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Factors Impacting Female Career Success in Leadership
“ Insights from female leaders on their journey of professional growth and leadership ”

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Abstract

The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles has become a global issue. There are many factors, numerous barriers, and obstacles that prevent women to attain leadership positions and career advancements such as unconscious bias, lack of access to networks and mentors, and a lack of work-life balance support, etc.

The thesis aims to investigate the leadership style and communication that contribute to the career success of women in leadership positions, identify the reasons for the low representation of women in leadership roles, and explore ways to promote female leadership.

The theoretical framework and literature review focus on the various leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, effective communication styles which can significantly impact one's ability to lead. In addition, the importance of diverse leadership in the workplace, gender differences in communication approaches, and strategies to empower women to overcome communication barriers.

We will provide a comprehensive understanding of the leadership and communication styles that influence women's career success in leadership positions and offer recommendations to organizations on how to foster gender diversity in leadership roles based on real-life experiences from several interviews with women leaders. We will provide in-depth interviews with female managers showing their sides of the work life and their experiences and issues leading to leadership and their struggles to gain a higher position at their organizations. With a mixture of different organizations provided and different countries' points of view. We will provide and show the different leadership styles and communications and how this shows different aspects of female managers' behaviors and communication. We will show how based on the information we gather how communication and leadership styles play a massive role in the workplace environment.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Gender inequality in managerial posts is a persistent issue in many industries such as business, politics, and academia. The underrepresentation of women in leadership has become a global issue and a focal point in many countries (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Unfortunately, females face barriers and obstacles to career advancement and leadership opportunities (Eagly and Carli, 2007). There are numerous barriers to women's career advancement such as unconscious bias, a lack of access to networks and mentors, and a lack of work-life balance support (Ely & Meyerson, 2010).

Moreover, the representation of women in decision-making roles in both the public and private sectors remains insufficient, reflecting an ongoing challenge of gender disparities (UNDP, 2021). These circumstances highlight the need for continued efforts to address and rectify the gender imbalance in leadership roles.

1.2. Previous Studies and Problematicization

While previous studies have made valuable contributions to understanding the challenges faced by women in their journey toward leadership positions, there are still gaps in knowledge concerning the specific aspects of leadership styles and communication patterns that impact women's career success. Eagly & Carli (2007) highlight women's challenges in attaining leadership positions, including navigating the complex and often biased organizational structures. The authors emphasize the importance of understanding the factors that impact women's career success and the need for organizations to create more inclusive environments for women leaders.

The World Economic Forum (2020) provides a comprehensive overview of gender inequality globally. The report highlights the persistent gender gaps in economic and political empowerment and emphasizes the need for continued efforts to achieve gender equity (World Economic Forum, 2020).

However, there are still gaps in understanding the specific aspects of leadership styles and communication that influence women's career success. Gender stereotypes are social constructs that reinforce traditional gender roles and can influence how females are perceived in leadership posts (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Among different gender stereotypes, self-confidence, work-life balance and access to mentorship and sponsorship are some of the issues that can shape the perception of a female's role as a leader.

On the other hand, both self-confidence and work-life balance are crucial factors that can significantly influence a woman's professional growth and success. Self-confidence refers to an individual's belief in their own abilities and can affect their willingness to take on leadership roles (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

Work-life balance can also impact women's ability to attain leadership positions, as women are often expected to balance work and family responsibilities (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The imbalance between work and family leads to stress and disappointment and prevents females from participating in senior positions and prevents them from doing many activities such as building up social relations and communicating with their colleagues due to lack of time as many of them prioritize family over career (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). Access to mentorship and sponsorship can be crucial for women seeking to climb the leadership ladder (Ragins & Kram, 2009).

The Catalyst report (2022) provides data-driven insights into the representation of women in management positions globally. The report highlights the persistent gender gap in leadership roles and the need for organizations to implement policies and practices that support gender diversity in leadership (Catalyst Report, 2022).

1.3. Aims and Research Question

To address these gaps, our thesis seeks to explore the individual factors impacting female career success in leadership, based on the insights of female leaders on their journey of professional growth and leadership. Specifically, we will examine leadership style and communication which research has identified as having an impact on women's leadership attainment since women's leadership style and communication patterns can affect their ability to attain leadership positions (Alvesson & Billing, 2009). To achieve this, the research conducted five interviews with women leaders to analyze the different factors that contribute to career success for females in leadership.

In addition, the research aims to identify the underlying reasons for the low representation of women in leadership roles and explore ways to promote female leadership. The driving force behind this study is the observation that there is a significant disparity in the number of male and female leaders worldwide, including in Sweden. The thesis seeks to identify the

leadership and communication patterns that impact women's career advancement and explore ways to enhance female representation in leadership positions. So, in order to achieve these goals, the question mentioned below have been formulated:

- How would leadership style and communication affect the ability of women to attain leadership positions?

Through addressing the question, our thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of leadership style and communication that influence women's career success in leadership positions. In addition, to provide an inclusive understanding of the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in senior roles, tactics that can be implemented to increase the representation of females in leadership positions, and the advantages of having female leaders in organizations (gender diversity) that influence women's career success in leadership positions and offer recommendations to organizations on how to foster gender diversity in leadership roles.

In order to achieve these objectives, the research will examine the impact of gender on leadership styles, highlighting the tendencies of men and women to adopt different leadership styles and how these styles affect the success of women in leadership positions. Furthermore, it will examine the issue of gender bias in leadership roles and its impact on the representation of women in leadership positions. The research will combine and compare these findings with the insights obtained from interviews conducted with female leaders about their experiences and views on leadership styles and communication. The analysis section of the thesis will provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the topic based on these findings.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Leadership style and effective communication are essential for successful leadership, and understanding these styles can significantly impact one's ability to lead. Leadership and communication styles can be critical factors in the success of females in leadership posts. We will provide a detailed theoretical framework, utilizing relevant referencing systems, to comprehensively explore the leadership and communication styles that affect the ability of women to attain leadership positions.

2.1. Leadership Styles

According to Van Engen & Willemssen (2004), there are several leadership styles that leaders can adopt such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. It is crucial for leaders to be aware of their leadership style and its potential impact on their team (Engen & Willemssen, 2004).

Transformational leadership is a type that involves motivating and inspiring followers to attain their entire potential and exceed their own expectations (Dartey-Baah, 2015). In addition, the transformational leadership style is characterized by its emphasis on vision, inspiration, and empowerment (Dartey-Baah, 2015). Bass and Riggio (2006) found that transformational leaders have a clear and captivating vision of the future, which they effectively convey to their followers. They inspire others by painting a picture of what could be achieved and how it aligns with the values and aspirations of the individuals and the organization as a whole (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In addition, transformational leaders motivate their followers through inspiration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). They create a sense of enthusiasm and optimism, encouraging their team members to believe in their own abilities and the importance of their contributions (Bass & Riggio, 2006). By setting high expectations and challenging their followers to surpass them, transformational leaders foster a strong sense of commitment and engagement (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Whereas transactional leadership is a type that focuses on maintaining order and emphasizing efficiency and effectiveness in accomplishing tasks (Dartey-Baah, 2015). In addition, the transactional leadership style is characterized by its emphasis on rewards and punishments (Dartey-Baah, 2015).

According to Engen & Willemssen (2004), laissez-faire leadership is a unique style of leadership characterized by a hands-off approach that allows followers to take charge and make decisions without any interference from the leader.

2.2. Leadership and Gender

Leadership styles have been extensively researched in recent years, with particular attention paid to gender differences in leadership styles. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes collaboration, empowerment, and motivation, is often considered the most effective style for women in leadership positions (Engen & Willemssen, 2004). Dartey-Baah (2015) suggests that transformational leaders focus on the growth and development of their followers, and they seek to empower them to take ownership of their own success. In addition, transformational leaders inspire their followers to think beyond their immediate goals and work towards a common vision (Dartey-Baah, 2015).

On the other hand, transactional leadership is more concentrated on preserving the existing status and enforcing rules and regulations (Engen & Willemssen, 2004). This style may not be as effective for women in leadership positions because it can be perceived as rigid and inflexible (Engen & Willemssen, 2004). Laissez-faire leadership, which involves a hands-off approach, may also not be effective for women in leadership positions because it can lead to a lack of direction and accountability (Engen & Willemssen, 2004).

Leadership and communication amongst females and males possess a very big difference in many of the industries and workplaces such as businesses, politics, and academia. Women continue to be significantly underrepresented in leadership roles and are often viewed as an exception compared to men, particularly in higher education institutions (Chin, 2011).

According to Setia et al. (2021), a considerable number of businesses and non-profits are embracing transformative leadership as the most effective approach to engage all members of an organization and guide them in achieving the company's aims and objectives.

