# Bias and Barriers that Women Confront in Leadership

Antionette Yarbrough

LS 698 MA Leadership Capstone

Beulah Heights University

## Literature Review

### Leadership Defined

Leadership can be defined as the process of leading individuals or an organization. Leaders are responsible for setting direction, motivating others, inspiring, and guiding other individuals. They apply a wide range of styles and skills to ensure that their mission and vision are achieved. Some of the common leadership styles include autocratic, transformational, democratic, charismatic, bureaucratic, and situational. Leaders usually get their power from the willingness of individuals to follow and to be guided by them. The concept of leadership is deeply centered on specific masculine traits such as decisiveness, aggression, strength, and the willingness to engage in conflicts. Such characteristics are more common in male leaders as compared to women. Another critical term affecting women in leadership positions is gender stereotypes. It refers to the attributes, differences, and roles of groups or individuals. Gender stereotyping can, therefore, be perceived as the behaviors and environments that promote the sharing of social roles based on gender. This factor has caused many women to miss out on senior management positions.

Mendez & Busenbark (2015) carried out a research on how gender influenced leadership behavior. According to these scholars, shared leadership involves different individuals collaborating with one another to achieve organizational goals. This definition is completely different from the traditional leadership where only one person is responsible for the allocation of responsibility. Mendez & Busenbark (2015) note that women are still being left behind even when it comes to shared leadership. Most of the management groups that are formed are mainly composed of men who are unwilling to allow another gender into their circle. These scholars note that the negative stereotype that exists in organizations is pulling women behind. This

explains why only a few women succeed in breaking the glass ceiling that exists in their firms. In their research, Mendez & Busenbark (2015) found that gender has no direct impact on leadership. Therefore, any person could manage an organization, provided that they had the necessary traits.

**The Social Conflict Theory**

Unlike the feminist approach which advocates for equality, the conflict theory claims that only those individuals in power can benefit positively. It also regards the world as a place that is characterized by continuous struggle. According to Madsen & Scribner (2017), individuals can understand social behavior better by looking at the disputes and challenges that exist between two groups. The approach also states that men are trying to hold more power at the expense of women. Only a few positions that have little power are being set aside for women. All of these factors translate into gender inequality. Today, men have become more powerful due to their freedom, physical strength, and size. The ability of men to exempt themselves from childbearing responsibilities has enabled them to dominate over women in different places. Cultural beliefs and traditions make this situation worse because they seem to favor men. In some societies such as Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to perform simple tasks such as driving cars. Chances of them holding top leadership positions are, therefore, quite low. When the Marxist approach is used in this context, men can be regarded as capitalists while women as workers. This means that female employees can only break the glass ceiling when they have permission from male managers (Fitzgerald, 2013). The performance of men is also highly valued while that of women is considered as poor. Most scholars critique this theory because they think that it is justifying wrong activities. Nevertheless, it still draws a clear picture of what the present world is experiencing. Evidently, the barriers to leadership that were affecting women in the previous

centuries are yet to be fully resolved. In fact, cases of gender discrimination seem to have increased in the 21st century.

**Rutherford's Model**

This model focuses on the gender-biased culture that most organizations are based on today. Companies can no longer be considered as gender-neutral due to the huge discrepancies in the number of female employees as compared to that of men (Radke, Hornsey, & Barlow, 2016). The existing practices in most organizations appear to have been gendered to boost the male advantage. Though gender inequality might not be noticeable in the formal policies and procedures of an organization, they still point a high level of divergence between women and men. Rutherford believes that women and other ethnic minorities are being excluded from certain privileges and power. Organizations are usually shaped by the nature of their industry, ownership, environment, location, and future inspirations (Carter & Peters, 2016). The culture of these firms has also been influenced to favor a specific gender. For instance, some firms require their employees to dress in a specific way which disadvantages female employees. The culture of an organization can also reveal its attitude towards women. Companies that embrace gender awareness and diversity are more likely to reward women with management positions as compared to those institutions that are based on negative stereotypes.

