Journal of Development and Social Sciences

www.jdss.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

Role of Stereotype Threat, Leadership Aspiration and Work from Home in Gender Gap in Leadership: A Study of the Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan

¹Sidra Naseem ²Prof. Dr. Abu Bakar Abdul Hamid ³Dr. Furqan Humayun Sheikh

1. PhD Scholar, Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia
2. Professor, Marketing & Supply Chain, Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Business, Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Pakistan

| ***Corresponding Author:** | sidra.naaseem@gmail.com |

ABSTRACT

This study examines the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in Pakistani higher education institutions (HEIs), where women hold only 4.5% of leadership positions. Despite comprising nearly half of the population and labor force, women tend to pursue teaching careers due to domestic and caregiving responsibilities. Male faculty members predominantly occupy leadership positions in HEIs, which creates stereotype threats and obstacles for female faculty members. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation by increasing domestic and family responsibilities for women. The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional design to collect data from 329 Ph.D. female faculty members working in Pakistani HEIs. The findings offer insights into individual and organisational factors impacting the gender gap in leadership positions and suggest potential remedies to increase the number of women in leadership positions in Pakistani HEIs.

| **KEYWORDS** | Faculty Members, Female, Gender Gap, Leadership, Higher Education Institutions, Pakistan, Stereotype Threat, Universities, Work from Home |

Introduction

This study aims to explore the factors that affect women's career development and advancement in leadership roles in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan, a developing country with persistent gender inequality. The study is motivated by the lack of data and research on women's leadership experiences in HEIs, especially in developing countries like Pakistan (Jones & Solomon, 2019; Elliott & Stead, 2018; Poltera, 2019). Previous studies have suggested that access to and the work environment are key factors affecting career development and advancement for women (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Sindell & Shamberger, 2016). However, these studies have mainly focused on Western contexts and have not adequately addressed the cultural and institutional factors that shape women's leadership opportunities and challenges in non-Western settings. The study will contribute to the literature on gender and leadership by providing insights into the context-specific challenges and opportunities for women leaders in HEIs. The study will also inform policy and practice recommendations for promoting gender equality and diversity in HEIs.

The study adopts a feminist perspective that recognizes the gendered nature of leadership roles and challenges the traditional stereotypes and expectations associated with them (Pullen & Vachhani, 2018; Tan, 2020; Fritz & Van Knippenberg, 2017). Leadership positions require characteristics that often conflict with traditional gender roles, such as self-sufficiency and irregular working patterns, creating societal and organisational obstacles for women seeking power and control (Pullen & Vachhani, 2018; Tan, 2020; Fritz & Van Knippenberg, 2017). Gender inequality in Pakistan requires addressing traditional and occupational barriers (Shroff, 2019). For example, cultural expectations limit women's financial independence, forcing them to depend on male family members and leading to their exploitation. Time poverty is also a problem, with women spending 10 times more

hours than men on unpaid care work. The pandemic has widened gender gaps in labor force participation, with 5% of female employees losing their jobs compared to 3.9% of men (International Labour Organization, 2021). Lack of support from the supervisors in HEIs (Sheikh, Hamid & Naseem, 2022) is also one of the reasons women's progress in leadership roles has shown only modest progress (Krause, 2017). The study's findings will contribute to the existing literature on gender gap in leadership and will provide valuable insights into the factors that hinder women's professional growth and development in HEIs of Pakistan. The study's recommendations will help promote gender equity in leadership roles in HEIs of Pakistan by addressing traditional and occupational barriers, such as cultural expectations and time poverty. Additionally, creating a supportive work environment that encourages and rewards leadership skills and qualities, regardless of gender, will further promote gender equality in leadership positions. Ultimately, this will lead to a more diverse and inclusive leadership in HEIs, which can positively impact the higher educational institutions and the overall development of Pakistan.

Literature Review

Gender inequality in leadership positions is a widely studied issue across the globe (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020; Eagly & Wood, 2012); World Economic Forum, 2021). In the context of Pakistan, several studies have highlighted the existence of a gender gap in leadership positions in higher education institutions (Ali & Rasheed, 2021). These studies point to several factors contributing to this gap, including cultural and social norms that limit women's access to education and leadership roles), bias and discrimination against women in recruitment and promotion processes and a lack of supportive policies and practices to address gender inequality in higher education (Ali & Rasheed, 2021).

Despite these challenges, there have been efforts to promote gender equity in leadership positions in Pakistani higher education institutions, including the development of gender-sensitive policies and training programs (Ali & Rasheed, 2021). However, there is still a long way to go in achieving gender parity in leadership roles in this context. The multidimensional nature of leadership aspiration emphasizes the role of work, relationships, and place, all influenced by the social environment, and highlights the need to address the underlying factors that contribute to the gender gap in leadership. Women's leadership aspiration is based on relational aspects that include opportunities to work with others, which align with their beliefs about leadership and necessary abilities (Okolo, 2021), while men's leadership aspiration is associated with the opportunities for power, influence, and presiding (Swartz & Amatucci, 2018). Moreover, female faculty members in higher education institutions have low leadership aspirations due to various factors such as cultural impacts, parenting challenges, lack of confidence, unwillingness to progress in their career (Van Dijk et al., 2021) and lack of employee engagement which can also lead to turnover intentions sometimes (Sheikh, Hamid & Naseem, 2022).