By adopting a transformational leadership style, leaders can create a more positive work environment and empower their team members to achieve their full potential (Engen & Willemssen, 2004). Setia et al. (2021) also suggest that talent management strategies that utilize a transformational leadership style in organizations tend to foster greater engagement among employees who have direct female supervisors.

Numerous studies have confirmed that both men and women tend to display different styles of leadership. Bass et al. (1996) found that women tend to exhibit more transformational leadership qualities compared to men, with a more democratic and participative approach. Eagly & Johnson (1990) proposed that men tend to adopt an agentic leadership style characterized by assertiveness, independence, and a focus on task accomplishment, while women tend to adopt a communal style of leadership, which is characterized by a focus on social relationships, empathy, and concern for others. Similarly, other studies have found that women tend to adopt a transformational leadership style, which focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve their full potential, while men tend to adopt a transactional leadership style, which focuses on the exchange of rewards for performance (Eagly et al., 2003). According to Dartey-Bah (2015), Transactional leaders use punishments such as reprimands and demotions are used to correct performance issues and they tend to be more directive in their approach.

Given these findings, organizations should consider hiring and promoting women for leadership positions in order to leverage the full potential of their workforce (Bass et al., 1996). In conclusion, understanding gender differences in leadership styles can help organizations to create a more inclusive and effective workplace.

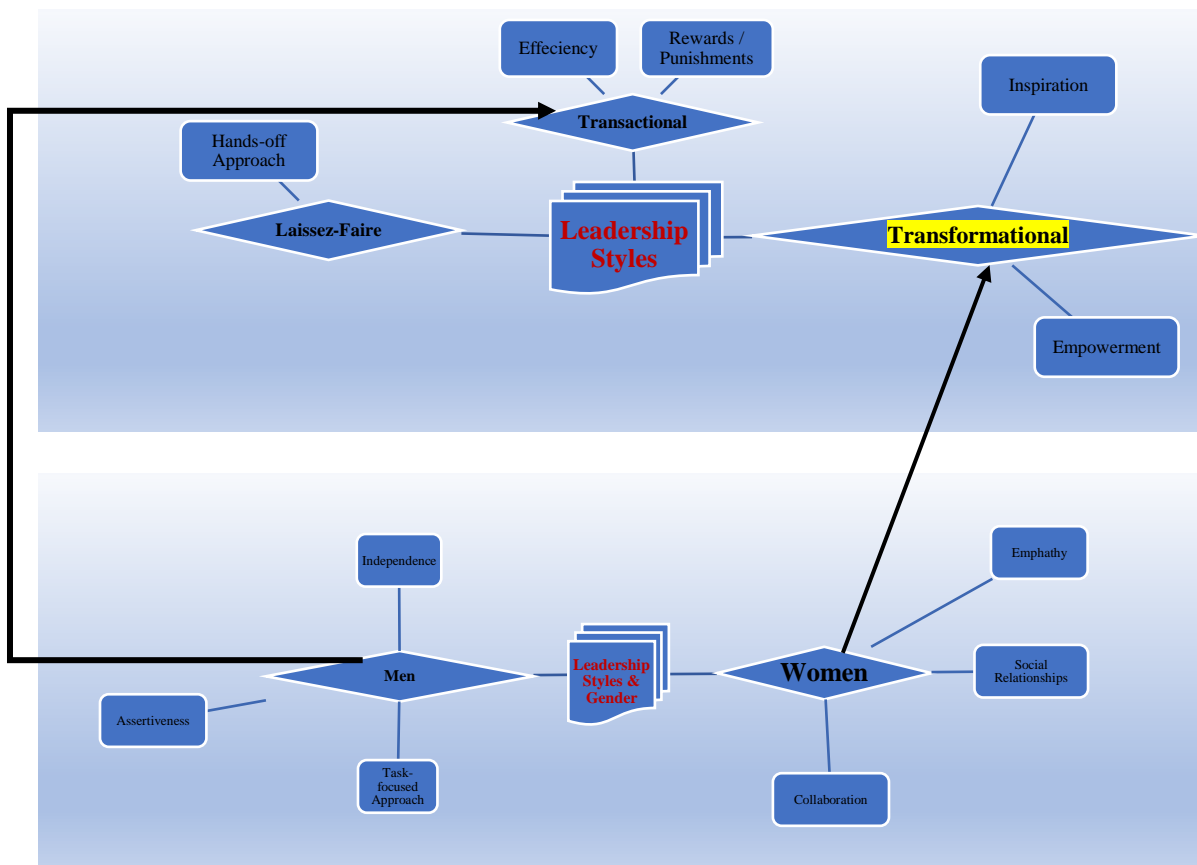


Fig 1: Leadership Style and Gender (Source: Group Notes)

The chart above represents the relationship between leadership styles, leadership, and gender based on the information in the two sections above (sections 2.1 & 2.2).

2.3. Communication Styles and Gender Differences

The connection between communication style and leadership style is significant as the way leaders communicate with their team can influence their leadership effectiveness. For instance, the transformational leadership style requires a leader to inspire and motivate their followers, which may require a more collaborative and participative communication style that fosters connections and emphasizes a shared vision (Dartey-Baah, 2015). On the other hand, a transactional leadership style may require a more directive and assertive communication style to emphasize rewards and punishments, which can drive efficiency and goal attainment (Dartey-Baah, 2015).

Furthermore, gender differences in communication styles can also impact leadership effectiveness. Women tend to be social and often use more polite and meaningful language, especially in conflict situations, whereas men tend to be more assertive and solution-oriented (Basow & Rubenfield, 2003). Men perceive conversations as an avenue to maintain their status and assert their dominance, while women see them as an opportunity to create and enhance connections by discussing shared problems and issues (Gray, 1992; Tannen, 1990).

Gray (1992) observed that men tend to be driven by goals and measure their self-worth based on their ability to achieve results. In contrast, women tend to be more focused on relationships and evaluate their sense of self based on their emotions and the quality of their connections with others (Gray, 1992). Gray (1992) emphasizes that both men and women deal with stress in different ways as men tend to withdraw from conversations or situations, while women often seek support by discussing the source of their stress. According to Alvesson & Billing (2009), the level of stress increases gradually and remains high after work has ended affecting the woman's life due to family responsibilities, communication problems, and lack of support from colleagues and/or key managers.

In addition, men desire to feel valued, appreciated, and respected, while women aim for commitment, respect, and being cherished (Gray, 1992). Furthermore, men tend to naturally offer a solution while facing problems while women tend to seek empathy and understanding and may offer unsolicited advice (Gray, 1992).

Moreover, women usually use language that is less forceful such as speaking in a more polite manner and utilizing more tag questions, and tend to interrupt less (Lakoff, 1975). However, women may weaken their declarations because of their lower self-confidence and fear of being wrong, which may stem from their perceived inferior status to male managers in the workplace (Pearson, 1985). The distinct communication styles of men and women can create challenges for women in interpersonal interactions, as women often use more tentative language than men, while men are more assertive and confident in their speech, which can make them appear more capable and authoritative as leaders (Lakoff, 1975).

According to Merchant K. (2012), women tend to adopt a more collaborative and participative communication style, while men lean towards a more directive and task-oriented approach. This difference in communication styles can be attributed to various factors such as socialization, expectations, and cultural norms. However, it is important to note that neither style is inherently better than the other, and both have their advantages and disadvantages.

A collaborative communication style can lead to increased employee engagement and creativity, while a directive approach can result in more efficient decision-making and goal attainment (Merchant K., 2012). Research has also shown that gender diversity in leadership teams can lead to better organizational performance (Merchant, 2012). This suggests that a combination of different communication styles and perspectives can be beneficial for organizational success. It is crucial to recognize and mitigate any potential biases that may arise due to gender differences in communication styles to ensure equal opportunities for leadership positions (Merchant K., 2012).

Overall, a nuanced understanding of gender differences in communication styles can help organizations create more inclusive and effective leadership teams. Therefore, it is necessary to address these differences to create an equitable and productive work environment. Leaders must understand their communication style and adjust it as per the situation and followers' needs to enhance their leadership effectiveness.

The graph below represents the relationship between communication patterns and gender differences based on the given information in the section above (section 2.3).