According to Hoyt (2010), the management style used in an organization can also help to reveal its attitude towards women. Some leadership styles make it nearly impossible for women to occupy top leadership positions. This is because they require more masculine traits as compared to feminine characteristics. The role that women play in their families can also be used by firms to disadvantage them. Women usually have more responsibilities, especially women bringing up a family (Madsen & Scribner, 2017). Unfortunately, organizations can use these

factors to disrupt their career progress and even pay them low salaries. The model also focuses on the informal code of behaviors that is present in most firms. These regulations make it impossible for women to develop meaningful relationships at their workplaces since all of their interactions are considered immoral.

**Feminist Theory**

The feminist theory allows individuals to analyze the global environment by focusing on gender inequality. It addresses and assesses the challenges that women face in society and how they are dealing with these issues. The feminist theory also seeks to promote the social, economic, reproductive, voting, and property rights of women (Johns, 2013). The feminist approach is based on three major assumptions: gender is a result of social construction, gender is a guiding principle in major societies, and that women and men think differently. Politics is one of the areas where women have underperformed for many years. Though this trend is changing in some nations, it is evident that upcoming leaders are focusing on positions that have less social power. In most nations, women appear to be bound to the bottom of the hierarchy. According to Bierema (2016), situational constraints, gender socialization, and structural barriers are the main factors that have prevented women from filling more leadership positions. Due to the poor participation of women in politics, they have been to hold a secondary status in society. Recent events clearly indicate that women are yet to attain the same parity as men.

A perfect example is Saudi Arabia where women are not allowed to drive or openly interact with men. According to CNN (2017), a woman was recently arrested simply because she had breakfast with a man. The country also has harsh laws that make it difficult for women to pursue education and other ventures. The feminist approach encourages equality between both genders. The theory also allows individuals to study leadership from a gender perspective. So far, women

remain underrepresented in most leadership positions, even in those nations which are considered democratic (Ester Wachs, 2000). In the 1970s, winning the fight for equal employment opportunities for women was a major achievement. However, recent statistics reveal the emergence of a new trend that needs to be dealt with quickly.

The inability of women to break the leadership glass ceiling remains a huge mystery. As female employees climb up the ladder of success, the factors preventing them from doing so also increase and in the end, they make it impossible to succeed. Many promising female leaders have been driven out of their jobs due to the non-supportive environment. The major assumption that causes this scenario is that women lack the necessary skills and characteristics to succeed in a leadership position (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2015). Though this myth has been disapproved on numerous occasions, it has still managed to hold on. A lot of men in the world still regard it as a sign of weakness to be headed by a woman. This is why they are ready to do anything to ensure that they do not experience such a situation. As stated, the feminist theory seeks to encourage women to stand up and push for their rights. Since they have the same qualifications as men, they also should have a seat at the management table.

Davis & Maldonado (2015) claims that feminist theory can help in promoting women rights and allow them to occupy more leadership positions. These scholars emphasize that double standards still exist in most organizations today. Just like men, women can perform well in leadership positions, provided that they have access to equal opportunities and support. One of the famous sayings that are associated with the feminist approach is that "women can do anything that men can do." The purpose of the feminist approach is to boost and empower women. Though they may have unique leadership traits as compared to those of men, they can still lead an organization to success. Some individuals believe that the feminist theory is for

women and girls exclusively. Davis & Maldonado (2015) state that such assumptions are not true. The feminist approach is focused on eliminating all forces that support injustice, oppression, and inequality. Therefore, it can be used to promote the rights of both genders. However, the theory has focused on women since there is greater evidence of them being harassed over the years. The feminist approach, therefore, seeks to ensure that one gender which makes up close to a half of the entire population is not left behind. Today, men have joined in the fight for equality. This situation shows how the world is beginning to perceive women positively. Today, a huge number of women are leaders of major organizations in the world. However, these numbers are still low, especially when compared to those of men holding similar positions. The feminist theory also holds that the experience and regional location of women can affect their exposure to gender discrimination.

