

WOMEN LEADERS IN MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM

D. Bobonazarova
Karshi State University

ANNOTATION

The present article deals with the psychological and social issues women leaders come across in their management activity. Nowadays, it is of extreme importance to take care of women managers in society, because they face a daily challenge in their everyday activities between their work and life balance. The article gives some recommendations and practical solutions to the present issue.

In our society, there are various spheres of activity, and management functions are present in all of them. From large-scale state governance to the smallest social unit—the family—management is carried out based on the leadership activity of the head of the family.

In modern society, leadership is a complex social process in which the personal qualities of a leader and their relationship with the team play an essential role. The leader's personality serves as the main subject of management, and their traits—such as willpower, determination, and empathy—guide collective activities. In addition to directing the workflow, the leader also distributes responsibilities and shapes the team's spirit. From a socio-psychological perspective, leadership involves the study of leader–employee relations, motivation, and conflict management.

The topic of “Women Leaders in Management: Challenges and Solutions” occupies a central place in modern discussions on gender equality and economic development. This research explores the barriers faced by women in leadership positions both globally and in Uzbekistan, and proposes legal and psychological measures to address them—thereby contributing to gender equality.

In today's world, the difficulties faced by women leaders stem from gender stereotypes, discrimination, and work–family imbalance. Studies show that women occupy up to 21% of leadership positions worldwide; however, they face barriers such as the “glass ceiling” and “sticky floor,” which often keep them in lower-level roles. Gender stereotypes tend to portray women as nurturing rather than authoritative, thereby undermining their perceived ability to lead. As a result, women are less frequently appointed to leadership roles and are more vulnerable to failure.

Moreover, the challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities slows down women's career progression.

An article published in "Merits" journal (2023) by E. Galsanjigmed and T. Sekiguchi provides an integrative overview of the challenges faced by female leaders and links gender equality with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The authors highlight the advantages of women's leadership, noting that female leaders tend to make more positive decisions, adopt innovative approaches, and create constructive work environments.

From a general management perspective, leadership theories have evolved as follows:

- **Classical theories** (early 20th century) were based on the trait theory, suggesting that leaders possess inherent qualities such as intelligence, confidence, determination, and charisma. Leadership was viewed as a natural gift rather than a skill that could be developed.
- **Behavioral theories** later emphasized that leadership is not merely about innate traits but also about behaviors and styles. For example, the Ohio State studies identified two main dimensions of leadership: task orientation and people orientation.
- **Modern approaches**, such as situational theories (Fiedler's contingency model), propose that leadership effectiveness depends not only on personal qualities but also on the specific organizational and environmental context.
- **Transformational leadership** (James MacGregor Burns, Bernard Bass) interprets the leader as a visionary figure who inspires change, redefines goals, and influences others through moral and ethical example.

Leadership Studies in Uzbekistan

Uzbek scholars—including A. Kholmatov, T. Qodirov, and Sh. Rakhimov—have analyzed leadership from socio-psychological and management perspectives. They define the leader as the subject of governance within a social system—one who unifies group activity, makes decisions, and bears responsibility. Factors such as national culture, moral values, and collective trust are emphasized as critical to leadership effectiveness.

In Uzbekistan, the management activities of female leaders are guided by the country's Gender Equality Policy. According to the World Bank's "Women, Business and the Law" report (2024), Uzbekistan ranked among the top five countries globally in achieving gender equality. The "Uzbekistan 2030" Strategy also aims to increase women's participation in public administration to 30% by 2030.

Gender stereotypes remain widespread in the workplace, and women often encounter the "glass ceiling"—an invisible barrier preventing them from advancing to senior leadership roles.

This phenomenon reflects deep-rooted gender biases that hinder women’s professional growth and requires substantial effort to overcome. Even when women do break through the glass ceiling, they continue to face leadership stereotypes questioning their authority and managerial competence. Such issues reflect society’s tendency to associate leadership with masculine traits, leading to negative perceptions of female leaders who do not conform to these expectations.

Taking these factors into account, this integrative analysis focuses on both the external (organizational) and internal (personal) challenges women leaders face in their professional development, and proposes an integrative model explaining the relationship between these factors. Since organizations’ gender-biased decisions shape women’s career paths and values, the study aims to identify how these barriers emerge and how they can be addressed through management and organizational research. From a broader perspective, gender stereotypes against women leaders persist globally, and overcoming them requires a change in worldview—a paradigm shift. History itself offers strong examples of capable female leaders:

- Queen Tomyris of ancient Central Asia led her people to great victories;
- Saray Mulk Khanum, wife of Amir Temur, held the title of “Great Lady” and played an influential role in governance;
- Margaret Thatcher, the “Iron Lady” of the United Kingdom, demonstrated that domestic management experience could translate into effective state governance;
- Other global examples include Joan of Arc, Indira Gandhi, and Golda Meir.

From a communicative perspective, women often exhibit more strategic approaches to relationship management than men. Their nurturing instincts—developed through motherhood—can enhance their emotional intelligence and objectivity in conflict resolution. Thus, society should recognize women not as “physiologically weaker beings,” but as individuals capable of demonstrating strong leadership potential—provided they are given equal opportunities and institutional support.

Practical Recommendations for Empowering Women Leaders in Uzbekistan

Area	Practical Recommendations
Personal Development	Identify one’s leadership style (MBTI, DISC, EQ tests); self-assessment every 3 months; read books on leadership and emotional intelligence.

Area	Practical Recommendations
Education and Training	Use online platforms (Coursera, LinkedIn Learning – Women in Leadership courses); participate in local trainings; apply for international programs (Chevening, Erasmus+, Women Leadership).
Mentorship and Networking	Find a mentor (formal/informal); engage in peer mentoring with other women leaders; participate in professional networks (LinkedIn, Women in Business Uzbekistan).
Core Leadership Competencies	Decision-making; active listening and non-verbal communication; team management; emotional awareness.
Organizational Support	Implement “High-Potential Women Leaders” programs; develop Individual Development Plans (IDP); use job rotations to build multi-dimensional skills.
Uzbekistan-specific Measures	Establish regional “Women’s Career Centers”; allocate state grants for women’s leadership projects; promote positive role models through media (“My Leadership Journey” initiatives).

Increasing the number of women in leadership positions is a strategic priority for Uzbekistan’s sustainable development, economic growth, and social justice. Although women actively participate in education, healthcare, science, and culture, their representation in senior management remains limited.

The main reasons include:

- traditional gender stereotypes,
- work–family role conflicts,
- limited access to leadership development opportunities,
- insufficient institutional support in the corporate environment.

In conclusion, increasing the presence of women in leadership is not merely a matter of personal success, but a prerequisite for the sustainable future of the nation. Achieving this goal requires joint, consistent, and continuous action by the state, private sector and society as a whole. Only through such cooperation can we build a fair, inclusive, and effective governance culture based on gender equality.

List of used literature:

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