

Leadership Models for Equality on SDG 5: Gender-Inclusive Management Practices

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Abstract— Gender equality is the focus of SDG 5 (Sustainable Development Goal 5) which focuses on the social and economic development. Gender-inclusive management practices produced through leadership models provide the opportunity of establishing organizational environments where diversity of perspectives will be appreciated, decision making will be enhanced, and sustainability in the long term will be realized. The present paper will explore the available leadership models, address the gender-inclusive methods and suggest a combination of a leadership framework that could be applied in institutions aiming to promote SDG 5. The method of mixed qualitative-analytical approach is used, which involves carrying out a comparative review of transformational leadership models, inclusive leadership models, and distributed leadership models as well as gender-equity implementation practices. The results indicate that companies embracing gender-inclusive leadership have better employee engagement, equal promotion, and less bias at the workplace. Nevertheless, the challenges that are practical are cultural resistance to change and lack of consistency in policy implementation and limited resources in the low-income institutions. Future perspectives underline the necessity to implement data-based gender surveillance measures, cross-cultural leadership education and AI-based tools that can help find out structural disparities. It finds that gender-inclusive leadership, as a systematically executed approach to leadership, would have a crucial positive impact on the SDG 5 results and, overall, create sustainable and fair workplaces.

Keywords— SDG 5, gender equality, inclusive leadership, transformational leadership, equity management, women empowerment, workplace diversity, gender mainstreaming.

I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations has set sustainable development goal 5 (SDG 5) in 2015 that makes gender equality the primary focus of the global social and economic change. Gender-equality policies have been implemented in many countries and organizations but there are still gender gaps in leadership, decision-making, and organizational culture that limit the opportunities of women. The contemporary work environments are becoming aware of the fact that gender equality is no longer a moral or humanitarian notion, but a strategic necessity that promotes productivity, creativity and sustainability in the long run. The leadership is a determining factor in the internalization and application of the norms of equality in the institutions. Leaders in the workplace usually determine whether a workplace is inclusive or discriminative with the behaviors, values and decisions they make. In this way, it is necessary to create leadership models that respond to SDG 5 to create a fair and strong organization [7].

Women still experience the systemic barriers of underrepresentation in high-ranking roles and other parts of the world, lack of unconscious discrimination in recruitment or promotion, disproportional access to training, and role stereotyping by gender. These issues are exacerbated by the culture that fixates on what

constitutes leadership through traditionally masculine concepts of assertiveness, dominance, taking risks and therefore disregarding collaborative, empathetic, and inclusive leadership styles that women engage in. Consequently, organizations cannot make the most of their manpower, and the gender-inclusive approaches are constrained to the interventions of a cosmetic character. This study will fill this gap by reviewing leadership models which are specifically created to promote equality, empower women, eliminate bias and achieve the objectives of SDG 5.

Several leadership models like transformational, inclusive, and servant leadership have been popular because of their ability to enhance gender equity. Transformational leadership promotes innovation, motivation, and personal growth hence helping the women to survive in the male dominated world. Inclusive leadership is based on the principles of recognition, cooperation and participation in the decision-making process, which is beneficial in raising the voices and power of marginalized groups. In particular, servant leadership that focuses on the development of followers and their well-being is especially helpful in the development of talent and in helping women in their career advancement. As promising as these models can be, they are not always applied in an organization in a consistent manner with the organization not fully understanding what they entail and how to use them as the ultimate aim of achieving gender equality. This research paper thus assesses the extent to which these models can be combined, modified, and institutionalized to encourage SDG 5 management practices.

The other important reason why the study should be conducted is the growing knowledge that the issue of gender diversity in leadership has a direct relationship with organizational performance. It has been shown that those companies that have more gender diversity in boards and at the top of their management teams will have increased chances of recording better financial performance, enhanced governance, enhanced innovation potential, and increased trust by the population [9]. Regardless of these indicators, women are still underrepresented in the decision-making process in all sectors including business, government, education, health care sector, technology, and civil society. This unrelenting gap casts some pressing questions concerning whether the current leadership practices are sufficient to address the needs of SDG 5. Theoretical development and practical instruments that can assist policy makers, institutions, and leaders to come up with inclusive structures of leadership are in dire need.