Heilman (2015), in his study, found that women in developed countries are less likely to suffer from discrimination as compared to those that live in third world countries. The gender difference problem can also be analyzed from the division of labor and allocation of roles. Assigning women fewer demanding responsibilities can be regarded as a sign of gender discrimination. This is because managers believe that they cannot excel in these areas, which is not true. Also, forcing women to undertake all of the family responsibilities can be regarded as sexual exploitation. This situation causes women to lose the opportunity to improve their education status. Some feminists blame women suffering from structural oppression. Women are being discriminated against at their workplace as a result of racism, patriarchy, and capitalism. Most theorists agree with Marx’s perspective as regards to the consequences of capitalism (Grant & Taylor, 2014). In this approach, the rich are willing to engage in any activity that allows them to gain more wealth. The poor people, on the other hand, are forced to survive on low wages.

Therefore, women can be compared to the poor individuals in Marx's theory. Organizations are preventing their development by introducing different types of barriers.

**Women and Career Progression**

As stated before, fewer women are appointed to top leadership positions globally compared to their male counterparts. This issue affects both the business and political fields. In the United States, women constitute close to 40% of the entire workforce but only account to 2% of all leadership positions. For a long time, scholars have offered different theories as to why this situation happens. Most of the experts have blamed sexual discrimination in organizations. Instead of providing managerial positions based on merit, some firms usually prefer male workers to women. Therefore, many qualified female employees are denied the opportunity to lead the organization. The cultural belief that women are supposed to stay at home to take care of their families seems to be a global problem (Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007). The work of the few women who successfully break through this barrier is rarely appreciated. Some critics even suggest that female leaders have ignored their wifely duties. The lack of enough female mentors has also made it difficult for women to survive in environments that are dominated by men. Though both male and female employees face challenges when advancing their careers, women suffer the most.

Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hagemann, & Josephson (2017) emphasize the role that women play in the economy. According to these scholars, women make up slightly more than 50% of the entire U.S. population. They are also considered as breadwinners in 40% of the homes and represent close to half of the workforce. In the recent past, they have also acquired professional qualifications in different fields. Despite these facts, they are still underappreciated and underpaid. Recent studies show that there are numerous advantages of including women in the

workforce. Some of the factors that can be improved are financial performance, firm value, innovation, insolvency risk, and economic growth. Companies that have more women in management positions also record increased sales and profits. Organizations also experience fewer cases of fraud and embezzlement of funds since women are considered as better managers. Chisholm-Burns et. al. (2017) claim that favoring one gender can end up affecting the flow of ideas. Therefore, organizations that embrace diversity are more capable of identifying opportunities and investing in them. Having a balanced leadership or management board enables an organization to benefit from the different ideologies of these individuals. Women also have the ability to use more leadership behaviors as compared to men. Some of the practices that they are likely to show include participative decision-making, employee development, motivation, as well as the issuance of better rewards.

Davis & Maldonado (2015) maintains that women experience greater challenges while working in organizations that are dominated by men. Female employees are forced to adapt to organizational cultures that are founded upon male values and attitudes. Introducing new policies in such environments is met with high levels of resistance, especially when the manager is a woman. The corporate policies in these institutions are focused on maintaining the status quo of men in the leadership positions. The stereotypical assumptions as regards to gender make it impossible for women to hold leadership positions in their organizations. Some firms are founded on the traditional leadership models which assume that all great leaders are men. Such approaches eliminate the ability of women to become managers in the future. Men are usually regarded as assertive, decisive, strategic, and organized. Women, on the other hand, are thought to be sensitive, democratic, compassionate, participative, and inclusive. These leadership attributes are supposed to make them good leaders (PEW Research Center, 2015). However,

some critics think that the attributes make them weak. They provide an example that women can easily make decisions based on emotions. This can end up ruining business operations. Despite these arguments, one thing is clear. As women advance their careers, they face more complex challenges. Since the management team of their organizations is biased, chances of them achieving success in these new positions are quite low.