Stereotypes are beliefs or cognitive shortcuts people have about groups or members of groups that influence the way people process information about them (Hoyt & Simon, 2017). Stereotype threat occurs when people "must deal with the possibility of being judged or treated stereotypically, or of doing something that would confirm the stereotype" (Steele & Aronson, 1998, p. 401). This phenomenon has been extensively studied in social psychology since the research by Steele and Aronson in 1995 (Bear et al., 2017). The evaluation of an individual based on negative stereotypes in society decreases their motivation and sense of achievement (Adom & Anambane, 2019), and undermines the performance of stigmatized individuals on cognitive and social tasks (Goethals & Hoyt, 2016). The impact of stereotype threat on women leaders has consequences such as a decrease in motivation and engagement (von Hippel, Kalokerinos & Zacher, 2017).

Heery and Noon (2008) defined work from home as "a form of flexible working that enables employees to perform their normal work tasks from home, through the use of

information and telecommunications technology that allows instant communication anywhere and at any time". Working from home is quite different from working at offices. It seeps professional life into personal life and blurs the boundary between work and family, thus increasing work-family interference (Feng & Savani, 2020). Owing to gender role theory (Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991), it was analysed that the work family interference due to working from home especially during the COVID-19 pandemic was detrimental for women in heterosexual dual-career families. This resultantly created a gender gap in perceived work productivity and job satisfaction (Feng & Savani, 2020). As the world transitions to the post-pandemic phase, many organisations have adopted work from home policies. However, women, particularly those who are married, are hesitant to work from home as it blurs the line between their work and personal lives. This is due to the fact that, with children at home, there is a greater chance of their personal lives interfering with their work responsibilities, such as caring for or supervising their children while working from home. (Caligiuri & De Cieri, 2021).

The research with feminist perspective, would be an excellent effort towards development of women academic leadership in Pakistan while the works shifts to home (Vaughn et al., 2020). Hence, countries like Pakistan are no exceptions where women confront discrimination issues from the generations which include: strong network of male dominance, intimidation and sexual harassment, as the fragment of impediments and work to achieve higher hierarchical and ordered levels (Mustafa et al., 2021). The literature above suggests that it is important to understand the impact of work from home on female faculty members in HEIs of Pakistan especially with regards to gender leadership gap, this study intends to address the same.

There are numerous theories which provide the theoretical base for studies on women leadership and gender gap prevailing in leadership roles like social identity theory (Epitropaki et al., 2017), social role theory (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016) and regulatory focus theory (Kark et al., 2018). These theories contribute to the psychological, structural, and social factors that help in understanding and explaining the phenomenon of women underrepresentation at senior level positions in higher education institutions (Hoyt & Simon, 2017). The social identity theory is of the view that social identification satisfies the need of belongingness of female leaders and hence, increases their aspiration and job satisfaction (Aitken & von Treuer, 2020). Moreover, the social role theory argues that common gender stereotypes that are part of society leads to stereotype threats for women at workplace and increases gender inequality (Carli & Eagly, 2016; Heilman et al., 2019). Above all, the regulatory focus theory states that promotion-focused individuals are concerned with fulfilment of their self-actualisation needs, growth, and aspiration whereas prevention focus individuals are inclined towards their duties and obligations (Higgins & Pinelli, 2020). Van Dijk et al. (2021) argues that since regulatory focus shapes the goals and means towards goals of an individual, it is an attribute that is likely to influence how females evaluate the strategic options for leadership roles. It shapes their aspiration to lead or to avoid leadership roles, therefore, following hypotheses and conceptual framework given in Figure 1 are proposed:

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between stereotype threat and gender gap in leadership.

H2: There is a significant relationship between work from home and gender gap in leadership.

H3: Leadership aspiration mediates the relationship between stereotype threat and gender gap in leadership.

H4: Leadership aspiration mediates the relationship between work from home and gender
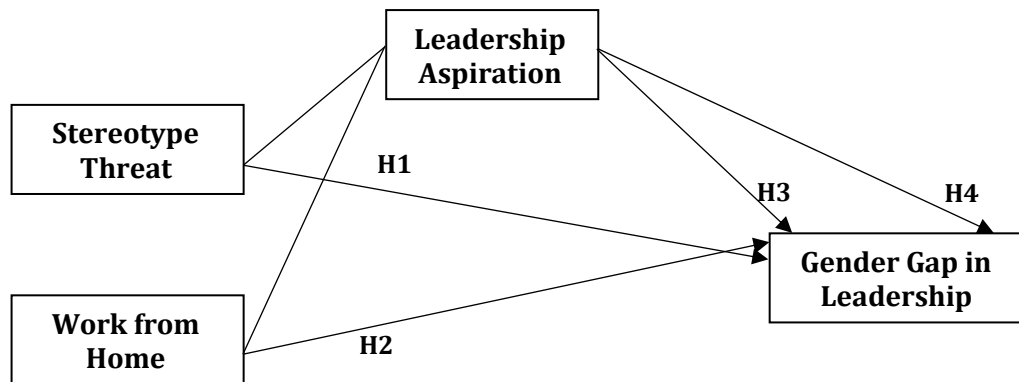   gap in leadership.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Note: H3& H4 (Leadership Aspiration as a mediator between Stereotype Threat &
Gender Gap in Leadership and Work from Home & Gender Gap in Leadership)