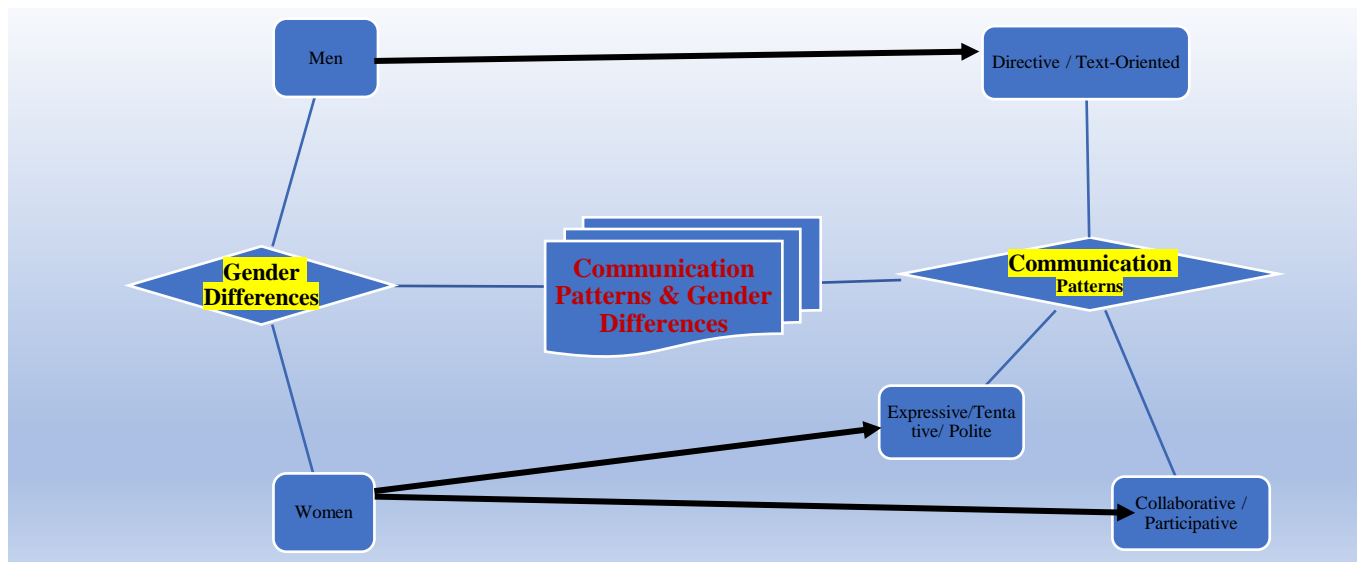


Fig 2: Communication Styles and Gender (Source: Group Notes)

For further explanation, we will provide a diagram below based on the information provided in both sections (2.1 and 2.3) showing the connection between leadership styles and communication styles.

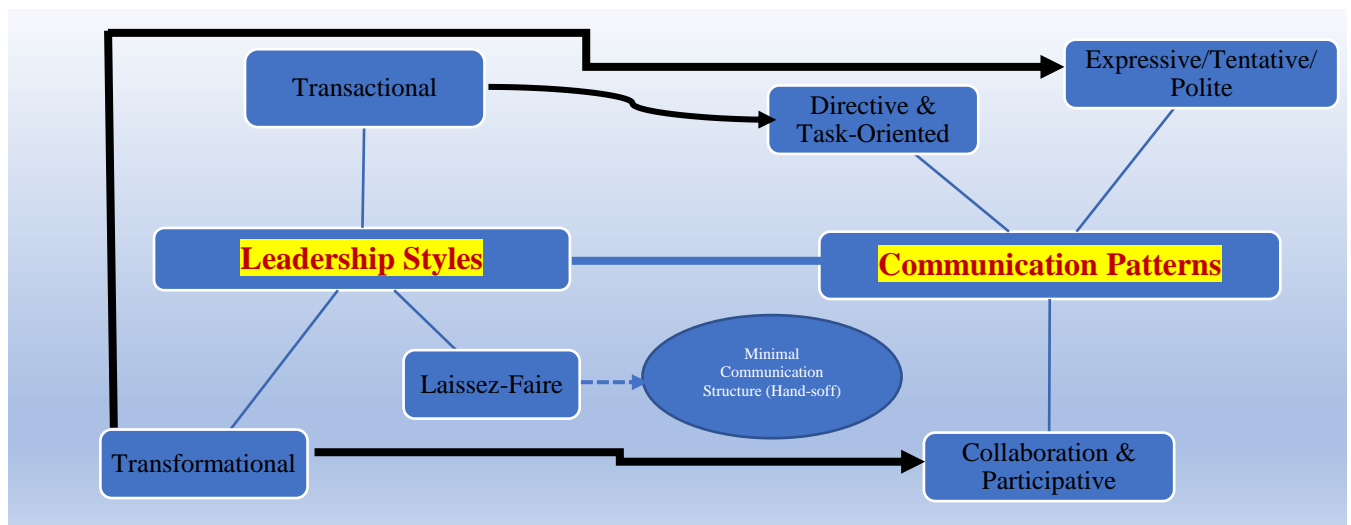


Fig 3: Leadership Styles vs. Communication Patterns (Source: Group Notes)

2.4. Leadership and Communication Impacted on Gender Bias

The issue of gender bias in leadership roles and communication has been a topic of discussion and debate. Leadership styles and communication styles are interconnected and have an impact on gender bias in leadership positions. The three types of leadership styles are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, and each of them can affect the team's performance in different ways (Engen & Willemsen, 2004). On the other hand,

communication styles differ between genders, with women using more expressive, tentative, and polite language, and men being more assertive and solution-oriented (Basow & Rubenfield, 2003). These differences in communication styles can lead to women being overlooked for leadership positions, evaluated differently as leaders, and struggling to achieve the same status and recognition as male colleagues.

Gender bias can impact the quality of decision-making, limit opportunities for growth, and create a toxic work environment (Johnson et al., 2008; Bosak & Sczesny, 2011). It is essential to understand the impact of gender bias in leadership and communication and provide insights into the issue and strategies to overcome it.

Gender bias has significant effects on leadership roles, impacting women's access to leadership positions and the types of roles they are permitted to hold. Women are frequently overlooked for leadership positions, caused of implicit and explicit biases (Bosak & Sczesny, 2011). Gender bias also contributes to the underrepresentation of females in executive posts, with societal stereotypes and discrimination limiting women's opportunities to lead (Johnson et al., 2008).

Moreover, gender bias affects the way women are evaluated as leaders. Women leaders are often judged more harshly than men for similar behaviors, which affects their leadership style (Johnson et al., 2008). In addition, women are often seen as less competent and assertive than men, which can result in their exclusion from leadership roles (Bosak & Sczesny, 2011). Women are frequently relegated to supportive roles, such as administrative or caregiving positions, rather than leadership positions that necessitate strategic decision-making and vision (Johnson et al., 2008).

Furthermore, women are held to higher standards than men, frequently requiring them to have more experience and credentials to be considered for the same position (Bosak & Sczesny, 2011). This limitation prevents women from realizing their full leadership potential, and it negatively impacts their access to leadership positions and styles. Women may also face additional barriers to attaining leadership positions, as they are expected to display competence and assertiveness, but too many of these traits can lead to backlash and violate gender norms (Heilman, 2001).

Gender bias is a pervasive phenomenon that has significant impacts on women's access to leadership positions, the types of leadership roles they can hold, and their leadership styles. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, societal stereotypes, and

discrimination are some of the key contributors to gender bias in leadership (Johnson et al., 2008; Bosak & Sczesny, 2011).

2.5. Strategies to Overcome Gender Bias and Communication Barriers

Various strategies have been suggested to address gender bias in leadership positions. One effective approach is to implement diversity training programs that raise awareness of unconscious bias and promote diversity in leadership (Roberts & Brown, 2019). In addition, setting clear and measurable diversity targets for leadership positions can encourage organizations to actively seek out qualified women candidates and create a more diverse leadership team (Roberts & Brown, 2019). Policies that promote work-life balance and flexible work arrangements can also address gender bias arising from traditional gender roles (Roberts & Brown, 2019).

Furthermore, organizations should foster an inclusive and respectful workplace culture where all employees are valued and treated fairly, regardless of gender (Roberts & Brown, 2019). In addition to these strategies, mentoring, and sponsorship can help women develop the skills and networks necessary for advancement in leadership positions (Brieger et al., 2019). Implementing gender-blind hiring and promotion practices can help eliminate unconscious bias and increase the likelihood of women being considered for leadership roles (Brieger et al., 2019). Organizations can also provide training and development programs that specifically address gender-based barriers to leadership such as the confidence gap and work-life balance issues (Brieger et al., 2019).

Overall, implementing these strategies can help create a more inclusive and diverse leadership culture, which has been shown to improve organizational performance and innovation (Roberts & Brown, 2019; Brieger et al., 2019).

Women still face significant communication barriers that hinder their success in leadership positions such as male-dominated workplaces, gendered language, and a lack of confidence in speaking up (Li et al., 2023). Several strategies can be employed to empower women to overcome these communication barriers.