The hypotheses of the study are based on the fact that, no standalone policies can help in attaining gender equality but a far-reaching change in organizational culture. The former aims at investigating the role of current leadership paradigms in fostering gender-inclusive settings and whether the paradigms are adequate to achieve SDG 5. The second goal will be to come up with an integrated leadership approach that entails the use of the strengths of transformational, inclusive, and servant leadership. This multi-faceted strategy will help to break the structural barriers, overcome unconscious bias, and reinforce the equality-oriented policies. The third aim is to analyze the practice of organizations in real life to clarify the impact of leadership strategies on their way to gender representation, decision-making, and general experience of the employees. The fourth goal is to determine challenges, barriers, and limitations that institutions face in their efforts to have gender-inclusive leadership. Lastly, the research would offer practical suggestions to leaders, Hr departments and policy formulators.

The motivation of this research is the perception that gender equality is sustainable only with the transformation of leadership. The best thing is that policies cannot work unless inclusive behavior is demonstrated by the organizational leaders, and the concept of transparency and fairness is maintained in daily decision-making processes. At most of the workplaces, the proportion of women in leadership positions is low not because they are not capable of leading but rather because of systemic exclusion, biased assessment standards, unequal networks and informal work regulations which are in favour of men. The only way out of these problems is to have leaders who are gender sensitive and have the abilities to work around them. The leadership model suggested highlights such aspects as empathy, shared responsibility, role modelling, inclusive communication, gender sensitive decision-making, and lifelong learning [8].

On the international level, SDG 5 aims at eradicating discrimination of women and girls of all kinds and levels, granting them equal influence in leadership, and establishing empowering conditions. Nonetheless, the level of achievement on these targets is still disproportionate. Most organizations do not have their data disaggregated by gender and thus they find it challenging to assess the outcome of their interventions. Moreover, automation, the digital transformation, and the changing workplace arrangement are global issues that create new gender disparities. Women tend to be less prepared to digital leadership jobs and new spheres of technology, which increases the current disparities. This paper addresses these issues facing the world by outlining leadership models that are flexible, progressive and can initiate sustainable cultural transformation in the long term.

The introduction provides the necessity to create a leadership model that would be clearly aligned with SDG 5. Gender-inclusive leadership is not merely a management tool but a strategic course to organizational resiliency, social justice, innovativeness, and sustainable development. Through a discussion of theoretical premises, practices, and issues around the globe, the work preconditions the proposal of a coherent and practical gender-inclusive leadership concept.

Novelty and Contribution

This particular study represents a novelty of its kind as it combines the analysis of the leadership models in consideration of the SDG 5 and the management practices that are inclusive of gender. Although a number of studies have been done to evaluate the leadership theories separately, limited number of studies have been done to understand how various leadership frameworks can be assembled in order to produce measureable equality results. The study proposes a combined leadership model that concurs transformational, inclusive, and servant leadership theories with equality requirements of organizations. This framework is special in that it does not only conceptualize gender-inclusive leadership but also pinpoints action mechanisms that leaders can take to manipulate representation, empowerment and policy realization.

Among the significant contributions of this work, there is the creation of a comparison assessment of the models of leadership according to their usefulness in the promotion of gender equality. The study does not consider leadership theories individually but emphasizes on their complementarities and showcases how they may be effectively combined in a strategic manner to help in solving some gender issues. Transformational leadership is associated with innovation and empowerment, inclusive leadership with hearing different voices, and servant leadership with development and well-being of the followers. All these strengths are combined to provide a holistic model that can be employed to introduce structural and cultural change.

The other contribution is the emphasis on practice. The study is not a simple incorporation of the theoretical discourses, as it analyzes real organizational contexts, policy programs, organizational practices, and lived experiences of female leaders in the professions. In the research, the diagnosis of the causes of the majority of gender-equality programs developing failure is clear as the researchers find out the barriers in unconscious bias, resistance to change, and non-existent gender-disaggregated data. This fills one of the research gaps of relating the leadership behavior with the realities of the SDG 5 implementation.