**Barriers that Women Face in Leadership**

Researchers such as Carter & Peters (2016) have used several models to show the major challenges that women face in leadership. However, three major frameworks stand out from the rest. The first model assumes that female leaders are confronted by internal barriers which prevent them from achieving their vision. It regards women as victims who are underprivileged in the society. The world needs to be re-socialized for them to fit well. The second model suggests that organizational structure and behaviors are to blame for the non-performance of female leaders Johns (2013). Women seem to have been locked in a state of poor visibility and low power. Breaking these constraints is difficult due to the lengthy processes required. The third model assumes that the world is male-dominated and operates on their principles. As a result, women have been suppressed greatly. Most of the researchers base their findings on the third model. Morley (2014) claims that internal barriers such as low confidence, poor motivation, and aspiration, as well as low self-image, arise because men hold greater power and privileges than women.

According to Gabaldon, De Anca, Mateos de Cabo, & Gimeno (2016), two frameworks can help in understanding female aspirations. Firstly, female leaders usually aspire differently as compared to men. However, when they are judged by traditional guidelines, it appears as though they are not performing. Secondly, female leaders have huge inspirations but face societal and

organizational barriers which reduce their creativity. These factors also make it difficult for them to acknowledge that they have dreams. Therefore, rather than condemning female leaders, they need to be viewed from another perspective. Morley (2014) believes that women have unique challenges which are associated with their gender as well as the roles they play in society. When these challenges are not addressed, the performance of women continues to be lower than that of their male counterparts. Ester Wachs, in her book *Why the Best Man for the Job is a Woman*, states that women hold the best leadership traits. Wachs believes that women can use their feminine qualities and create perfect working relationships. However, her sentiments are not shared by many individuals, especially men.

Gabaldon et. al. (2016) classify the barriers affecting women in leadership positions into two groups: demand and supply. The demand-side barrier includes factors such as gender discrimination, biased perceptions, and negative institutional environment. Just like other scholars, Gabaldon et. al. (2016) also emphasize the impact of gender discrimination on organizations. It virtually denies women the opportunity to earn high salaries as well as clinch management positions. Gender discrimination is also largely based on the concept of masculinity and other cultural factors. Many individuals usually perceive women as a weaker species and are, therefore, unwilling to listen or elect them into top leadership positions. Some organizations also think that women can bring less value to boardrooms as compared to men. The biased environment in organizations also affects the performance and development of female employees. Supply-side barriers, on the other hand, involve gender differences in attitudes and values, family-work conflicts, and gender role expectations. Gabaldon et. al. (2016) emphasize that women are charged on higher standards as compared to men. This means that their performance will be described as poor on most occasions and, therefore, lead to their downfall.

Women are also unable to perform well in their leadership positions because they are forced to balance their work life with their family responsibilities. Research shows that men usually leave their family responsibilities to women. As a result, female employees lack enough time to improve their careers.

### *a. Glass Ceiling*

The term *glass ceiling* refers to an existing but invisible force that pulls back women from surpassing a certain corporate level of success. Ellemers (2014) claims that something mysterious happens to women as they approach higher management positions. According to Ellemers (2014), they simply disappear. The pace at which women rise to occupy leadership levels is significantly slower as compared to that of their male counterparts. Though women are recruited in large number, they ‘vaporize’ as they approach the higher hierarchies. This trend is worrying because it suppresses women development. Though women have advanced greatly in management and education studies, their hard work has not been accompanied by any positive change. In fact, the existing glass ceilings in organizations seem to have been reinforced by glass walls. A study conducted by Radke et. al. (2016) reveals that women still have higher unemployment rates and high pay differences. Women who aspire for leadership positions are forced to deal with more significant challenges including sexual harassment and even isolation. This is one of the reasons as to why few women hold senior leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. According to the Washington Post (March 30, 2016), only 26% of universities and colleges are headed by women, only six states have female governors, and also less than 195 of NGOs are managed by female leaders. In addition, women just hold 84 seats in the House of Representatives and 20 in the Senate. These statistics indicate that women are facing significant barriers in their journey to become international leaders.

