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A REVIEW ON WOMEN LEADERSHIPS IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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PREFACE

This article investigates the contradictory realities of female leadership in patriarchal cultures, delving into both the significant challenges and opportunities. Despite progress toward gender equality, women leaders confront persistent challenges, such as gender stereotypes, underrepresentation, work-life balance concerns, and systemic discrimination (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). These difficulties are worsened by the widespread biases that impede their professional growth. The article highlights the impact of female leaders on society despite the fact that women only hold 28.2% of managerial jobs globally (UN Women, 2023). With their unique perspectives and inclusive approach to leadership, they may promote gender equality, advance society, and inspire future generations. Through a balanced review of the opportunities and challenges, the article aims to present a nuanced representation of the environment for women leaders in a patriarchal society, highlighting the need for systemic change to truly achieve gender parity.

INTRODUCTION

Men have long occupied leadership roles in patriarchal societies, creating a system in which women face significant barriers to advancement. Male domination in positions of authority within the family, in politics, the economy, and religion is a hallmark of patriarchal societies (Omar & Muhammed, 2023). However, things are increasingly changing as more women overcome these challenges. According to a report by Singapore's Ministry of Social and Family Development, women are increasingly represented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professions and leadership roles that were previously dominated by men, an area in which Singapore has excelled (Ministry of Social and Family Development [MSF], 2024). Albeit many cultures have taken the initiatives toward gender equality inclination, patriarchal components may still exist in obscured or overt forms, shaping societal and personal practices. Women's leadership in patriarchal culture remains a challenge due to several factors, including stereotypes, a scarcity of flexible career opportunities, and women's frequent family duties (Patwardhan et al., 2016).

THE CHALLENGES

Gender bias is defined in patriarchal cultures as the systematic elevation of men to positions of power and authority while women are confined to submissive duties, hence maintaining gender norm-based imbalances. These cultural norms frequently result in women having less access to education, professional networks, and opportunities for advancement than their male counterparts (Westerman, 2021). Women aspiring to leadership posts in patriarchal settings frequently face a lack of mentorship and supportive networks, which serves as a significant barrier to their professional growth and advancement. Women can particularly benefit from early career exposure to mentoring programmes since they frequently lack the confidence needed to advance in their careers (McNeill, 2024). Lack of support and mentorship in the workplace and at home renders women's efforts to obtain leadership roles a difficult feat, as they must navigate a setting that frequently ignores or dismisses their capabilities, qualifications, and ability to thrive in positions of authority and influence (Mulawarman et al., 2021). Subordinates, peers, or superiors who are unfamiliar with women in leadership positions may resist female leaders. In addition, women in leadership roles may experience imposter syndrome and self-doubt as they must continually demonstrate their capacity to effectively lead the team due to the assumptions that they may lack the requisite competence (Quraishi, 2019). The lack of regulations, including quotas or affirmative action initiatives that support gender equality in leadership, compels the gap even wider in society (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2021).

THE OPPORTUNITIES

While patriarchal societies present numerous challenges for female leaders, they also offer unique opportunities to advance gender equality, personal development, and societal transformation. Gender stereotypes can be challenged and demolished by successful women leaders, demonstrating that women are just as capable of holding leadership positions and encouraging other generations of women to aspire to such positions (Natural HR, 2021). Women in leadership positions bring an array of perspectives and expertise that can result in more innovative and practical problem-solving resolutions. Collaboration and inclusivity are frequently emphasised in their leadership style, which can enhance corporate performance and culture (Cunningham et al., 2017). When employees believe that their concerns are treated seriously and that their contributions are appreciated in a caring environment, their dedication and engagement at work soar. This is made feasible by women's unique perspectives and styles of leadership. Women in political and academic leadership positions have the ability to influence and enact legislation and policies that promote gender equality (Chowdhury et al., 2013). They can also work to reform institutions to be more inclusive and supportive of women's participation and leadership. This will result in an equitable society where everyone, regardless of gender, has equal opportunity to grow and demonstrate their abilities, talents, and knowledge, ultimately advancing their organisations, communities, and society as a whole.

WAY FORWARD

Women leaders can succeed personally and advance the broader cause for social justice and gender equality in a patriarchal society by seizing the chances and growing from the setbacks. Although it may take some time to overcome long-standing cultural biases and stereotypes against women in leadership roles, consistently investing in women's professional

development, mentorship, and advancement into positions of power and influence is a critical and necessary step toward creating a more just and equitable society. Not only that, women's participation in business is hardly noticeable despite their undeniable contribution to politics, education, and the world labour force. The idea that leadership is a skill that can be developed and exhibited by people of all genders instead of being innate to any one gender has to be challenged by everyone in society, even if it takes a long time to manifest and requires concerted effort.

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