Materials and Methods

The study used a quantitative research design. The unit of analysis for this study
were individual women and data was collected through survey method/questionnaires
having a 5-point Likert scale from 329 female faculty members having a PhD degree working
in HEIs of Pakistan. Systematic random sampling technique was followed. Stereotype Threat
was measured with the help of eight items; four of which were adapted from Deemer et al.
(2016) and four items were adapted from Sultana (2019) Work from home was measured
with the help of eight items; one item was adopted while five items were adapted from
Batool et al. (2020) while three items were adapted from Irawanto et al. (2021) Leadership
Aspiration was measured with the help of seven items; four items were adapted from Fritz
& Knippenberg (2017), and three items were adapted from Tharenou & Terry (1998).
Gender Gap in Leadership was measured with the help of seven items; two items were
adapted from Fleming (2018), two items were adapted from Matot et al. (2020), two items
were adapted from Taylor (2017) and one item was adapted from Desmond, (2019).

Results and Discussion

The data was analysed using
Statistical Package for Social
Science (SPSS) & Analysis of
Moment Structures (AMOS)
(version 24). The result of the
measurement model showed in
Figure 2 below, the final
evaluation of the model fit
revealed that the most indices
such as the relative Chi-square
with a value of 2.281 (which
was   less   than   the
recommended value of five),
and CFI with values of more
than 0.90 (0.965), RMSEA with
a value of 0.051, which was less

Figure 2 Measurement Model

than the recommended value of 0.08. The modified model fitted the data perfectly.
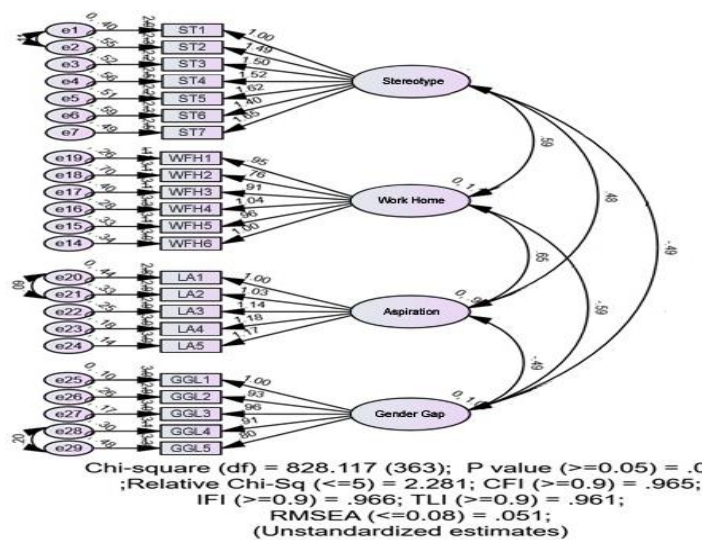
As shown in Figure 3 and Table 1 below, the results showed that two exogenous variables, stereotype threat, and work from home could explain 45% variance of leadership aspiration (as the coefficient of determination- R square was 0.45), and three exogenous variables stereotype threat, work from home and leadership aspiration explained 41% variance of gender gap in leadership (as the coefficient of determination- R square was 0.41).
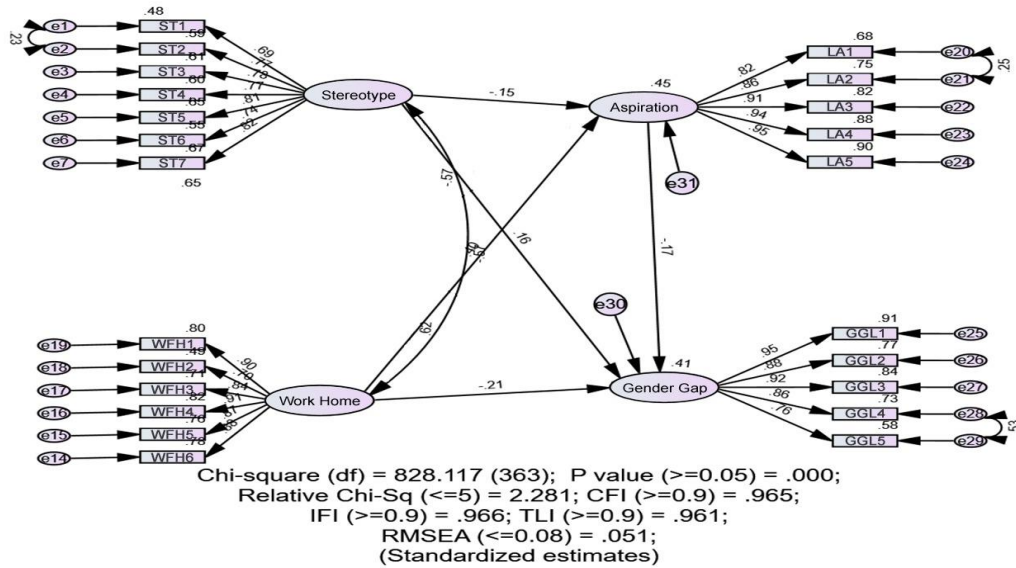

Figure 3 Structural Model

Table 1
Regression weights in the Structural Model

Hypotheses			Unstd. B	Std. β	S.E	C.R	p-value	Result
Stereotype Threat	→	Leadership Aspiration	-0.239	-0.150	0.08	-3.003	0.003	Accepted
Work from Home	→	Leadership Aspiration	-0.356	-0.400	0.047	-7.577	***	Accepted
Stereotype Threat	→	Gender Gap in Leadership	0.262	0.158	0.087	3.005	***	Accepted
Work from Home	→	Gender Gap in Leadership	0.195	0.210	0.053	3.679	***	Accepted
Leadership Aspiration	→	Gender Gap in Leadership	-0.174	-0.167	0.054	-3.195	0.001	Accepted

B= Unstandardised Regression coefficient, β= Standardised Regression Coefficient, C. R.= Critical Ratio, and S. E.= Standard Error.