One approach is to provide training on effective communication skills such as public speaking and assertiveness (Li et al., 2023). In addition, organizations can create a supportive environment for women by promoting gender equality and diversity, increasing female representation, and reducing gender bias (Li et al., 2023).

Moreover, mentoring and sponsoring women in leadership positions can also provide guidance and opportunities for growth (Li et al., 2023). Furthermore, using inclusive language can help women feel more included and respected in the workplace (Li et al., 2023).

Effective communication is an essential tool for empowering women in various sectors. One of the main components of effective communication is active listening and empathy (Cunico et al., 2012). Cunico et al. (2012) emphasize that active listening involves being present, attentive, and responsive to the speaker's message. In contrast, empathy involves understanding and sharing the speaker's feelings and perspectives (Cunico et al., 2012).

Women often face barriers that prevent them from being heard and understood such as gender bias and discrimination (Cunico et al., 2012). So, by practicing active listening and empathy, communication can become a tool for breaking down these barriers and creating a safe and welcoming space for women to express themselves which ultimately led to increased confidence and self-efficacy, which are key components of empowerment (Cunico et al., 2012).

Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate active listening and empathy in communication with women in various sectors to promote empowerment and gender equality (Li et al., 2023; Cunico et al., 2012).

We aim to explore the impact of leadership and communication styles on the success of women in leadership positions. Therefore, we utilized relevant referencing systems to provide a comprehensive overview of the various leadership styles and communication in order to show which one is proper for female leaders, and its potential impact on team members.

In addition, we will examine the impact of gender on leadership styles, highlighting the tendencies of men and women to adopt different leadership styles, and how these styles affect the success of women in leadership positions. Furthermore, we will examine the issue of gender bias in leadership roles and its impact on the representation of women in leadership positions. The goal is to provide insights into the issue of gender bias in leadership and strategies to overcome it to create a more inclusive and effective workplace.

We aim to provide insights into the gender differences in communication styles, the challenges women face in communication, and strategies to empower women to overcome communication barriers in various sectors.

We will combine and compare all these with the finding of the conducted interviews with female leaders about their experiences and views on leadership styles and communications. We will discuss these findings in detail in the analysis and discussion part to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the topic.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

The research approach employed in this study is inductive, which enables accurate data analysis and provides an opportunity to gather firsthand qualitative research data experiences and perspectives of the interviewees. Inductive research is an approach that focuses on gathering and analyzing data to develop theories or concepts (Davies, 2007). Therefore, by employing the inductive research approach, we can provide a comprehensive understanding of our research question.

3.2. Research Method

Our thesis adopts qualitative research with a specific focus on conducting explanatory research. The qualitative method allows for interpretive practices and the utilization of various sources such as interviews, published data, documents, and analysis (Davie, 2007). This approach enables us to explore the factors influencing the success of female leaders in-depth.

The figure below shows the selected research methodology, research approach, and data collection procedures. Gathering the necessary data and information will involve the use of primary sources (interviews).



Fig 4: Methodology (Group Notes)

3.3. Data Collection

The primary data sources were collected through a structured questionnaire in Appendix B with female leaders. We have emailed thirteen leaders from different countries to provide full details about the leadership style and communication and how they affect the ability of women to attain leadership positions but only five of them responded to us.

In order to ensure diversity, and reliability and broaden the scope of our study, we purposefully selected female leaders from various countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, the USA, Bahrain, and the UAE. Additionally, leaders from different industries, such as National Training Organization (NTO), Humanitarian Associations, Manufacturing, Consultancy, and Construction, were included. We identified potential candidates through online directories and professional networks.

Based on the interviews, we noted some differences between NTO leaders (First, Second, and Fifth Interviewee) and private sector leaders (Third and Fourth Interviewees) in terms of their culture, leadership style, and communication pattern as follows:

Culture: The NTO leaders work in a male-dominant culture. It is unclear whether private sector leaders work in similar cultures.

Leadership style: The NTO leaders have a democratic and hands-on leadership style respectively, focusing on building relationships with their teams. The private sector leaders have empowering, collaborative, and democratic leadership styles.

Communication patterns: Both NTO and private sector leaders acknowledge the significance of effective communication for successful leadership and for creating an inclusive organizational culture. NTO leaders stress participatory communication, listening, and

coaching skills, while private sector leaders emphasize transparency, active listening, feedback, and clear goals and objectives.

In addition, we approached close friends and relatives who have the experience to help us in this respect. We sent out an email invitation explaining the purpose of our research and requested their participation. We also included a consent form and explained the nature of our study.

3.4. Interviews' Structure

We asked interviewees fifteen open-end questions regarding leadership styles and communication styles in addition to ten yes-or-no questions in order to get full details, comprehensive answers, and feedback from the interviewees (see Appendix B).

The interview questions were designed to explore the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of female leaders regarding their leadership style and communication style, and how these factors affect their ability to attain leadership positions (see Appendix B). The questions cover a wide range of topics such as career inspiration, leadership style, communication strategies, gender bias, work-life balance, mentoring, discrimination, and barriers to leadership.

In addition, the yes-or-no questions were included for the purpose of obtaining a more concise response from the interviewees. These questions cover relevant topics such as gender hindrances, gender bias, female representation in leadership positions, mentoring, communication styles, and gender standards in leadership.

The initial section of the interview comprises questions about the company, current job, educational background, and years of experience in management positions. The second part focuses on the leadership styles of the interviewees. The third segment focuses on the interviewees' communication approaches.

The empirical portion of the study will rely on primary sources such as interviews and the author's analysis. The individuals that we have interviewed have varying levels of education and years of experience in managerial positions in well-reputed organizations and companies, making them reliable sources for discussing leadership and communication (attached the answers of interviewees).

The interviewees' extensive experience and diverse educational backgrounds make them reliable sources for discussing leadership and communication. In addition, the questions about leadership style and communication can provide valuable insights into the experiences of these individuals and their perceptions of the challenges faced by women in leadership roles.

Overall, the interviewees' qualifications and experience make them reliable sources for discussing leadership and communication, and the questions posed can provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by women in leadership positions and the strategies that can be employed to overcome them.

3.5. Females Who Were Interviewed

To investigate the influence of leadership styles and communication on the ability of women to attain leadership positions, this thesis conducted interviews with five accomplished female leaders currently employed in diverse organizations. Specifically, two participants were from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), one from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), one from AECOM Middle East Limited (AECOM), and the final one from Technical Suppliers and Services Company (TSSC) (refer to Appendix C for additional details). The perspectives shared by these interviewees are anticipated to yield valuable insights into the relationship between leadership styles, communication, and women's advancement in leadership roles.

3.6. Process of Interpretation

The process of interpretation involves analyzing and deriving meaning from the perspectives shared by the interviewees, with the aim of gaining valuable insights into the relationship between leadership styles, communication, and women's advancement in leadership roles. We will be carefully reviewed the data and information in order to identify key themes and patterns that emerge from the interviews, such as different leadership styles exhibited by the interviewees, their communication approaches, and the impact of these factors on women's advancement in leadership positions. By examining the various perspectives shared, we can gain a deeper understanding of how different leadership styles and communication patterns, and strategies may influence the representation and progress of women in leadership roles.

The identified themes and patterns will be analyzed to explore the correlations and relationships between leadership styles, communication methods, and women's advancement as well

as the similarities and differences in the experiences and viewpoints of the interviewees. The interpretation process will also involve considering factors that may influence leadership styles, communication, and women's advancement such as organizational culture, difficulties, and barriers.

Throughout the interpretation process, we will apply our knowledge in the field of leadership, gender, and communication to make informed conclusions. The goal is to extract meaningful insights that can contribute to a better understanding of the interplay between leadership styles, communication, and women's advancement in leadership roles. These insights can then be used to inform future research, organizational practices, and policies aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women in leadership positions.

5. Analysis

In this part, the data were analyzed using content analysis, a qualitative research method that focuses on the content and meaning of the data. We used a deductive approach by using pre-defined categories or codes. The categories are about leadership styles, communication patterns, and the ability of females to attain leadership positions.

5.1. Leadership Styles and Challenges

The interviews provide evidence that leadership style significantly impacts women's ability to attain leadership positions. The interviewed women leaders employ various leadership styles such as transformational, democratic, participative, and hands-on approaches while emphasizing the importance of warmth, empathy, empowerment, collaboration, and fostering inclusive work environments as the interviewees perceive female leaders as possessing greater empathy and emotional understanding.