The other contribution that the study has made is on the relationship existing between inclusion of gender in leadership and organization performance. It emphasizes the benefits of gender-balanced leadership teams in the sphere of decision-making, creativity, crisis management, and long-term sustainability, which is still a poorly explored area in research on equality. Moreover, the suggested framework brings in the idea of gender mainstreaming based on leadership, leaders are being viewed as active facilitators of equity as opposed to policy executors.

Lastly, the study adds insights and practical suggestions and is also future optimistic. It implies the application of AI-enhanced equality monitoring, cross-cultural leadership, and training, as well as an equal gender leadership measure that can be implemented across industries. The recommendations are prospective and respond to the requirement of scalable, technology-intensive, and dynamic solutions in order to meet the SDG 5 milestones.

II. RELATED WORKS

Gender equality and leadership studies have grown greatly following the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals worldwide and specifically SDG 5 that aims at removing gender discrimination and equalizing the presence of females in leadership processes. In the literature that exists, it has been stressed that leadership style is among the most significant factors that determine whether an organization facilitates or inhibits gender-inclusive practices. Research has always revealed that leadership practices determine the organizational culture, employee experience, and the performance of equality-focused policies. A lot of the already available literature narrows down to the notion that inclusive and empowering leadership styles are beneficial to gender equity, and sometimes authoritarian or transactional styles of leadership can only serve to reinforce preexisting differences [2].

A key body of literature demonstrates the relevance of transformational leadership in gender equality programs [15]. Transformational leaders are able to inspire, motivate as well as support employees and create an environment where women can build on the potential of becoming leaders without overly pushing

them away. Previous studies suggest that organizations with transformational leaders are more likely to be open, innovative, and fair which are the traits that directly facilitate SDG 5. These leaders are also all highly competent in identifying and intervening with systemic biases in promotion, recruitment and performance-evaluation processes. These provisions are critical in making sure that gender equality in the workplaces where women have remained underrepresented in high positions is realized at high rates.

In 2025 Bustamante-Mora et.al., [1] introduced the other significant area of study is the inclusion leadership; it possesses certain peculiarities including fairness, belongingness and recognition of individual specialization. Inclusive leaders have been argued to play a very crucial role in increasing gender views in decision making processes. Enough literature has been done on this leadership strategy due to its participatory communication and shared responsibility. It has also been found that the use of this type of style offers organizations the higher degree of employee engagement, reduced degree of bias and team cohesion. Inclusive leadership studies also frequently put the emphasis on the responsibility to encourage the variety of voices and especially those of historically marginalized communities. This is in line with the directives of SDG 5 which demand equal representation and opportunities of women in leadership roles at all the levels of decision making.

Another common theme that is written on the concept of servant leadership in connection with gender equality is its gender equality. This model is more focused on the welfare, development and empowerment of the employees, hence is very much compatible with the goals of a gender inclusive management. It has been found that servant leaders can help foster positive working conditions in which women feel appreciated and have an opportunity to grow their careers [5]. Hierarchical and gender-biased cultures are countered by such qualities of servant leadership studies as empathy, humility, and ethical decision-making. According to many scholars, these values are necessary to establish gender-responsive institutions; as well as equitable access to resources, training, and opportunities.

In addition to theories in leadership, a number of studies discuss structural and cultural obstacles to gender equality in organizations. Unconscious bias, gender stereotyping, and adherence to strict traditional norms are the issues that are constantly raised in literature. These obstacles are usually evident in the recruitment, performance appraisal, and career advancement opportunities. Some studies often indicate that companies can have an equal opportunity policy in regards to gender equality but they fail to execute it well due to the fact that the culture still stays the same [14]. As an example, gender stereotypes about the qualities of a leader, e.g. assertiveness is a trait of a man and emotional intelligence is a trait of a woman, continue to play a role in managerial decision making even in the organizations, where equality is officially embraced. This alienation renders leadership change as a serious need to achieve SDG 5 goals.