Frequency and percentages were used in this research to explain the demographic characteristics. The descriptive findings indicated that the respondents belonged to different age brackets with a majority of people i.e., 158 (44.1%) falling in the age category of 40 years and above. The descriptive analysis regarding findings indicated that 252 of the total respondents were married and 98 were single. The descriptive statistics on academic designation revealed that most of the respondents (46.6%) were Assistant Professors, 15.1% were Associate Professors and 38.3% were Professors.

In addition, based on administrative tasks and responsibilities of female faculty members 66.2% of the respondents were not involved in any administrative responsibility in addition to teaching, only 1.1% of the respondents were serving on leadership position of Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Pro-Rector. Majority (19%) of the respondents had two to five years of experience of working in a leadership role followed by 18.7% of the respondents who had 14 years and above experience. With regards to total work experience, 27.7% of the faculty

members had two to five years of total work experience and only 5% of the respondents had less than two years of work experience.

The results of the study indicate that there is a significant relationship between stereotype threat and the gender leadership gap in higher education institutions of Pakistan. Additionally, the study found that work from home had a negative effect on reducing the gender leadership gap. Furthermore, the study found that leadership aspiration played a mediating role between stereotype threat, work from home, and the gender leadership gap.

The hypothesis was developed after obtaining evidence from the literature that there is a strong relationship between stereotype threat and gender leadership gap. The statistical analysis showed that there was a significant positive relationship between stereotype threat and gender leadership gap with beta value = 0.262 (positive), C.R. = 3.005 (>1.96), and the p-value = 0.000 (<0.05).

The statistical findings presented in the hypothesis highlight the complex interplay between stereotype threat, social identity, motivation, and societal gender roles and expectations in perpetuating the gender leadership gap. Recent studies (such as Reinwald, Zaia & Kunze, 2023; Swab, Javadian, Gupta & Pierce, 2022) have examined these factors in greater detail, shedding light on the underlying causes of the gender leadership gap and proposing strategies for promoting gender diversity and inclusion in leadership positions and the findings of the current study support their stance.

The inferential analysis demonstrated the presence of a significant positive relationship between work from home and gender leadership gap of faculty members with a beta value = 0.195 (positive), C.R. = 3.679 (>1.96), and the p-value < 0.000 (<0.05). The findings of this study indicate that work from home has a negative effect on reducing the gender leadership gap in higher education institutions in Pakistan. The beta value of 0.195 indicates that there is a positive relationship between the two variables, meaning that as work from home increases, the gender leadership gap of faculty members also tends to increase. The C.R. (critical ratio) of 3.679 is greater than 1.96, which is the critical value for a 95% confidence level, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. The p-value of less than 0.05 also indicates that the relationship is statistically significant, meaning that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Taken together, these findings suggest that allowing faculty members to work from home may contribute to the gender leadership gap among faculty members, with women potentially being disproportionately affected.

Dunn et al. (2022) noticed that work from home has made it harder for the female faculty members to balance their work and family responsibilities. Particularly, female faculty members who were untenured and had children faced additional challenges due to the lack of childcare during the pandemic. These challenges were on top of the pre-existing barriers such as institutional, systemic, and psychological issues that hindered female faculty members from seeking tenure. The study highlights a missed opportunity for higher education to provide better support for female faculty members who were not yet tenured.

The results in Table 2 showed that leadership aspiration partially mediated the relationship between stereotype threat and gender gap in leadership of higher education institutions in Pakistan. The standardised indirect effect was found to be significant (beta = 0.025, p-value = 0.006; lower bound = 0.005 and upper bound = 0.061) with p-value less than 0.05 and lower bound and upper bound had no zero value. This indicates that the impact of stereotype threat on gender gap in leadership can be partially explained by leadership aspiration, which suggests that female leaders who have higher leadership aspirations may be less likely to be affected by the negative impact of stereotype threat and more likely to pursue leadership positions in HEIs.

Table 2
Mediation Effect of Leadership Aspiration in between Stereotype Threat and Gender Gap in Leadership

	Beta	P-value	LB	UB	Mediation of Brand Trust
Direct Model					
ST → GGL	0.183	0.009			Partial Mediation
Mediation Model					
ST → GGL	0.153	0.014			
St. Indirect Effect	0.025	0.006	0.005	0.061	

Finally, the results revealed that both the direct and mediation models were significant, and the standardised indirect effect was also significant (beta = 0.067, p-value = 0.002; lower bound = 0.127 and upper bound = 0.022). The p-value was less than 0.05, and the lower and upper bounds had no zero values. Thus, leadership aspiration partially mediated the relationship between work from home and gender gap in leadership as given in Table 3.