However, women leaders also face numerous challenges in their journey. One common challenge highlighted by the second interviewee is the lack of respect and appreciation for their decisions due to a prevailing ‘‘manly culture.’’ In this culture, male colleagues often unite and work closely together, making it more difficult for women to establish themselves. The second interviewee explains, ‘‘The biggest challenge is that we are still working in a manly culture where men colleagues usually flock together in activities and they work together, the female always has to work hard to establish, and many don’t appreciate either value. The respect part is still missing when a decision comes from a female. Despite these challenges, she adopts a transformational and democratic leadership style, incorporating warmth and empathy

while coaching and mentoring her team. She states, “ My style is a whole mixture of all styles depending on the situation and supported by warmth, mainly transformational and democratic style. ” Similarly, the first interviewee highlights the challenge of building new relationships and creating a sense of containment, especially with male staff. She states, “ Building new relationships, to make containment for the team, especially with male staff. ” Her leadership style is described as transformational, hands-on, and inspiring, where she motivates her team to perform their best. She explains, “ I inspire my team by showing that I am working hands-on to help them. Sometimes when I have a lot of tasks I go on delegating tasks. ”

The third interviewee acknowledges that the construction industry is male-dominated. As a woman, she had to do extra efforts to prove her capabilities. She states, “ The construction industry is male-dominant. As a female or woman, I have to work harder to prove my capabilities. There are clients who prefer to work with men rather than women. ” Regarding her leadership style, she seeks feedback, conducts regular conversations, and is accountable for delivering business plans. She also makes time to coach and support her team, delegates tasks, and supports innovative and new solutions. She states, “ I seek feedback, conduct regular conversations, am accountable for delivering business plans, and make the time to coach and support the team as well. I delegate tasks and support innovative and new solutions. ”

Breaking the stereotype that women are not fit for leadership roles emerges as a significant challenge, as expressed by the fourth interviewee. She states, “ One of the biggest challenges I faced as a female leader is breaking the stereotype that women are not fit for leadership roles. ” Her leadership style is described as transformational and democratic, focusing on empowering and encouraging collaboration among team members. She states, “ I would describe my leadership style as transformational and democratic, where I focus on empowering my team, encouraging collaboration, and fostering a positive and inclusive work environment. ”

The fifth interviewee highlights her participative or democratic leadership style, with exceptions in special circumstances because of time limits. She states, “ A participative style or a democratic style with some exceptions based on certain situations as an emergency when there is no time to consult everyone’s opinion. ” She also notes that women leaders are more dedicated when it comes to defending certain cases. She states, “ My beliefs on women’s rights and children’s rights formulated my personality to be a patient, good listener, more human and never to leave anyone behind without offering any kind of support. Of course, there are men who have these characteristics, but in general, women leaders are more dedicated

when it comes to defending certain cases. `` Regarding the challenges faced by female leaders, the fifth interviewee mentions the difficulties of working with communities that have stereotypical thinking. She states, ‘‘Working with communities with stereotype thinking creates challenges to work with and supervise men. Addressing women’s rights was a challenge in the conservative community. ``

5.2. Communication Patterns and Strategies

Effective communication skills are highly valued in leadership, as highlighted by the interviewees. They stress the importance of participatory communication, listening, and respect, which are seen as essential for successful leadership, especially for female leaders. In addition, the interviewee also underscores the importance of open and honest conversations, constructive feedback, transparency, and active listening for effective communication in both men and women. Communication strategies mentioned by the interviewee include regular meetings, participation, clear instructions, and empathy, among others.

All interviewees highlighted the importance of effective communication skills for women to succeed as leaders. The first interviewee states ‘‘ Strong communication skills and the capacity to influence others are key attributes of any leader. They are especially important for women leaders. `` Similarly, the second interviewee points out ‘‘ Communication skills are very important, and it's the core of work in the social work domain. ``

Both interviewees emphasize that participatory communication and listening are the most effective strategies while leading a team. The first interviewee mentions ‘‘ Creating a communication plan, coaching to improve skills, and acting with empathy. `` The second interviewee emphasizes listening and respect ‘‘ Two-way participatory communication, listening, and respect. ``

Regarding whether women are less likely to be considered for leadership positions due to their communication styles, both interviewees, the first and second, disagreed. They state that leadership requires a heart and can be learned by both men and women. The first interviewee stated ‘‘ No because our organization is working on gender equality, and from my experience, women taking officers and chief positions are strong leaders and showing great achievements due to their strong communication skills. `` The second interviewee believes that effective leadership requires the ability to interact and that it is a technique that can be learned by both males and females. She states ‘‘ I don't think so because to be an effective leader, you need to

know how to interact and when to interact. It's a technique that can be learned by both males and females. Leadership requires a heart too in the process. ``

The third interviewee emphasized that effective communication skills play a crucial role in a woman's ability to succeed as a leader because of the need for open and honest conversations, transparency, listening, and constructive feedback. She states `` Effective communication is important to both men and women. It's very important to be able to make an open and honest conversation to give honest and constructive feedback, be transparent and listen well. `` The interviewee also follows communication strategies such as setting clear goals and objectives, maintaining open lines of communication, and seeking feedback. She states `` Always be open and set goals and objectives. Follow up and seek feedback. It is very important to build a conclusive team to feel engaged and part of the organization. `` She clarifies that women are less likely to be considered for leadership positions due to their communication styles. Communication is essential for all leaders, regardless of gender, enabling them to deliver messages, build strong teams, and achieve desired results. Technical skills alone are not sufficient for managerial or leadership positions. The ability to effectively communicate, engage with others, express oneself, and coach and engage teams are critical factors for success. She states `` Communication is essential especially in leadership and managerial positions whether for a man or a woman. If a manager or a leader cannot deliver a message, build a team, or achieve results, then he or she cannot lead or manage a team. If I have excellent technical skills but I cannot engage with others, express myself, coach a team, get them engaged, then I cannot achieve a managerial position and for sure not a leadership position. ``

The fourth interviewee emphasizes that clear and direct communication helps to build trust between the leader and subordinates, which ultimately leads to enhanced cooperation and motivation among team members. She stated `` Effective communication is essential for any leader. Clear and direct communication helps build trust between the leader and subordinates which ultimately leads to enhanced cooperation between the leader and subordinates and inspires motivation among the team members. `` She also believes that transparent communication, listening, and accountability are considered effective strategies. She states `` Active listening, clear and concise messages, and transparent communication were the most effective strategies for me when leading a team. I also make an effort to get feedback and ideas from my team members, as this fosters a sense of accountability. `` She acknowledges that women are less likely to be considered for leadership due to biases and stereotypes and their communication styles because women may be seen as too emotional. She stated `` Unfortunately,

there are still biases and stereotypes that can impact how women are perceived as leaders including their communication styles. Women may be perceived as too emotional or aggressive if they exhibit assertive communication styles, which can hinder their advancement to leadership positions. ``

The fifth interviewee highlights that effective communication contributes to maintaining a good relationship with staff and stakeholders. It also positions the leader as an influencer, spreading ideas, methods, and qualitative results. She stated `` With new communication means and modalities, the recipients are more attracted to effective communication skills. Effective communication contributes to maintaining good relationships with staff and stakeholders who consider you as a role model. Through effective communication, the leader becomes an influencer and thus contributes to spreading ideas, methods, and qualitative results. ``

Communication strategies found effective include regular meetings, participation, rewarding achievements, clear instructions, caring and listening to staff. She stated `` Having regular meetings, giving space for participation, rewarding, and mentioning achievements, giving clear instructions, and talking and caring about staff wellbeing. being a good listener and showing empathy. `` She believes that women's likelihood of being considered for leadership positions is more influenced by culture, societal norms, and traditions rather than their communication styles. She stated `` No, it is more refers to the specific culture, norms, and traditions of each community. It is the gender stereotype of the roles of both males and females. Behavioral change that occurred in certain communities enabled women to lead and use different communication skills that lead their teams or their countries to remarkable progress. ``

5.3. Obstacles in Attaining Leadership and Strategies

Regarding the ability of females to attain leadership positions, it is clear that the interviewees recognize the obstacles and biases that women face in male-dominated fields. However, they also provide insights or strategies on how to overcome these challenges.