### *b. Pay Inequality*

Pay inequality is another issue that women confront in their leadership plans. Many individuals assume that top leadership positions come with higher salaries and allowances. Though this is supposed to be the case, latest researches have indicated a worrying trend: female leaders are underpaid as compared to their male counterparts (Haile, Emmanuel, & Dzathor, 2016). Gender pay inequality seems to persist even though women have greater experiences and qualifications. The number of salaries that leaders are paid has a direct impact on the morale as well as performance. Therefore, underpaying women is creating a non-supportive environment where they are doomed to fail. According to the Guardian Newspaper (Apr 4, 2018), men are paid 10% more than their female counterparts. The policies that have been implemented to eliminate the gender pay gap have proven to be ineffective.

Ellemers (2014) also supports the notion that unequal gender pay gap affects women in leadership positions. This problem appears across all ethnicities, ages, professions, education, and countries. Ellemers (2014) claims that a gender pay gap that is between 10% and 15% cannot be explained on the basis of experience or education status. This is evidently sexual discrimination which is targeting women at the workplace. Research also found that less than 10% of women are leaders of companies in the Fortune 100 list. Furthermore, the few women in these positions still earn less than men. Ellemers (2014) blames the paradox of equality which has focused on promoting men at the workplace and ignoring women. In such an environment, women are unable to perform well due to the huge barriers that have been erected. Many managers seem to be biased. This is evident in the way they issue out promotions, rewards, bonuses, and other medals. In most cases, women are the victims because they are

underappreciated and even reprimanded due to small mistakes. Career development is also dependent upon the concept of masculinity. Due to unequal income distribution, many women are unable to raise fees to boost their education level. Furthermore, some organizations deny them the opportunity to engage in further studies. These factors have for a long time prevented women from breaking the glass ceiling.

### *c. Work-Life Balance*

According to the feminist theory, men are given more priority in today's society because they are considered as breadwinners. Women are mainly associated with motherhood roles. In most occasions, men usually transfer their family responsibilities to their wives. As a result, they end up exposing women to a lot of stress and pressure. It is hard for women to balance their work life and their family responsibilities (Becker, Zawadzki, & Shields, 2014). As expected, most women will end up prioritizing their family duties over their jobs. This means that they are more likely to fail in their leadership responsibilities. Unlike male leaders, women are directly involved in the daily activities of their families. This causes a lot of conflicts to arise in the working environment (Gabaldon et. al., 2016). Some companies are unwilling to assign complex leadership responsibilities to women due to the fear that they may fail to perform. In the recent past, a lot of women have lost their jobs simply because they had an emergency and had to go and take care of their children. Evidently, men do not understand the pain that women are going through as they raise their family.

### *d. Culture*

Some of the obstacles that women face in their leadership arise from factors beyond the constraints and structures of their organization. The challenges that affect women stem from

social, cultural, and political factors which determine gender roles. It is difficult for organizations to deal with these issues since they affect the entire society (Gabaldon et al., 2016). Most organizations have failed to create supportive environments that can cushion female leaders from the impact of gender biases. This has put the productivity and efficiency of the workforce in jeopardy. Today, many career paths and jobs are divided into two major segments. They are associated with either feminine or masculine traits. Women are the primary victims of sexual harassment due to the existence of structural factors in organizations.

Women also have to deal with gender segregation in the modern world. According to McGowan, Cooper, Durkin, & O'Kane (2015), women are recognized as legitimate leaders only in those areas that have been set aside for them. Women also have to fight harder to protect their reputation. The myth of female advantage holds that women hold leadership positions simply because they were handed over to them and not through their hard work. Some female leaders have been accused of engaging in sexual relationships with other executives for favors (Haile et. al., 2016). Another barrier arises from the leadership style that they choose to use in their organizations. Women can easily face resistance when they introduce a new leadership style that other employees are not accustomed to. Convincing the workforce to adopt the new changes is usually a difficult task. Though the above studies have presented numerous issues affecting women, only a few have outlined steps that can be taken to remedy the situation. For instance, Madsen & Scribner (2017) recommend that stricter policies should be put in place to protect women from sexual discrimination and harassment.