Table 3
Mediation Effect of Leadership Aspiration in between Work from Home and Gender Gap in Leadership

	Beta	P-value	LB	UB	Mediation of Brand Trust
Direct Model					
WFH → GGL	0.277	0.001			Partial Mediation
Mediation Model					
WFH → GGL	0.210	0.002			
St. Indirect Effect	0.067	0.002	0.127	0.022	

Overall, the findings from the present study suggest that leadership aspiration is an important factor in the gender gap in leadership in higher education institutions in Pakistan. The study provides evidence that stereotype threat, and work from home are all significant predictors of leadership aspiration, and that leadership aspiration partially mediates the relationship between these factors and the gender gap in leadership. These findings suggest that efforts to promote leadership development and address gender bias in the academic setting may help to close the gender gap in leadership in Pakistan's higher education institutions.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that stereotype threat significantly affects the leadership aspirations of women in higher education institutions in Pakistan. The present study supports that suggests that stereotype threat has a significant impact on the aspirations and career development of women. The findings of this study also revealed that work from home has a negative effect on leadership aspirations. This is an important consideration given the increasing prevalence of remote work arrangements in the post-pandemic era. This is consistent with social role theory, which suggests that individuals' roles and expectations are shaped by the cultural and social norms of their society (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The study highlights the importance of understanding the complex interplay between individual and contextual factors in shaping leadership aspirations. Previous research has focused on either individual or contextual factors (Day & Lord, 1988; Alade, 2022), but the current study demonstrates the need for a more holistic approach that considers both and it emphasizes the importance of taking a multi-level perspective in understanding leadership aspirations.

Work from home can provide employees with better work-life balance, which can lead to decreased job satisfaction and higher levels of motivation (Bellmann & Hübler,

2021), however, in case of women the results are contrary due to increased domestic responsibilities and lack of support from family. The study highlights the potential negative impact of work from home policies on women's leadership aspirations. This is an important consideration given the increasing prevalence of remote work arrangements in the post-pandemic era. Moreover, the current study highlights the need to examine the impact of different work arrangements on women's leadership aspirations. As remote work and flexible work arrangements become more prevalent, it is crucial to understand how they can either facilitate or hinder women's career aspirations. Research has suggested that flexible work arrangements can increase job satisfaction and work-life balance (Bloom, Liang, Roberts & Ying, 2015), but they can also perpetuate gendered norms and biases (Olsen, Hildrum, Kummen & Leirdal, 2023; Hoang, Cline & Sabharwal, 2023).

Additionally, the findings of this study contribute to the development of interventions that target the reduction of the gender leadership gap. For instance, organisations can implement training programs that address stereotype threat and provide support for women in leadership positions. This study contributes to the broader discourse on diversity and inclusion in leadership. The findings suggest that the gender leadership gap persists, and more work needs to be done to address the structural barriers that hinder women's advancement in leadership positions. This calls for continued efforts to increase the representation of women in leadership and to challenge the gendered norms and biases that perpetuate the gender leadership gap.

In conclusion, the present study has made a valuable contribution to the literature on the gender gap in leadership in higher education institutions in Pakistan. The findings have theoretical implications for the role of stereotype threat, work from home, and leadership aspirations in understanding the gender gap in leadership. Practically, the study provides recommendations for higher education institutions in Pakistan to address the gender gap in leadership. Future research should aim to build on the present study by exploring the role of other factors, such as family responsibilities, cultural norms, and institutional policies, in the gender gap in leadership in higher education institutions in Pakistan.

The current study has several practical implications for organisations and policy makers. The following section discusses the practical implications of the study's findings in detail.

The study found that stereotype threat has a significant negative impact on women's leadership aspirations in a patriarchal society. Therefore, HEIs should take steps to mitigate the effects of stereotype threat on women employees. Unconscious bias training can be an effective approach to mitigate the negative effects of stereotype threat on women's leadership aspirations. Unconscious bias training can help managers and leaders become more aware of their implicit biases and help them create a more inclusive workplace culture (Post & Sen, 2020).

HEIs should also strive to create a supportive and inclusive workplace culture. This can be achieved by implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives and creating a sense of belonging and identification among female faculty members. A positive organisational culture can also be created by providing mentorship and leadership development programs that focus on the development of women employees. Such programs can help women employees gain the necessary skills and knowledge to advance in their careers (Arshad, Dost & Qasim, 2022).

The study found that work from home policies have the potential to increase employee engagement. However, in a patriarchal society like Pakistan, work from home policies have the potential to decrease women's leadership aspirations. This is because women struggle to maintain work-life balance due to increased domestic responsibilities

and expectations of the family. Therefore, HEIs should consider implementing work from home policies that are inclusive and address the unique needs of female faculty members. Such policies should provide flexibility and support for female faculty members to balance their work and domestic responsibilities (Fazlurrahman, Wijayati, Hadi, Rahman, Nugrohoseno & Wahyudi Rahman, 2020).

One practical implication of the study is the implementation of gender quotas in leadership positions. Gender quotas are policies that require a certain percentage of female faculty members to be represented in leadership positions. Implementing gender quotas can promote gender diversity in the workplace, increase women's representation in leadership positions, and reduce gender disparities in leadership opportunities. Studies have shown that gender quotas have been successful in increasing the representation of women in leadership positions in several countries, including Norway, Spain, and France (World Economic Forum, 2022). However, gender quotas are not without controversy, and some argue that they may lead to tokenism and undermine meritocracy. Nonetheless, the implementation of gender quotas remains a viable strategy for promoting gender diversity in leadership positions.