The first interviewee emphasizes the importance of developing empathy for others and educating oneself about different groups. By understanding and appreciating diverse perspectives, women can navigate the barriers they face and excel as leaders. She states `` Develop empathy for others and educate myself about different cultures and groups. ``

The second interviewee highlights the significance of treating everyone as equals in terms of applying rules and instructions, as well as providing equal opportunities for expression. Creating a fair and inclusive environment that values everyone's contributions can help overcome

gender biases and promote women's leadership. She states `` Treat all as equal in terms of applying rules and instructions and give all equal time to express. ``

The third interviewee mentions the importance of controlling emotions and avoiding hasty actions. In addition, she highlights the role of her line manager in her career progression. She states `` I control my emotions and do not rush my actions. I always improve the quality of my work to prove my capabilities. Also, I was fortunate that my line manager supported me during my career. ``

The fourth interviewee shares her approach to overcoming biases and stereotypes by consistently showcasing her skills and demonstrating her value as a leader. She states `` I have worked to overcome biases and stereotypes by consistently demonstrating my skills and expertise and building strong relationships with my colleagues in the workplace. ``

The fifth interviewee believes that remarkable achievements, high qualifications, and skills, and delivering excellent results can effectively counteract biases and stereotypes. She states `` A remarkable achievement that leads to achieving good results can overcome any biases or stereotypes in work. Being a role model with high qualifications and skills including life skills should defeat biases. ``

Overall, these interviewees demonstrate a recognition of the challenges faced by women in leadership and offer strategies such as empathy, equality, skill development, relationship-building, and personal achievements to overcome barriers and promote gender parity.

Furthermore, they acknowledge the potential for organizations to create a more equitable environment by promoting equal opportunities and fostering respect for female leaders. The third interviewee believes that organizations should encourage diversity and inclusion, and businesses should include targets to promote women based on their capabilities. She states `` The organization shall encourage diversity and inclusion by conducting training, and social events and setting targets for recruiting females. `` Whereas, the first and second interviewees suggested providing equal opportunities and a respectful environment `` Provide access to opportunities for growth and development ``, the first interviewee. As well as organizations should listen to women directly and understand their needs `` Listen to women directly and understand their needs prior to any set of rules that needs to be established `` , Second interviewee.

In addition, the fifth interviewee highlights the importance of qualifications, learning, personality traits, and dedication as essential factors for women to achieve leadership positions. She states “It is a combination of qualifications, continuous learning, personality, innate charisma, and dedication to work and ideological causes that I fought for.”

In conclusion, the analysis of the data collected through the interviews revealed that effective leadership styles and communication patterns are crucial for women to attain leadership positions. In addition, they perceived female leaders as having greater empathy and emotional understanding, which helps them build relationships with their teams. Effective communication skills were also highlighted as crucial for female leaders, with participatory communication, listening, and respect being seen as essential.

5.4. Comparison of Interviewees’ Views

In the analysis of the interviews with five female leaders, it is evident that leadership style and effective communication skills play a crucial role in women's ability to attain leadership positions.

The table below summarizes the comparison of the opinions of the five interviewees, just to make it easier for the reader to follow the comparison:

Interviewees	Leadership Style & Communication Skills	Advantages of Female Leaders	Work-Life Balance	Gender Biases & Stereotypes
First Interviewee	Transformational, hands-on, Motivation, inspiration, effective communication	Warmth & cleanliness Positive environment for the organization	Able to balance	Faced
Second Interviewee	Transformational/democratic, Participatory, empathy, coaching, effective communication	Warmth & cleanliness Positive environment	Able to balance - Clear vision, good planning	Faced
Third Interviewee	Seeking feedback, accountability, coaching, supporting the team, promoting diversity and inclusion	Strengthening the team through diversity	Setting objectives, planning time, switching off from work	Not Faced

Fourth Inter-viewee	Transformational/democratic, empowerment, collaboration, inclusivity Direct communication	Unique perspectives and experiences	Clear vision and good planning help to balance	Faced
Fifth Inter-viewee	Participative/democratic, effective communication	Increase labor force, multifunctional, ability to work under pressure, humanize work	Well-organized, managed time help to balance	Faced

Fig 5: Comparison of Interviewees' Views (Source: Group Notes)

The first and second interviewees emphasized the need for effective communication and transformational and participatory leadership styles, with the second interviewee emphasizing the importance of empathy and coaching, and the first interviewee emphasizing motivation and inspiration. In addition, the fourth emphasized the importance of direct communication, empowerment, collaboration, and inclusivity, and highlighted the negative impact of gender biases and stereotypes on women's advancement to leadership positions.

On the other hand, the third highlighted the importance of seeking feedback and accountability, coaching, and supporting the team, and promoting diversity and inclusion.

We can conclude that the first, second, third, and fourth interviewees all emphasized the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and inclusive leadership styles to increase women's representation in leadership positions. They also recommended mentorship and development programs, flexible work arrangements, and promoting diversity and inclusivity. However, the fifth interviewee's experience showed that leadership style and communication skills are critical for women to attain leadership positions. The fifth interviewee's participative or democratic leadership style, combined with effective communication strategies, has been instrumental in her career advancement. She also emphasized the importance of creating an inclusive environment that fosters women's leadership and ensures gender equality and equity.

Overall, all interviewees highlight the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and inclusive leadership styles in promoting women's leadership. In addition, organizations should create policies that enable women to thrive and ensure gender equality and equity.

Further information gathered through interviews relates to several issues such as regarding the advantages of having female leaders, the first and second interviewees mentioned that they bring warmth and cleanliness, which is a positive environment to the organization. Whereas

the fourth interviewee believes that having female leaders brings many advantages to the organization such as unique perspectives and experiences that can lead to better decision-making and problem-solving. Women leaders can set an example for other women in the organization, which can help to promote diversity.

On the other hand, the third interviewee believes that diversity in gender, background, culture, religion, etc. strengthens the team and the organization as a whole because organizations are reflections of communities that will not succeed without having this combination and mix between men and women. The fifth interviewee stated that female leaders bring advantages to an organization such as increasing the labor force and productivity, being multifunctional persons, having the ability to work under pressure, being willing to humanize work, being sensitive to human issues and supporting others, and being less abusive of authority than men. In addition, the fifth interviewee emphasized that policies should be put in place that enable females to thrive in order to increase female representation in managerial roles. Women's access to all fields of sciences, including higher education majors, should be ensured with no restrictions. Women should have the right to compete and get leadership positions without giving them a minimum quota.

Regarding the balance between work and personal life, the first interviewee stated that leadership is a required trait in personal life too, and one should live in the moment and enjoy what one like outside of the profession. On the other hand, the fourth interviewee admits that it is a challenge, but having a clear vision and good planning in life helps her to reach goals and balance her personal and work life. Whereas the third and the fifth interviewees were able to balance their personal and professional lives as leaders. The third interviewee stated that she set her objectives and plans her time before she leaves the office and when she arrives every morning. In addition, she tries to switch off when she leaves the office to refresh by doing something different and being with friends. Whereas the fifth interviewee balanced this by working on projects that she could achieve remotely when her children were young. Her life was well organized, and her time was managed.

Regarding gender biases and stereotypes, the fourth believes that leadership style is not inherently gendered. However, societal expectations and biases can impact how men and women are perceived as leaders, especially in the Middle East. The fourth interviewee stated that unfortunately, there are still biases and stereotypes that can impact how women are perceived as leaders, including their communication styles. She faced gender bias and discrimination in the

workplace and felt that her gender has been a hindrance to her career advancement. In addition, she is not sure whether she has ever mentored or supported other women in their leadership journeys, and she has never been mentored or supported by another female leader in her career. She also never mentored or supported other men in their leadership journeys.

The fifth interviewee has also faced discrimination and harassment when working on gender-based violence. However, she has not felt that her gender has been a hindrance to her career advancement, experienced any type of gender bias or discrimination in the workplace, or think that there is a lack of female representation in senior leadership positions in her industry or organization.

Furthermore, all interviewees gave some advice to young women aspiring leaders to look for mentors who can provide guidance and support, learn how to develop their communication and leadership skills, have confidence in themselves, have faith in their skills and abilities, ideas, and rights, to always think that they can do it better, and take accountability for their work that they can succeed and reach it and that they can supervise and lead.

6. Findings and Conclusion

6.1. Summary of the Study

Based on the data collected, it can be concluded that the ability of women to attain leadership positions is greatly influenced by two key factors: participatory and democratic (transformative) leadership styles, and effective communication. These leadership styles encompass vital elements such as motivation, inspiration, empathy, coaching, feedback, promoting diversity and inclusion, and supporting the team, all of which are crucial for successful leadership. Furthermore, effective communication involves empowerment and collaboration, which are essential components for fostering positive and impactful interactions. All participants mention how communication is one of the most important aspects that is needed in the workplace and having good and clear communication with all workers no matter the gender will help solve issues even easier and make big problems become small. It is also present from the interviews that some of the female managers did and still have communication problems in the workplace with having their voice and presence known. The interviewees say having a strong voice present for communication is needed especially in a male dominant workplace.

In addition, the findings suggest that promoting diversity in leadership as diverse leadership is essential for organizations that want to thrive in diverse and rapidly changing business environments. Organizations can achieve better performance and foster a more positive work environment for all employees by embracing diversity and promoting inclusivity.