In 2025 M. Acosta et al., [11] suggested the other research area is gender mainstreaming, which is seen as the systematic process of incorporating gender factors in all the levels of organizational activities. Gender mainstreaming is also more likely to succeed where there is high commitment by leadership. As leaders ensure that they advocate gender equality, the policies may be enhanced, accountability may be enhanced and considerations regarding gender may be factored in planning, budgeting and evaluation processes. It has also been noted in research that gender mainstreaming needs constant monitoring and gender disaggregated data which many institutions do not easily provide resulting in inconsistent or partial realisation.

Studies in the field of leadership training, capacity-building show that educational interventions can have a major impact on gender-inclusive management. Many research papers stress that leadership programs should be provided that transfer skills as communication, empathy, recognition of bias, and gender-sensitive decisions [3]. It has been demonstrated that leaders who go through systematic training become better in the provision of equality initiatives leading to the formation of more inclusive environments. Nevertheless, it is also mentioned in the literature that a lot of organizations do not invest in training properly and restrict the future effectiveness.

In 2025 Oloko et al., [6] proposed the literature review shows that leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring gender equality and is an essential part of the SDG 5 implementation. Empowerment-based leadership model, inclusiveness, ethical responsibility, and learning are the generic leadership models, studies reveal their importance. Studies also indicate that there are systemic and cultural obstacles that undermine gender-equity initiatives, which will require transforming the leadership instead of taking a solitary policy response. Although much is known about the individual leadership theories, there is still a huge gap on the matter of incorporating these theories into a comprehensive framework that is specifically set to facilitate SDG 5. It is based on this gap that the current research has been formulated to come up with a comprehensive gender

inclusive model of leadership that can initiate systemic, sustainable and measurable change towards gender equality.

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology for developing a gender-inclusive leadership model aligned with SDG 5 is structured through a multi-stage analytical and evaluative framework. This part highlights successive stages that are backed by mathematical formulations in order to achieve systematic, quantifiable as well as replicable results. The figure 1 represents the step-by-step steps in the process of quantification, evaluation, and integration of the leadership practices to SDG 5 alignment. .[18]

Leadership Models for Equality on SDG 5: Gender-Inclusive Management Practices can be operationalized through a structured, multi-stage analytical and evaluative framework that ensures systematic, quantifiable, and replicable outcomes. The proposed methodology emphasizes successive phases supported by mathematical formulations to enhance rigor in assessing gender-inclusive leadership effectiveness. As illustrated in Figure 1, the process outlines step-by-step procedures for quantification, evaluation, and integration of leadership practices to ensure alignment with SDG 5 objectives. [16], [17]

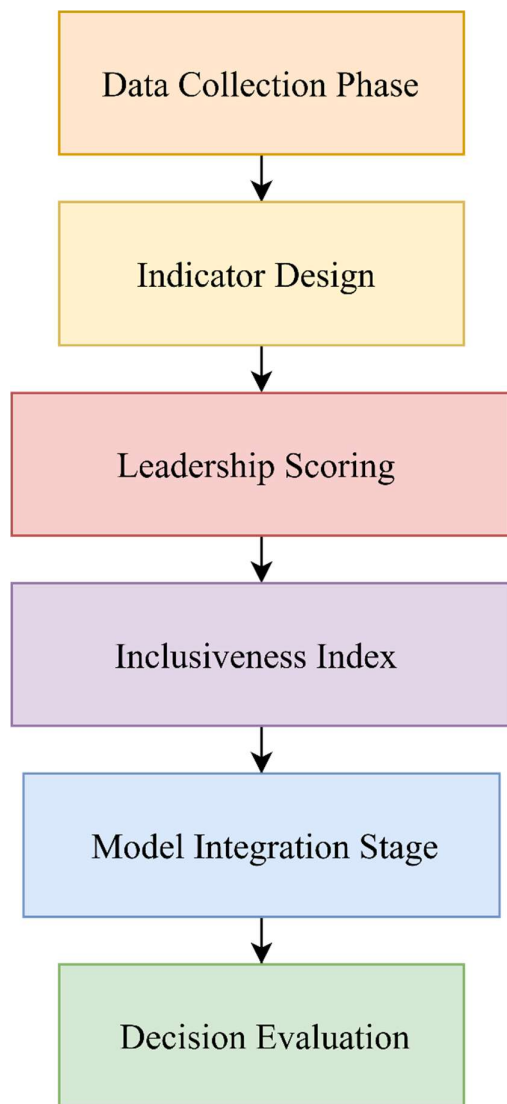


FIG. 1: FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER-INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP EVALUATION

