) and the necessary leadership academy created to ensure the continuity of women's leadership is realised until the achievement of the aspirations of 30% of women in decision-making. By investing in women's education, organisations will likely see a more diverse and qualified pool of candidates for leadership positions.

Table 4. The organisation's governance system gives fair opportunities to rural women to be appointed as organisational leaders

	N	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	12	4.2	4.2	4.2
Disagree	22	7.8	7.8	12.1
Neutral	97	34.4	34.4	46.5
Agree	95	33.7	33.7	80.1
Strongly agree	56	19.9	19.9	100.0
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 focuses on rural women becoming leaders in an organisation. A total of 151 respondents (53.6%) or the quality of the vote is on the medium level considering almost half as well provide an opposing view that is uncertain and disagreeing rural women are given the opportunity to be leaders. These findings indicate a moderate level of confidence in the system's fairness in providing opportunities to rural women for leadership positions. This indicates a positive perception of inclusivity and equal opportunities within the organisation's leadership structure. Additionally, it also indicates that a significant portion of respondents may have reservations or doubts about the fairness of the opportunities provided. This finding may also inform that there may still be room for improvement in the organisation's governance system to enhance opportunities for rural women in leadership roles. As such, continuous evaluation and refinement of policies and practices may be necessary to ensure ongoing progress towards gender equality and inclusivity.

Table 5. Management demonstrates gender sensitivity by providing a women-friendly work environment so that more women are involved at leadership levels

	N	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	16	5.7	5.7	5.7
Disagree	18	6.4	6.4	12.1
Neutral	78	27.7	27.7	39.7
Agree	106	37.6	37.6	77.3
Strongly agree	64	22.7	22.7	100.0
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 shows 60.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the management demonstrates gender sensitivity by providing a woman-friendly work environment to involve more women at leadership levels. This finding suggests a relatively strong perception that the management is taking positive steps to support gender diversity and inclusion. However, 27.7% of the respondents are unsure or ambivalent about the organisation's efforts in this area. This neutrality could stem from a lack of awareness about the specific initiatives or policies implemented by the management. Ongoing commitment and action may be necessary to maintain and further enhance gender diversity and inclusivity within the organisation. In addition, 12.1% of respondents' disagreement may signal the presence of gender bias or discrimination within their workplace, where some employees may feel that the management is not adequately addressing the needs and concerns of women in leadership roles. This may also reflect deeper cultural or structural barriers that hinder the creation of a women-friendly work environment.

Table 6. The state government provides many opportunities for local women to become leaders at various decision-making levels

	N	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	10	3.5	3.5	3.5
Disagree	16	5.7	5.7	9.2

Neutral	99	35.1	35.1	44.3
Agree	107	37.9	37.9	82.3
Strongly agree	50	17.7	17.7	100.0
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 illustrates the feedback regarding the claim that "The state government offers ample opportunities for local women to take on leadership roles and participate in decision-making." A total of 55.7% pointed out their agreement and strong agreement with the opportunities provided for local women to become leaders. The finding indicates that a significant majority of respondents perceive the state government as providing sufficient opportunities for local women to engage in leadership positions and decision-making processes. However, this percentage falls within the moderate quality category, as nearly half (44.3%) expressed neutrality or disagreement with the statement. This finding suggests that a significant portion of respondents may perceive limited opportunities or barriers for local women to advance to leadership positions within the state government. Local women may have limited access to leadership roles or opportunities for women in decision-making levels are not adequately provided or promoted.

Table 7. The state government's efforts through the sustainable development goal agenda at the national level contribute to sensitivity towards gender equality so that opportunities for women are more open at the leadership level

	N	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	9	3.2	3.2	3.2
Disagree	10	3.5	3.5	6.7
Neutral	82	29.1	29.1	35.8
Agree	110	39.0	39.0	74.8
Strongly agree	71	25.2	25.2	100.0
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 provides a frequency analysis of the statement "The government's efforts through the SDG 5 at the national level contribute to sensitivity towards gender equality so that women's opportunities are more open at the leadership level." The item has a moderate quality rating, of which 64.2% of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement. Based on the findings, many respondents believe that gender equality and women's access to leadership possibilities are positively impacted by the state government's efforts to achieve sustainable development goals. The results also indicate that the respondents believe that a more inclusive environment for women in leadership roles has been fostered by the government's emphasis on gender equality within the framework of the sustainable development goal agenda. A significant portion of respondents opting for a neutral stance could reflect a deliberate choice to remain politically impartial or refrain from expressing a specific opinion on government initiatives.

The SDGs, intended to be achieved by 2030, and SDG 8, for example, emphasises the development of the economy and the creation of good jobs. About half of the world's population still lives together, with about USD\$2 a day and a global unemployment rate of 5.7%. This slow and uneven progress requires rethinking and the restoration of economic and social policies that aim to improve the level of education, thinking and living standards, including gender equality, in making results among women. (Jamaludin, Azman, & Zakaria (2019).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, this empirical investigation provides valuable insights into the evaluation of support systems within both the public and private sectors that facilitate the advancement of women's leadership in Sabah. The findings indicate a moderate level of commitment from organisations to promote gender diversity and support the growth of women leaders through training initiatives and the provision of study leave incentives. Women in rural areas are also provided with reasonably fair opportunities for further education. The government's significant role in fostering a supportive work environment for women's leadership development and efforts to incorporate gender equality considerations into national agendas, especially through initiatives aligned with SDG 5, is fairly evident. However, the study reveals that these support systems fall short of optimal levels in addressing the multifaceted needs of women in Sabah's professional landscape. Additionally, our research indicates that companies' intentions regarding the development of women into leadership roles are somewhat unclear.

This study provides a significant contribution by identifying key gaps in the support systems for women's leadership development in Sabah, offering insights that can guide policymakers and employers in designing targeted interventions to address women's unique challenges in the workforce. Specifically, the research highlights the need for a comprehensive framework that not only mandates minimum representation of women in decision-making roles but also includes actionable strategies to facilitate effective implementation. For policymakers, the findings suggest prioritising a holistic approach to workplace gender equality, including infrastructure and support systems aligned with SDG 5 and SDG 8. Employers are encouraged to foster an inclusive environment that promotes gender diversity through specific initiatives such as mentorship, targeted training, and flexible work arrangements, considering the distinct challenges faced by women, especially in rural areas. Transparent communication about gender diversity commitments and progress is essential to building trust and accountability. These contributions collectively offer a strategic roadmap for advancing women's leadership in Sabah, supporting organisational effectiveness and broader societal development.

LIMITATIONS

The data collection process was conducted during COVID-19, which resulted in several limitations. First, social distancing measures restricted in-person interactions, compelling the researchers to rely more on digital platforms. This situation may introduce sampling bias as certain groups, such as older respondents or those without stable internet access, could be underrepresented. Second, mental health challenges, such as anxiety and burnout, likely influenced respondents' perceptions, which eventually impacted consistency. Third, the respondents might face increased and certain demands during the pandemic, which affected their availability and response rates, leading to lower response rates and impacting data quality.

The research findings suggest various potential factors contributing to the organisation's shortcomings in fostering the growth of women leaders, such as a lack of resources or ineffective communication. Simply enacting a policy that ensures thirty per cent representation of women in

decision-making in Sabah is insufficient. Proper implementation of these quotas is crucial. Hence, further research is recommended to understand the specific challenges and issues related to elevating women to leadership positions in Sabah.

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