In conclusion, the study shows how leadership style and communication affect the ability of women to attain leadership positions in addition we go further into these issues and reasons why there is such a low representation of women in leadership roles, and with the help of research and interviews in hopes of findings ways to promote female leadership. Showing how these issues affect female managers and how they deal with them and find ways to overcome such issues and show how they promote female leadership.

6.2. Importance of Diverse Leadership

Diverse leadership is becoming increasingly important in the workplace due to the changing nature of the workforce (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2014). “A diverse leadership team can lead to

creativity and innovation, better decision-making, increased employee engagement, and retention `` (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2014). This is because diverse teams bring different views and experiences, which leads to more innovative problem-solving (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2014).

In addition, when employees see leaders from diverse backgrounds, they are more likely to feel valued and included, resulting in increased motivation and job satisfaction (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2014). A diverse leadership team can also help organizations better understand and connect with their diverse customer base (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2014).

However, having diversity in leadership is not enough. Leaders need to actively promote and support diversity on all sides (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2014). This can practices adding diversity and inclusion training, ensuring equitable hiring and promotion practices, and promoting a culture of respect and inclusivity (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2014).

6.3. Benefits of Email Interviews

To further explore the low representation of women in leadership roles and explore ways to promote female leadership, we conducted email interviews with female leaders from different industries and countries to gain insights into their experiences (see Appendix C). Although we only received responses from five of the thirteen female leaders we contacted i.e., low response rate, the responses received were rich in detail and provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by female leaders in different industries and countries.

6.4. Women Leaders' Journey to Success

The email interviews were a valuable source of primary data, providing us with insights into the experiences of female leaders in various industries and countries. The open-ended questions allowed the interviewees to express their thoughts and ideas freely, providing us with rich data to analyze. The email interview approach was convenient for both the participants and us as researchers, as it allowed us to conduct the interviews at a time and place convenient for the participants and analyze the responses at our own pace.

As we can tell from these interviews all the people who participated had an end goal of reaching a position of higher power and they have reached it. But not with ease as some might believe especially from the eyes and perspective of males. Especially those outside that workplace. All the interviewees answered the questions we provided with confidence and showed that they have the confidence and belief of wanting to be a manager and lead a team of their own. The answers also show as we have mentioned earlier how female managers

apply more to their co-workers and be a helping hand when needed. The answers also show how females have a harder time in some areas like communicating and establishing some important aspects of work related to male coworkers.

6.5. Barriers and Support

Some of the interviewees also mentioned how being a female has hindered their ability for further success as well as some of the people we interviewed work in countries where stereotypes are still very present about how a female cannot be a leader. From these interviews, we can see that these female managers possess a strong character and a straightforward approach being democratic and transformational as mentioned the most which is appreciated by co-workers and employers since it helps get things done and is straight to the point.

However, the third interviewee has been fortunate not to encounter any discrimination or harassment and has not faced any significant obstacles in her role as a leader because she replied ``No`` when asked ``Have you ever experienced any type of gender bias or discrimination in the workplace?`` This is largely due to her ability to manage her emotions and approach her work with thoughtfulness and intention. In addition, the third interviewee consistently strives to improve the quality of her work, showcasing her capabilities to those around her. She states ``I control my emotions and do not rush my actions. I always improve the quality of my work to prove my capabilities. Also, I was fortunate that my line manager supported me during my career.``

She has also had the support of her line manager throughout her career, which has undoubtedly contributed to her success and ability to navigate any challenges that may have arisen. It's also important to note that she is employed by an American company that has a strong culture of following strict rules, regulations, and restrictions to ensure the protection of its employees from discrimination and biases.

Furthermore, Bahrain's labor laws and regulations are in place to safeguard employees, particularly women, from harassment, discrimination, and bias in the workplace. With these legal protections in place, the third interviewee can focus on her work without the added stress of worrying about facing any unfair treatment.

6.6. Future Research Suggestions

For further studies in the future, we believe there needs to be a follow-up study on how new female managers are experiencing their workplace and if there have been any changes in treatment and communication amongst all levels of employees. As well as the organizations that have a lot of female managers should conduct a study on how their manager's treatment has been from the start of their work at that organization until now. There should also be a focused study on how female managers can more easily be able to address their issues at the organization without facing any comments or harassment from fellow employees.

6.7. Manager Implications

To promote women's advancement in leadership roles, there are several key implications for managers to consider. It is important for managers to incorporate participatory and democratic (transformative) leadership styles i.e., managers should adopt leadership styles that encourage employee participation, empowerment, and collaboration. These styles, characterized by motivation, inspiration, empathy, coaching, and feedback, are beneficial for successful leadership and women's advancement.

In addition, managers should prioritize effective communication in the workplace. This involves promoting clear and inclusive communication with all employees, regardless of gender. Addressing communication challenges, such as ensuring female managers' voices are heard and recognized, can contribute to a more supportive and gender-inclusive work environment. Moreover, managers should actively promote and support diversity by implementing diversity and inclusion training, ensuring equitable hiring and promotion practices, and fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity. Diverse leadership can lead to creativity, innovation, better decision-making, increased employee engagement, and a better understanding of diverse customer bases.

6.8. Theoretical Implications

The findings emphasize the significance of participatory and democratic (transformative) leadership styles in facilitating women's ability to attain leadership positions. This highlights the connection between specific leadership approaches and gender diversity in leadership roles. In addition, our study underscores the importance of effective communication for women's advancement in leadership. It identifies empowerment, collaboration, and clear communication as critical elements for fostering positive interactions and addressing

workplace challenges. Furthermore, our thesis highlights the significance of diverse leadership. It demonstrates the benefits of diverse teams in terms of creativity, innovation, decision-making, employee engagement, customer understanding, and job satisfaction.

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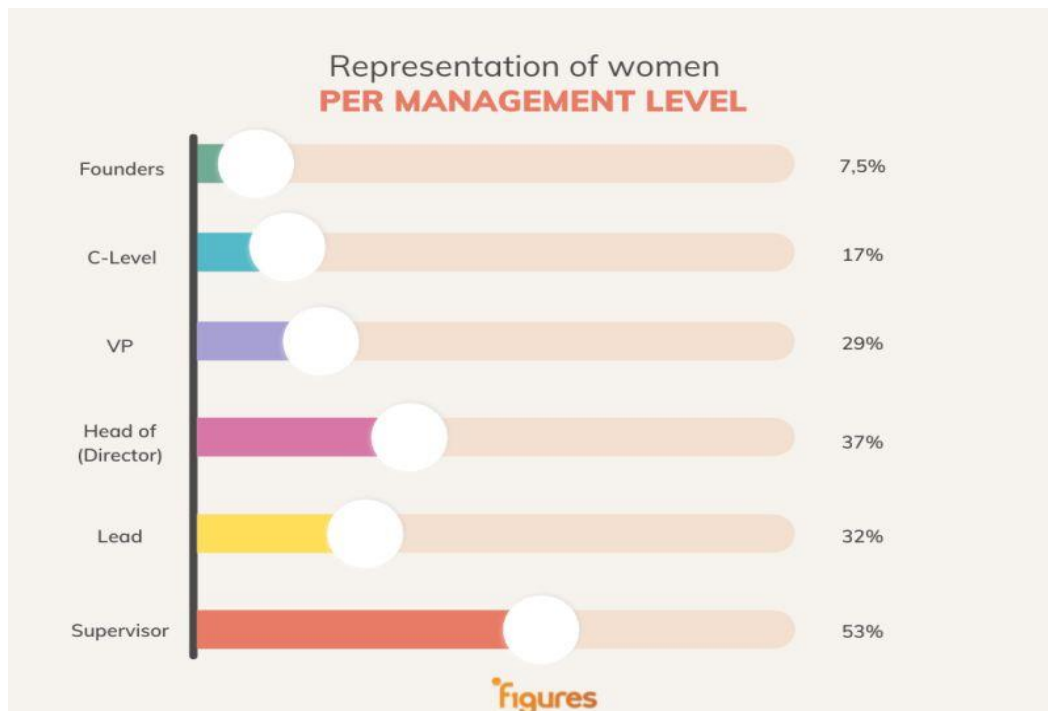
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8. Appendices