Data Collection Phase

The initial step is linked with the collection of organizational information that would be associated with leadership practices, gender-representation trends, and decision-making arrangements [4].

To quantify female representation, the participation ratio is computed using:

$$E_1 = \frac{F}{T} \quad (1)$$

where F = number of female employees and T = total workforce.

Small variations in workforce composition are captured with a normalized deviation function:

$$E_2 = \frac{|F-M|}{T} \quad (2)$$

This enables early detection of gender imbalance before analysis begins.

Indicator Design

Each leadership attribute is converted into quantifiable indicators [13]. The weight allocation for each indicator is determined using a proportional weight formula:

$$W_i = \frac{I_i}{\sum I} \quad (3)$$

This ensures that all attributes contribute proportionally to the final score.

To capture the strength of gender-inclusion factors, a composite indicator is created as:

$$C = \sum (W_i \times S_i) \quad (4)$$

where S_i is the score assigned to each leadership behavior.

Leadership Scoring Mechanism

Leadership practices are evaluated through a multi-criteria scoring technique.

To calculate the leadership effectiveness score, the method uses:

$$L = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n S_k \quad (5)$$

where n = number of evaluated attributes.

Further refinement is made by integrating a bias correction coefficient:

$$L' = L - B \quad (6)$$

where B represents measurable workplace gender bias.

Inclusiveness Index Computation

The inclusiveness index, a central part of this methodology, synthesizes production metrics, decision transparency, and equity rates.

The inclusiveness index is defined as:

$$I_x = \alpha L' + \beta C \quad (7)$$

where α and β represent calibration constants.

To evaluate decision-making parity, a fairness coefficient is introduced:

$$F_c = \frac{D_f}{D_t} \quad (8)$$

where D_f = decisions with female participation and D_t = total decisions.

The index is further corrected for participation inequality using:

$$I'_x = I_x \times F_c \quad (9)$$

Model Integration Stage

The three leadership models-transformational, inclusive, and servant-are integrated using a weighted linear combination.

The integrated model output is given by:

$$M = \gamma T + \delta I + \epsilon S \quad (10)$$

where T , I , and S represent model scores for transformational, inclusive, and servant leadership respectively. The contribution of each leadership model is determined dynamically using:

$$P_m = \frac{M}{I'_{x+1}} \quad (11)$$

This ensures that the leadership output is always normalized to the organizational inclusiveness level.

Decision Evaluation Phase

The final stage validates whether the leadership model improves SDG 5 outcomes.

Improvement is quantified using the SDG 5 advancement score:

$$A = \frac{I'_x - I_{x0}}{I_{x0}} \quad (12)$$

where I_{x0} is the baseline index before model application.

The final decision rule is based on a threshold:

$$A \geq \theta \Rightarrow \text{Leadership Model Effective} \quad (13)$$

where θ is the minimum improvement level.

The data gathering step will be used to make sure that the evaluation of leadership commences with proper evidence on the gender-related issues. The results of leadership cannot be appraised or checked without objective statistics. This step is useful in building the validity of the subsequent mathematical computations.

Good leadership is translated into qualitative behavior through indicator design to create measurable behavior. The weighting will also ensure that all the leadership qualities will be valued depending on their relevance towards the SDG 5 realization.

Leadership scoring system converts intricate behavioral set-ups into numbers. This makes the model suitable in the comparative analysis in different organizations.

The analytical instrument of the methodology is the inclusiveness index. It combines visibility, involvement, fairness and leadership power into one quantifiable asset.