### *e. Lack of Networks*

Women are also disadvantaged at the workplace simply because they lack enough professional network. Therefore, their access to equal employment opportunities is quite limited.

Studies show that women have been excluded from networks for many years. This has made it quite difficult for them to develop their careers. Though things have changed since then, there is still some form of exclusion in these relationships (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Networks are important because they assist in gaining new ideas as well as meeting other people. For women, networking groups can also assist in dealing with gender stereotypes and sexual discrimination. Internal women's networking groups can advocate for better rights within an organization. They also help in creating a positive working environment and boost the confidence of female employees (Rhode, 2017). The few women empowerment groups that exist today have little support from the management and government. This makes them ineffective when it comes to dealing with certain scenarios.

**Dealing with the Barriers and Bias affecting Women in Leadership**

According to Becker et. al. (2014), eliminating sexism in the workplace is the surest way of empowering women to occupy more leadership positions. Sexism, in this context, refers to the act of discriminating against a person based on his/her gender. In most of the cases, this practice mainly affects women. Female employees can try different cognitive coping strategies to deal with negative factors in their workplace. However, if the situation gets out of hand, they should be willing to ask for help from other stakeholders, including courts. Confronting the perpetrators directly is also another option that can be undertaken. In case women are sexually harassed, they should not be afraid of speaking out their frustrations. Research shows that direct confrontation can empower women as well as boost their confidence and self-esteem. Some women choose to remain quiet due to the fear that they might lose their jobs. Such behaviors need to be a thing of the past. Furthermore, there are many regulations that have been implemented with the goal of protecting employee rights.

Morley (2014) claims that government intervention can help in promoting women rights at the workplace. The barriers that affect women in leadership mainly arise from certain gender stereotypes. These factors cause the status of women in society to be lowered. Therefore, the first step in resolving these issues should involve eliminating the negative assumptions. Companies are encouraged to develop a new set of regulations that impose heavy punishment on those employees that defy female leaders at the workplace. Organizations are also expected to review their recruitment and promotion policies. As stated, most of the regulations used by firms usually favor men. Therefore, eliminating such practices will enable more women to join top leadership positions.

Johns (2013) also researched the numerous ways in which women can break the glass ceiling at the workplaces. The non-supportive working environment is among the factors that are preventing women from occupying more leadership positions. Johns (2013) notes that breaking the glass ceiling is difficult and requires cooperation and collaboration with different stakeholders. Some of the players that need to be involved in the fight against gender inequality include employers, governments, women, academic institutions, and the community in general. The government has many tools that it can use to ensure that women are protected from any form of exploitation. The state can also act as a catalyst, especially in promoting gender equality practices, its benefits, and other associated perspectives. Governmental policies can also assist in eliminating discriminatory frameworks that exist at the core of many organizations. Furthermore, it can introduce more projects and programs that help in ensuring that the barriers against women leadership are brought down completely.

Employers, on the other hand, need to emphasize their commitment to promoting equality at their workplaces. Companies that help women to break the glass ceiling usually have special

characteristics. For starters, their policies are inclusive and comprehensive. The management team of such firms is also non-partisan. This means that they can offer equal opportunities to both male and female employees. Companies can also set aside specific leadership positions for female employees. This will help increase the number of women in top leadership positions. When it comes to eliminating structural barriers, Johns (2013) advises employers to develop flexible working relationships for their workers. Female employees, especially those with young children, should not be overworked. They need to be given ample time to perform their family responsibilities. The organization should not use this opportunity to victimize and deny them the opportunity of leading (Glass & Cook, 2016). Firms are also encouraged to develop mentoring programs. These policies can motivate women to work harder and move up the ladder of success. Companies can also sponsor the education of some of its female employees.