Another practical implication of the study is providing flexible work arrangements to promote work-life balance. Flexible work arrangements refer to alternative work arrangements that allow employees to have more control over their work schedules. Examples of flexible work arrangements include telecommuting, job sharing, and flexible work hours. Providing flexible work arrangements can benefit female faculty members who often face competing demands of work and family. Flexible work arrangements can also increase employee satisfaction and productivity (Villamor, Hill, Kossek & Foley, 2023). However, the implementation of flexible work arrangements should be done in a way that does not disadvantage women employees and reinforce gender stereotypes.

HEIs should also encourage female faculty members' participation in leadership development programmes. Leadership development programmes are training programs that provide employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to advance in their careers. Encouraging women's participation in leadership development programmes can help them gain the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in leadership positions. However, organisations should ensure that leadership development programmes are inclusive and address the unique needs of women employees.

Another practical implication of the study is offering parental leave and other benefits for working mothers. Parental leave refers to the leave provided to employees who are taking care of a new-born child or a child who is newly adopted. Offering parental leave can benefit female faculty members who are working mothers and help them balance their work and family responsibilities. Other benefits for working mothers can include on-site childcare, lactation rooms, and flexible work hours. However, offering parental leave and other benefits for working mothers should be done in a way that does not reinforce gender stereotypes or disadvantage female faculty members who are not mothers.

HEIs should also provide equal opportunities for women to access education and training programs. Access to education and training programs can increase female faculty members' skills and knowledge and improve their career opportunities. However, women often face barriers to accessing education and training programs, including financial barriers, cultural barriers, and gender stereotypes. Therefore, HEIs should ensure that education and training programs are accessible to women employees and address the unique needs of female faculty members.

Another practical implication of the study is addressing gender stereotypes and biases in recruitment and selection processes. Gender stereotypes and biases can lead to the underrepresentation of female faculty members in leadership positions. Addressing gender

stereotypes and biases in recruitment and selection processes can increase the representation of women in leadership positions. One way to address gender stereotypes and biases is to implement blind recruitment practices. Blind recruitment practices refer to removing personal identifying information, such as name, gender, and age, from job applications to reduce the potential for bias in the recruitment process (Forbes, 2018). Additionally, HEIs should provide unconscious bias training for recruiters and hiring managers to raise awareness of unconscious biases and their impact on recruitment and selection decisions.

Finally, HEIs should increase awareness and understanding of intersectional discrimination. Intersectional discrimination refers to the discrimination that occurs when individuals experience multiple forms of discrimination, such as discrimination based on gender and race. Intersectional discrimination can have a compounding effect on the experiences of individuals and lead to even greater disparities in leadership opportunities. Therefore, HEIs should ensure that their policies and practices are inclusive and address the unique needs of individuals who experience intersectional discrimination. This can include providing targeted support and resources for individuals who experience intersectional discrimination, such as women of colour, and ensuring that diversity and inclusion initiatives consider intersectional experiences.

In conclusion, the practical implications of the current study highlight the need for HEIs and policy makers to take steps to mitigate stereotype threat, promote gender diversity in leadership positions, and support female faculty members' leadership aspirations. Creating a supportive and inclusive workplace culture, providing mentorship and leadership development programs, and implementing work from home policies that address the unique needs of female faculty members can positively impact women's leadership aspirations. These practical implications can be implemented in various HEIs and other industries to create a more equitable and inclusive work environment which include implementing gender quotas in leadership positions, providing flexible work arrangements to promote work-life balance, encouraging women's participation in leadership development programs, offering parental leave and other benefits for working mothers, providing equal opportunities for women to access education and training programs, addressing gender stereotypes and biases in recruitment and selection processes, and increasing awareness and understanding of intersectional discrimination. By implementing these practical implications, organisations can promote gender diversity and support women's leadership aspirations, ultimately leading to more inclusive and equitable workplaces.

Recommendations

The current study is not without its limitations. Firstly, the sample consisted of women from higher education institutions in Pakistan, and therefore, the results may not be generalisable to women from other sectors or countries. Secondly, the study was based on self-reported data, which is subject to social desirability bias. This means that participants may have provided answers that were perceived to be socially desirable, rather than their true experiences. Thirdly, the study used a cross-sectional design, and therefore, it is not possible to establish causality between the variables studied. Longitudinal studies would be needed to establish causal relationships. Fourthly, the study did not control for other individual and contextual factors that may impact leadership aspirations, such as job satisfaction, access to mentorship and career development opportunities, and cultural norms and values.