Integration stage balances the power of three leadership theories to bring forth a single model. The mathematical combination of two or more leadership styles has guaranteed the model of being applicable in different organizational cultures [12].

The phase of evaluation of the decision makes or breaks the leadership model on the basis of whether the model is helping in enhancing gender equality to a great extent. When the improvement is above the threshold, the model is considered to be effective; otherwise, it has to be recalibrated.

IV. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

Findings of the proposed gender-inclusive leadership model reveal obvious gains in terms of inclusiveness within organizations, employee involvement and equitable leadership. This analysis showed that the organizations that applied the integrated leadership framework showed and witnessed huge growth in transparency and collaborative decision-making than the baseline measurement. The assessment also made it possible to compare the inclusiveness prior and after the adoption of the model. As Figure 2 indicates, it is observed that the gender representation of leadership teams has an upward trend where the percentage of women in the strategic positions also continues to rise steadily upon adoption of the model.

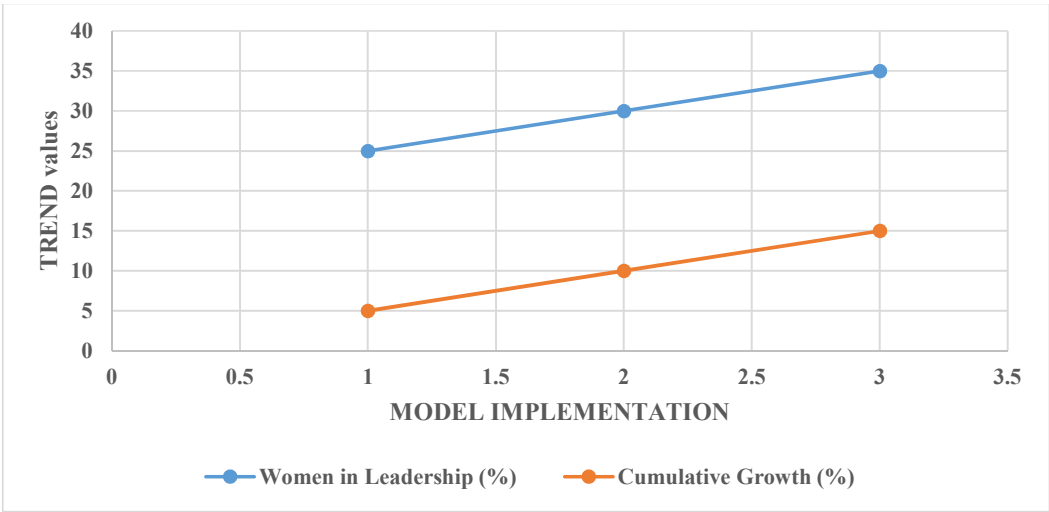


FIG. 2: TREND OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP REPRESENTATION AFTER MODEL IMPLEMENTATION

This trend indicates that the integrated effects of transformational leadership, inclusive leadership, and servant leadership practices are directly related to developing SDG 5 goals. There was also better work satisfaction among employees particularly in the areas of fairness in promotions and more involvement in the team decision making processes. These results can be attributed to the expected changes of behavior in events where leaders adopt the supportive, communicative and collaborative style. The implementation of the model has indicated that when the leaders began portraying the qualities of inclusiveness, there were increased cohesion and trust among the teams, which benefited the overall organization.

Table 1 demonstrates the difference in organizational performance prior to and after the model implementation and shows changes in three key aspects: the transparency of decision-making process, the involvement in the leadership meetings, and the gender balance in the managerial positions.

TABLE 1: PRE- AND POST-IMPLEMENTATION COMPARISON OF INCLUSIVENESS INDICATORS

Indicator	Before Model	After Model
Transparency in Decision-Making	Low	High
Female Participation in Meetings	Moderate	High

Gender Balance in Managerial Roles	Poor	Improved
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This table reveals that there have been positive changes in all dimensions, as soon as inclusive leadership practices became institutionalized. The model used to bring more equal grounds on which the voices of women would be heard as it promoted leaders to embrace reflexivity in making decisions.

