

Redefining Leadership And Gender: The Concepts Of The “Female Leader” And The “Modern Woman” In Contemporary Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article explores the growing role of women in global and Uzbek society, emphasizing their increasing participation in leadership positions. The study analyzes historical and modern leadership theories, including masculine and feminine models, charismatic and authoritarian leadership, and the emerging concept of the “super-leader.” Special attention is given to the specific features of female leadership, such as empathy, cooperation, and emotional intelligence, which distinguish women leaders in the modern context. The findings reveal that in Uzbekistan, women leaders not only embody the qualities of traditional leadership but also integrate distinctive feminine skills, contributing significantly to both organizational efficiency and societal development. The study argues that recognizing and strengthening women’s leadership capacities is essential for advancing gender equality and accelerating socio-economic progress.

Keywords: Female leader, modern woman, leadership models, charismatic leadership, super-leader, gender equality, Uzbekistan.

Introduction: In recent decades, the activity of women in various spheres of society has significantly increased worldwide, contributing to socio-economic development. In the modern world, the departure from traditional models of governance, technological advancement, and easier access to information have created a unique evolution in leadership approaches. This evolution has enabled women to assume leadership positions in both public and private sectors. For example, despite women making up only 4.6% of CEOs among companies listed in the S&P 500, these companies have demonstrated notable success (Catalyst, 2020).

The issue of women’s leadership potential has long attracted scholarly attention. Early leadership theories were predominantly based on masculine qualities, emphasizing hierarchy, authority, and competitiveness (Loden, 1985). However, with changing social structures and gender equality reforms, new perspectives emerged that recognized the distinct strengths of female leadership, including empathy, collaboration, and emotional sensitivity.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative methodology, including literature review and comparative analysis. Primary sources include classic leadership theories, contemporary Western concepts of leadership such as “super-leadership,” and recent studies on gender and leadership in Central Asia. A historical-comparative approach was applied to trace the evolution from masculine leadership models to modern gender-sensitive perspectives.

RESULTS

The findings indicate that leadership theories historically prioritized masculine models, such as autocratic, transactional, and charismatic leadership. Charismatic leadership, introduced by Max Weber, emphasized the leader’s ability to influence through personal charm and rhetoric, as exemplified by figures like Napoleon Bonaparte and Alexander the Great (Weber, 1947). Authoritarian leadership, on the other hand, stressed centralized control, often associated with military governance. Transactional leadership

emerged in market economies, focusing on systems of reward and punishment (Bass, 1990).

In contrast, modern approaches emphasize participatory and empowering styles. Manz and Sims (1991) introduced the concept of the “super-leader,” defined as a leader who fosters independence and initiative among team members. Their step-by-step model stresses self-leadership, persuasion, empowerment, encouragement, and building autonomous teams.

Female leaders, in particular, demonstrate unique strengths, including empathy, cooperation, and the ability to balance professional and personal life. These qualities not only enhance team cohesion but also contribute to sustainable organizational success.

Thus, leadership models in Uzbekistan’s history have developed through the combination of both masculine and feminine traits. Men primarily focused on military and political strategic leadership, while women played a significant role in cultural and social modernization. From the examples mentioned above, it becomes evident that in Uzbekistan’s history, women often influenced governance through an Eastern style of prudence and subtlety, as exemplified by Bibikhonim. In particular, from ancient times, women have frequently been portrayed as individuals with balance and patience in professional and political spheres. They assumed great responsibility for driving social change and achieving reforms. The history of women in Uzbekistan has largely been shaped within such a social context. However, during the later stages of the medieval period, stricter restrictions on women began to intensify. Around 100–150 years ago, the prevailing belief was that women could not serve as full-fledged leaders.

In contrast, over the past two decades, societal consciousness has shifted in favor of gender equality, and the number of women leaders has grown significantly. Even in large enterprises and organizations, perceptions have changed regarding the traditional system of promotion to leadership positions and the qualities expected of individuals in top-level roles.

When discussing the leadership potential and psychological characteristics of men and women, many experts across different fields argue that women have fewer opportunities than men to manifest themselves as leaders. However, the experimental and practical research conducted by psychologist Horner demonstrated that women, in fact, possess a higher leadership potential compared to men.

Further, in 2011, Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman (leaders of the Zenger/Folkman company) conducted a

study that assessed male and female leaders based on competencies influencing business outcomes and overall leadership effectiveness. This research identified the qualities most critical for women leaders and highlighted their competitive advantages.

The results confirmed Horner’s findings: women possess genuinely impactful leadership capabilities. Beyond their traditionally acknowledged strengths—such as building relationships, motivating others, self-development, and initiative—women also outperformed men in competencies typically considered male domains, such as results orientation and proactive decision-making. According to the study, men significantly surpassed women only in one area: the ability to develop strategic thinking. This is explained by men’s natural inclination toward abstract and conceptual thought. Moreover, since men represent a larger proportion among top leaders, their overall indicators in this competency appeared higher in comparison.

The differences in competencies between men and women shape their respective leadership styles. Male and female management approaches differ substantially: in the management process, men tend to create a “team,” while women foster a sense of “family.” Men are managers by nature, whereas women are leaders. While men are more result-oriented, women place greater emphasis on the process itself. They view the workplace as an extension of the family and employ a detailed, thorough approach when addressing challenges.

DISCUSSION

The study highlights that while early leadership theories were gender-neutral in theory, in practice they reflected masculine dominance. As a result, women leaders initially adopted masculine styles, often leading to the “iron lady” archetype. However, with the development of gender-sensitive leadership models, female leaders increasingly draw upon their natural strengths, such as emotional intelligence and collaboration, which are critical in contemporary governance and business.

In Uzbekistan, female leadership reflects a hybrid model: women combine traditional leadership traits with uniquely feminine qualities, thereby reinforcing both efficiency and inclusiveness. This balance plays a crucial role in national reforms and modernization processes.

CONCLUSION

Effective leadership is one of the highest forms of social influence, requiring the ability to affect both oneself and others. While male leaders traditionally relied on

hierarchy and authority, female leaders are increasingly recognized for their empathy, cooperation, and innovative approaches. In Uzbekistan, the concepts of the female leader and the modern woman are central to understanding gender transformations and the role of women in socio-economic progress. Strengthening women's leadership potential is not only a matter of gender equality but also a crucial factor in sustainable national development.

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