Future research should aim to address the limitations of this study and explore the topic of gender leadership gap further. Some recommendations are provided below:

1. Conducting further studies with a larger sample size and a wider range of organisations and industries. This would provide a more robust representation of the relationships between stereotype threat, work from home, leadership aspiration and the gender leadership gap.
2. Examining the role of cultural values and beliefs in shaping leadership aspirations, as well as the impact of national policies and cultural differences on the gender leadership gap.
3. Investigating the role of work-family conflict in shaping the leadership aspirations of women, particularly in relation to work from home.
4. Exploring the impact of organisational support, mentoring and coaching, as well as leadership development programs, in reducing the gender leadership gap.
5. Conducting further research on the intersectionality of gender, race and ethnicity and how it influences the gender leadership gap.
6. Examining the impact of unconscious bias and microaggressions in the workplace on women's leadership aspirations and career progress.
7. Exploring the mechanisms underlying this relationship and identify strategies for mitigating its negative effects on women's career advancement.
8. Examining how specific aspects of work from home, such as virtual communication, availability of resources, and workload, impact women's leadership aspirations.

References

Adams-Prassl, A., Boneva, T., Golin, M., & Rauh, C. (2020). Inequality in the impact of the coronavirus shock: Evidence from real time surveys. *Journal of Public Economics*, *189*, 104245.

Adom, K., & Anambane, G. (2020). Understanding the role of culture and gender stereotypes in women entrepreneurship through the lens of the stereotype threat theory. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, *12*(1), 100-124.

Aitken, K., & Von Treuer, K. (2021). Leadership behaviours that foster organisational identification during change. *Journal of organizational change management*, *34*(2), 311-326.

Alade, K. T. (2022). *Developing a leadership framework for improving construction business organisation performance in South Africa*. Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, Department of Construction Economics and Management, University of Cape Town.

Ali, R., & Rasheed, A. (2021). Women leaders in Pakistani academia: Challenges and opportunities. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, *27*(2), 208-231.

Arshad, M., Dost, M., & Qasim, N. (2022). Enhancing employee work engagement through organizational identification, gender and leader social dominance orientation. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, (ahead-of-print).

Batool, S. B., Cheema, B. A., & Siddiqui, S. (2020). Online teaching during Covid 19: Prevalence of occupational stress among University Faculty in Pakistan. *Journal of Research*, *14*(2), 194–210.

Bear, J. B., Cushenbery, L., London, M., & Sherman, G. D. (2017). Performance feedback, power retention, and the gender gap in leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *28*(6), 721–740.

Bloom, N., Liang, J., Roberts, J., & Ying, Z. J. (2015). Does working from home work? Evidence from a Chinese experiment. *The Quarterly journal of economics*, *130*(1), 165-218.

Caligiuri, P. M., & De Cieri, H. (2021). Predictors of employees' preference for working from home post-pandemic. *Business and Economic Research*, *11*(2), 1-9.

Carli, L. L., & Eagly, A. H. (2016). Women face a labyrinth: An examination of metaphors for women leaders. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, *31*(8), 514-527.

Day, D. V., & Lord, R. G. (1988). Executive leadership and organizational performance: Suggestions for a new theory and methodology. *Journal of management*, *14*(3), 453-464.

Deemer, E. D., Lin, C., Graham, R., & Soto, C. (2016). Development and validation of a measure of threatening gender stereotypes in science: A factor mixture analysis. *Journal of Career Assessment*, *24*(1), 145–161.

Desmond, N. M. (2019). *Gender Gaps in Organizational Leadership in MTN and Orange Head Offices in Douala: Issues and Prospects*. Masters Dissertation, Department of Development Studies, Pan African Institute for Development-West Africa.

Dunn, M., Gregor, M., Robinson, S., Ferrer, A., Campbell-Halfaker, D., & Martin-Fernandez, J. (2022). Academia during the time of COVID-19: Examining the voices of untenured female professors in STEM. *Journal of career assessment*, *30*(3), 573-589.

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological review*, *109*(3), 573.

Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2012). Social role theory. In P. van Lange, A. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories in social psychology* (pp. 458–476). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Elliott, C., & Stead, V. (2018). Constructing women's leadership representation in the UK press during a time of financial crisis: Gender capitals and dialectical tensions. *Organization Studies*, *39*(1), 19–45.

Epitropaki, O., Kark, R., Mainemelis, C., & Lord, R. G. (2017). Leadership and followership identity processes: A multilevel review. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *28*(1), 104–129.

Fazlurrahman, H., Wijayati, D. T., Hadi, H. K., Rahman, Z., Nugrohoseno, D., & Wahyudi Rahman, M. F. (2020). Analysis of work engagement measurement at work from home due to the effect of Covid-19 pandemic. *Technium Soc. Sci. J., 14,* 363.

Feng, Z., & Savani, K. (2020). Covid-19 created a gender gap in perceived work productivity and job satisfaction: implications for dual-career parents working from home. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, *35*(7/8), 719-736.

Fleming, G. M. (2018). *Missouri Superintendents' Perceptions of the Variables Impacting the Gender Leadership Gap in Public Education*.

Forbes. (2018). *The Benefits And Shortcomings Of Blind Hiring In The Recruitment Process*. Forbes Human Resources Council.

Fritz, C., & Van Knippenberg, D. (2017). Gender and leadership aspiration: the impact of organizational identification. *Leadership & organization development journal*, *38*(8), 1018-1037.

Goethals, G. R., & Hoyt, C. L. (2016). *Women and leadership: History, theories, and case studies*. Berkshire Publishing Group.

Gutek, B. A., Searle, S., & Klepa, L. (1991). Rational versus gender role explanations for work-family conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *76*(4), 560.

Heery, E., & Noon, M. (2008). A Dictionary of Human Resource Management. : Oxford University Press.