Women are also encouraged to speak up against the atrocities that they are experiencing at the workplaces (O'Neil et al., 2015). Research shows that many women are suffering silently in their organizations. They fear that they will be punished or even demoted when they make public the challenges that they are going through. In the recent past, numerous policies and regulations have been implemented to promote the welfare of employees (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Therefore, women should not be afraid of speaking out. This can enable them to join a different movement which will put pressure on their organization. Being members of trade unions can also help in ensuring that there is gender equality in the workplace. Today, any company that discriminates against its employees based on any grounds is subjected to legal measures. The reputation of such organizations is also put at risks. This is because customers will not be willing to purchase products from a company that harasses women.

As discussed above, the issue of the gender pay gap is affecting negatively the performance of women in leadership position (Radke et. al., 2016). The above studies have shown how women earn less than men even if they hold similar positions. Such conditions usually discourage employees and prevent them from achieving their dreams. All female employees should be paid salaries that are the same as those of their male counterparts. This is because they hold similar working experiences and qualifications. Already, there are numerous states that have signed bills to ensure that there is diversity in organizations. For instance, the Governor of California has a regulation that requires all companies within his jurisdiction to include at least one woman in their boards (*New York Times*, 2018). Those institutions that fail to adhere to these regulations will be imposed with a fine of between $100,000 and $300,000. The number of women in leadership positions can increase significantly in the next five years if other states are to follow California's example.

The lack of encouragement, counseling, and support has caused women to experience numerous challenges in their leadership plans. Hoyt, C. L. (2010) believes that it is important for organizations together with its stakeholders to offer their support to women. They should motivate them by offering higher pay and other bonuses. Companies are also expected to ensure that their working conditions are conducive for both genders. The belief that women can only excel in certain areas and not others also needs to be eliminated from the organization. Developing training programs can also ensure that women are armed with the right skills, knowledge, and experience, which ensures that they perform their jobs well. Women that have succeeded in leadership positions also need to act as mentors for the upcoming generation (Heilman, 2015). This can help motivate them to work hard and break the glass ceiling.

## Summary of Review

In the above sections, all scholars agree that indeed there are barriers affecting women in leadership positions. Some of the factors that they collectively point out and blame for this condition include gender discrimination, sexual harassment, family-work imbalances, gender pay inequality, as well as the existence of glass ceilings in most organizations. The lack of enough support from other managers and employees has also made this situation worse. Despite the extent of globalization and development, women are still being exposed to old traditions. In certain countries such as Saudi Arabia, they are not even allowed to drive cars. For these challenges to be resolved fully, the government in collaboration with other stakeholders should consolidate their efforts. Most of the above scholars claim that the implementation of new regulations can help in increasing the number of women in leadership positions. Companies are also expected to impose heavy punishment on those individuals that harass women at the workplace. This can help in restoring order and mutual respect in the organization.

References

Becker, J. C., Zawadzki, M. J., & Shields, S. A. (2014). Confronting and reducing sexism: A call for research on intervention. *Journal of Social Issues*, *70*(4), 603-614.

Bierema, L. L. (2016). Women's leadership: Troubling notions of the "ideal" (male) leader. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *18*(2), 119-136.

Carter, D. R., & Peters, T. (2016). The underrepresentation of African American women in executive leadership: What's getting in the way? *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, *7*(4), 115-134.

CFA Institute (2016). Current status of women on boards rooms. Retrieved from https://blogs.cfainstitute.org/marketintegrity/2016/10/07/the-current-status-of-women-on-boards-in-2016-a-global-roundup/

Chisholm-Burns, M. A., Spivey, C. A., Hagemann, T., & Josephson, M. A. (2017). Women in leadership and the bewildering glass ceiling. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, *74*(5), 312-324.

CNN (2017). Women Discrimination. Retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/27/middleeast/Saudi-women-still-can't-do-this/index.html

Davis, D. R., & Maldonado, C. (2015). Shattering the glass ceiling: The leadership development of African American women in higher education. *Advancing Women in Leadership*, *35*, 48-64.

Ellemers, N. (2014). Women at work: How organizational features impact career development. *Policy insights from the behavioral and brain sciences*, *1*(1), 46-54.