Appendix A

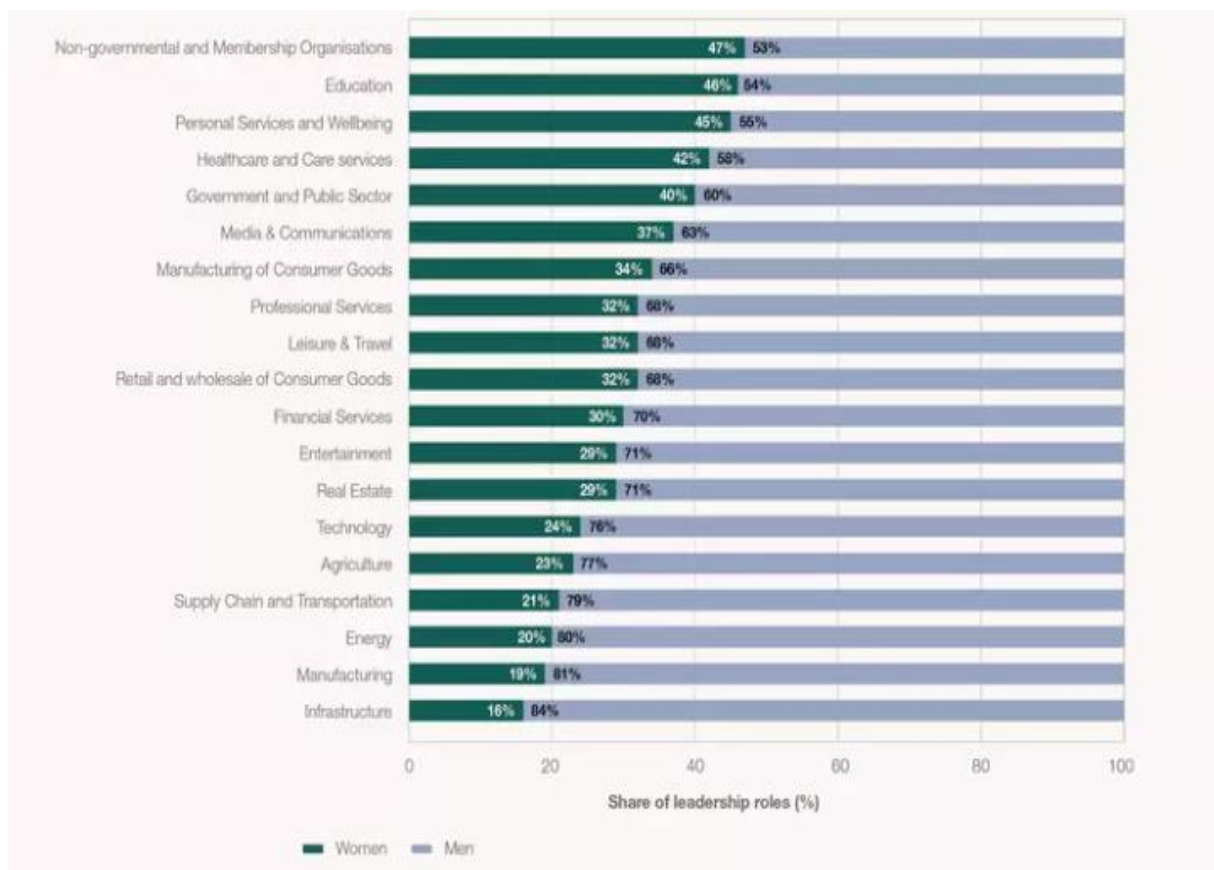
Figure 1: Representation of Women Per Management Level in European Start-ups and Companies. As we can see the number at some levels is still very low.



Source: (figures.hr)

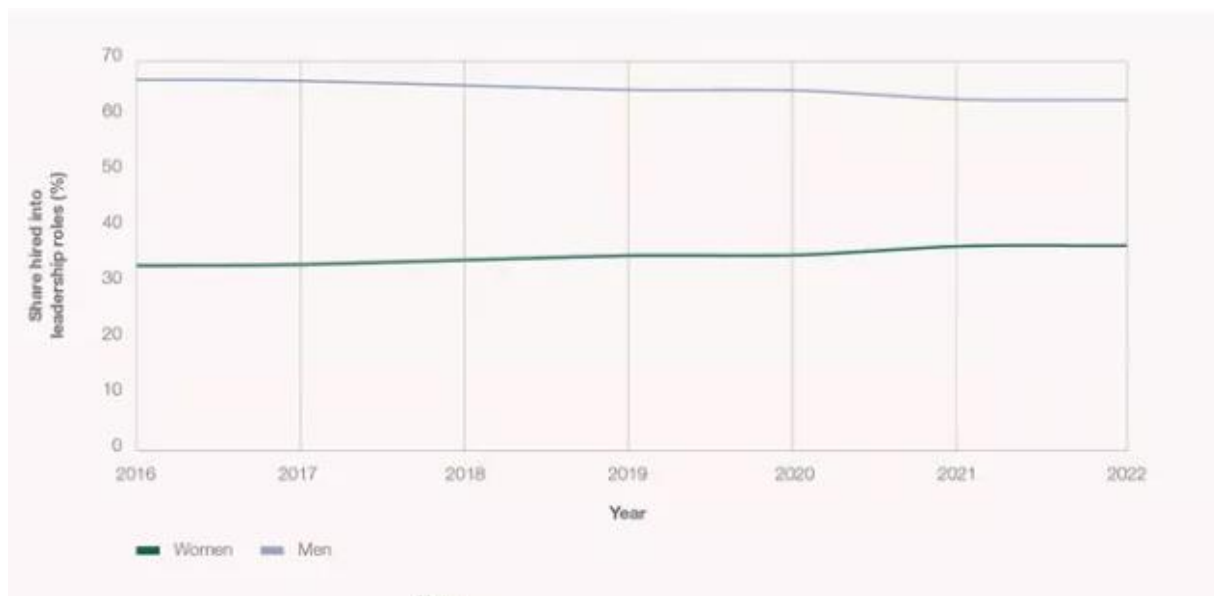
Figure 2: Gender Gap in Leadership

The below diagram shows a sample of the gender gap in leadership by industry from different countries (155 countries)



Source: (weforum.org)

Figure 3: The blow figure shows the share of women hired into leadership by year.



Source: (weforum.org)

Appendix B

Configuration of Interview Questions

Name of interviewee:

Company:

Title:

Educational background:

The number of years of experience in managerial positions:

1. What inspired you to pursue a career in leadership?
2. What are some of the biggest challenges you faced as a female leader?
3. How would you describe your leadership style?
4. How did you get promoted to a leadership position in your career?
5. How do you think your leadership style differs from that of male leaders?
6. How do you think effective communication skills contribute to a woman's ability to succeed as a leader?
7. What communication strategies have you found most effective when leading a team?
8. Do you think that women are less likely to be considered for leadership positions because of their communication styles? Why or why not?
9. How can organizations create a more inclusive environment that fosters women's leadership?
10. How have you worked to overcome any biases or stereotypes in your industry or organization?
11. In your opinion, what are some tactics that can be implemented to increase the representation of women in leadership positions?
12. What advantages do you believe having female leaders brings to an organization?
13. How have you balanced your personal and professional life as a leader?
14. What advice would you give to young women aspiring to become leaders?
15. Have you ever faced any discrimination or harassment or specific barriers in your role as a leader?

Yes or No questions:

- Have you ever felt that your gender has been a hindrance to your career advancement?
Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever experienced any type of gender bias or discrimination in the workplace?
Yes No Not Sure
- Do you think that there is a lack of female representation in senior leadership positions in your industry or organization?
Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever mentored or supported other women in their leadership journeys?
Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever been mentored or supported by another female leader in your career?
Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever mentored or supported other men in their leadership journeys?
Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever been mentored or supported by another male leader in your career?
Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever received feedback that your communication style was too assertive?
Yes No Not Sure
- Do you believe that women are held to different standards than men when it comes to leadership?
Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever felt that your gender has hindered your ability to succeed in a leadership role?
Yes No Not Sure

Appendix C

The below chart shows the interviewees' names and details/information.

Interviewees	Names	Organization/Position	Education	Experience	Country
First Interviewee	Darine AlKhatib	UNRWA/Social Worker Manager	University degree in Sociology	4 years in managerial positions	Jordan
Second Interviewee	Soha Abdulrahman	UNRWA/Relief and Social Services Manager	University graduate	Over 10 years in managerial positions	Lebanon
Third Interviewee	Nisreen Moussa	AECOM Middle East Limited/Associate Director	Bachelor of Civil Engineering, MSc in Construction Management	2 years in managerial positions	Bahrain
Fourth Interviewee	Amani Rashid	Technical Suppliers and Services Company (TSSC)/Contract Manager	Bachelor's degree in civil engineering	Over 4 years in managerial positions	The UAE
Fifth Interviewee	Bourshra Moghrabi	UNICEF/Program Director	Master's degree in International Affairs and Diplomacy, Master's degree in Educational Science	Over 20 years in managerial positions	The USA