Higgins, E. T., & Pinelli, F. (2020). Regulatory focus and fit effects in organizations. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *7*, 25–48.

Hoang, T. T., Cline, R. R., & Sabharwal, M. (2023). Women Falling Through the Cracks: Intersectionality During Crisis and Implications for Human Resource Management. In *Intersectionality and Crisis Management* (pp. 59-80). Routledge.

Hoyt, C. L., & Murphy, S. E. (2016). Managing to clear the air: Stereotype threat, women, and leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(3), 387–399.

Hoyt, C. L., & Simon, S. (2017). Social psychological approaches to women and leadership theory. In *Handbook of research on gender and leadership*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

International Labour Organization. (2021). *Labour Statistics on Women*. ILOSTAT. Retrieved from https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/women/ on August 14, 2022.

Irawanto, D. W., Novianti, K. R., & Roz, K. (2021). Work from home: Measuring satisfaction between work–life balance and work stress during the covid-19 pandemic in indonesia. *Economies*, *9*(3), 96.

Jones, M. S., & Solomon, J. (2019). Challenges and supports for women conservation leaders. *Conservation Science and Practice*, *1*(6), e36.

Kark, R., Van Dijk, D., & Vashdi, D. R. (2018). Motivated or demotivated to be creative: The role of self-regulatory focus in transformational and transactional leadership processes. *Applied Psychology*, *67*(1), 186–224.

Krause, S. F. (2017). *Leadership: Underrepresentation of women in higher education*. Northcentral University.

Matot, I., De Hert, S., Cohen, B., & Koch, T. (2020). Women anaesthesiologists' attitudes and reported barriers to career advancement in anaesthesia: a survey of the European Society of Anaesthesiology. *British Journal of Anaesthesia*, *124*(3), e171–e177.

Mustafa, F., Khursheed, A., Fatima, M., & Rao, M. (2021). Exploring the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, *13*(2), 187-203.

Okolo, O. O. (2021). *Understanding Women's Experiences in Achieving Senior Executive Position in Nigeria's Oil Industry: A Narrative Study*. University of Phoenix.

Olsen, K. M., Hildrum, J., Kummen, K., & Leirdal, C. (2023). How do young employees perceive stress and job engagement while working from home? Evidence from a telecom operator during COVID-19. *Employee Relations*, *Vol. ahead-of-print* No. ahead-of-print.

Poltera, J. (2019). *Exploring examples of women's leadership in African contexts*. Taylor & Francis.

Post, A. S., & Sen, P. (2020). Why can't a woman be more like a man? Female leaders in crisis bargaining. *International Interactions*, *46*(1), 1-27.

Pullen, A., & Vachhani, S. J. (2018). Examining the politics of gendered difference in feminine leadership: The absence of 'female masculinity.' In *Inclusive leadership* (pp. 125–149). Springer.

Sheikh, F. H., Hamid, A. B. A., & Naseem, S. (2022). Interplay among Abusive Supervision, Employee Engagement and Turnover Intentions: Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, *6*(2), 525-537.

Shroff, S. (2019). Pious capital: fashionable femininity and the predicament of financial freedom. *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, *4*(4–5), 360–376.

Sindell, T., & Shamberger, S. (2016). Beyond gender: Changing the leadership conversation. *People & Strategy*, *39*(3), 32–36.

Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1998). How stereotypes influence the standardized test performance of talented African American students. In *The Black-White test score gap* (pp. 401–427). Brookings Institution.

Sultana, A. (2019). *Stereotype Threat and Job Performance Role of Hedonic Wellbeing Coping Strategy and Workplace Ostracism among Teachers*. Doctoral Dissertation, Lovely Faculty of Business and Arts, Lovely Professional University.

Swartz, E., & Amatucci, F. (2018). Framing second generation gender bias: implications for women's entrepreneurship. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, *23*(02), 1850009.

Tan, B. U. (2020). The Effects of Values and Gender Role Perceptions on Attitudes Towards Women Managers. In *Macro and Micro-Level Issues Surrounding Women in the Workforce: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 37–57). IGI Global.

Taylor, D. L. (2017). *Understanding the public education gender gap amid secondary and central office administrators*. Concordia University.

Tharenou, P., & Terry, D. J. (1998). Reliability and validity of scores on scales to measure managerlal aspirations. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *58*(3), 475–492.

Van Dijk, D., Kark, R., Matta, F., & Johnson, R. E. (2021). Collective aspirations: collective regulatory focus as a mediator between transformational and transactional leadership and team creativity. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *36*, 633-658.

Vaughn, L. A., Garvey, C. A., & Chalachan, R. D. (2020). Need Support and Regulatory Focus in Responding to COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 3229.

Villamor, I., Hill, N. S., Kossek, E. E., & Foley, K. O. (2023). Virtuality at Work: A Doubled-Edged Sword for Women's Career Equality?. *Academy of Management Annals*, *17*(1), 113-140.

von Hippel, C., Kalokerinos, E. K., & Zacher, H. (2017). Stereotype threat and perceptions of family-friendly policies among female employees. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *7*, 2043.

World Economic Forum. (2021). *The Global Gender Gap Report*. World Economic Forum. Retrieved on December 20, 2022

World Economic Forum. (2022). *Global gender gap report*. World Economic Forum. Retrieved on December 20, 2022 from https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022.