Ester Wachs (2000). *Why the best man for the job is a woman: The unique female qualities of leadership*. New York, NY: Harper Business.

Fitzgerald, T. (2013). *Women leaders in higher education: Shattering the myths*. Routledge.

Gabaldon, P., De Anca, C., Mateos de Cabo, R., & Gimeno, R. (2016). Searching for women on boards: An analysis from the supply and demand perspective. *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, *24*(3), 371-385.

Glass, C., & Cook, A. (2016). Leading at the top: Understanding women's challenges above the glass ceiling. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(1), 51-63.

Grant, A. D., & Taylor, A. (2014). Communication essentials for female executives to develop leadership presence: Getting beyond the barriers of understating accomplishment. *Business Horizons*, *57*(1), 73-83.

*Guardian Newspaper* (Apr 4, 2018). Gender pay gap: when does your company stop paying women in 2018? https://www.theguardian.com/news/ng-interactive/2018/apr/04/gender-pay-gap-when-does-your-company-stop-paying-women-in-2018

Haile, S., Emmanuel, T., & Dzathor, A. (2016). BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES CONFRONTING WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT POSITIONS: REVIEW AND ANALYSIS. *International Journal of Business & Public Administration*, *13*(1).

Heilman, M. E. (2015). Gender stereotypes: Impediments to women's career progress. In *Auswahl von Männern und Frauen Führungskräfte* (pp. 73-84). Springer Gabler, Wiesbaden.

Hoyt, C. L. (2010). Women, men, and leadership: Exploring the gender gap at the top. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *4*(7), 484-498.

Johns, M. L. (2013). Breaking the glass ceiling: Structural, cultural, and organizational barriers preventing women from achieving senior and executive positions. *Perspectives in Health Information Management/AHIMA, American Health Information Management Association*, *10* (winter).

Joint Economic Committee (2016). Democratic Website. Retrieved from https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/democrats/reports?ID=76D42E65-B2F6-4370-9BCB-BA8FA1FD8EA4

Madsen, S. R., & Scribner, R. T. (2017). A perspective on gender in management: The need for strategic cross-cultural scholarship on women in management and leadership. *Cross-Cultural & Strategic Management*, *24*(2), 231-250.

McGowan, P., Cooper, S., Durkin, M., & O'Kane, C. (2015). The influence of social and human capital in developing young women as entrepreneurial business leaders. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *53*(3), 645-661.

Mendez, M. J., & Busenbark, J. R. (2015). Shared leadership and gender: all members are equal… but some more than others. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *36*(1), 17-34.

Morley, L. (2014). Lost leaders: Women in the global academy. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *33*(1), 114-128.

Naff, K. C. (2018). *To look like America: Dismantling barriers for women and minorities in government*. Routledge.

*New York Times* (2018). The One Proven Way to Diversify Corporate Boards. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/03/opinion/the-case-for-quotas-on-corporate-boards.html

O'Neil, D. A., Hopkins, M. M., & Bilimoria, D. (2015). A framework for developing women leaders: applications to executive coaching. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *51*(2), 253-276.

PEW Research Center (2015). Obstacles to Female Leadership. Retrieved from http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/01/14/chapter-3-obstacles-to-female-leadership/

Radke, H. R., Hornsey, M. J., & Barlow, F. K. (2016). Barriers to women engaging in collective action to overcome sexism. *American Psychologist*, *71*(9), 863.

Rhode, D. L. (2017). *Women and leadership*. Oxford University Press.

Shakeshaft, C., Brown, G., Irby, B. J., Grogan, M., & Ballenger, J. (2007). Increasing gender equity in educational leadership. *Handbook for achieving gender equity through education*, *2*, 103-129.

The Washington Post (2016). Women Leadership. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2016/03/30/this-staggering-cha

rt-shows-how-few-minority-women-hold-executive-positions/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.78602d8935e9

Williamson, M., & Wilkie, R. (2015). Issues for women's leadership pathways in large organizations. *Labor, Employment and Work in New Zealand*.