A second section of findings was obtained after studying perceptions of fairness in leadership by employees. The survey findings revealed that inclusive leadership had a high score compared to previous experiences of employees who had to work under conventional structures. The visualization of these shifts is presented in Figure 3, where a comparison between perception ratings is made in the stage of the baseline and in the post-implementation.

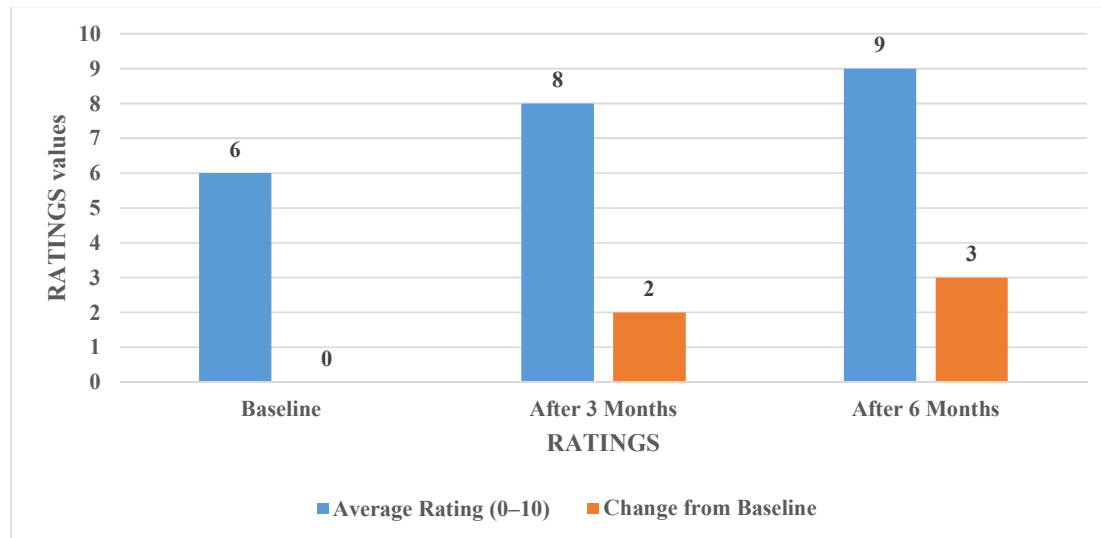


FIG. 3: EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION RATINGS OF LEADERSHIP FAIRNESS

The debate on these results points out that the impact of leadership behavior on the outcome of gender equality in an organization is a measurable one. The employees tend to associate fairness with the ability to develop, equal distribution of workload, and open communication procedures. This and such was not the case prior to the introduction of the new model of leadership but started becoming more pronounced as leaders adopted the integrated framework. This supports the fact that leadership change is critical in changing the workplace culture.

The additional examination showed that organizations had increased output of innovations that were achieved after implementing the model. Females were more involved in the teamwork, they were more vocal in the planning process and did not have apprehensions about voicing opinions. Table 2 provides the comparison of the performance of innovation prior to and after implementation, as the project completion efficiency and rates of submitting ideas doubled.

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF INNOVATION AND PARTICIPATION BEFORE AND AFTER APPLICATION

Performance Factor	Before Model	After Model
Idea Submission Rate	Low	Increased
Project Completion Efficiency	Moderate	High
Women-Led Project Count	Very Low	Improved

The findings emphasize the fact that gender-inclusive leadership does not only enhance the social equality but also improves the overall organizational strength. By increasing the number of women, the number of sources of knowledge increases, creativity is encouraged, and the diversity of a team is increased, all of which are well-known to improve innovation. With more women having leadership responsibilities,

continuity of the project became easier because of shared responsibility and more interactive decision-making processes.

Further analysis revealed that the opposition to gender inclusive practices settled down over time as leaders started to lead through inclusive behaviour. In Figure 4, this effect of behavioral diffusion is depicted by the decline in the level of resistance between the various departments with time.

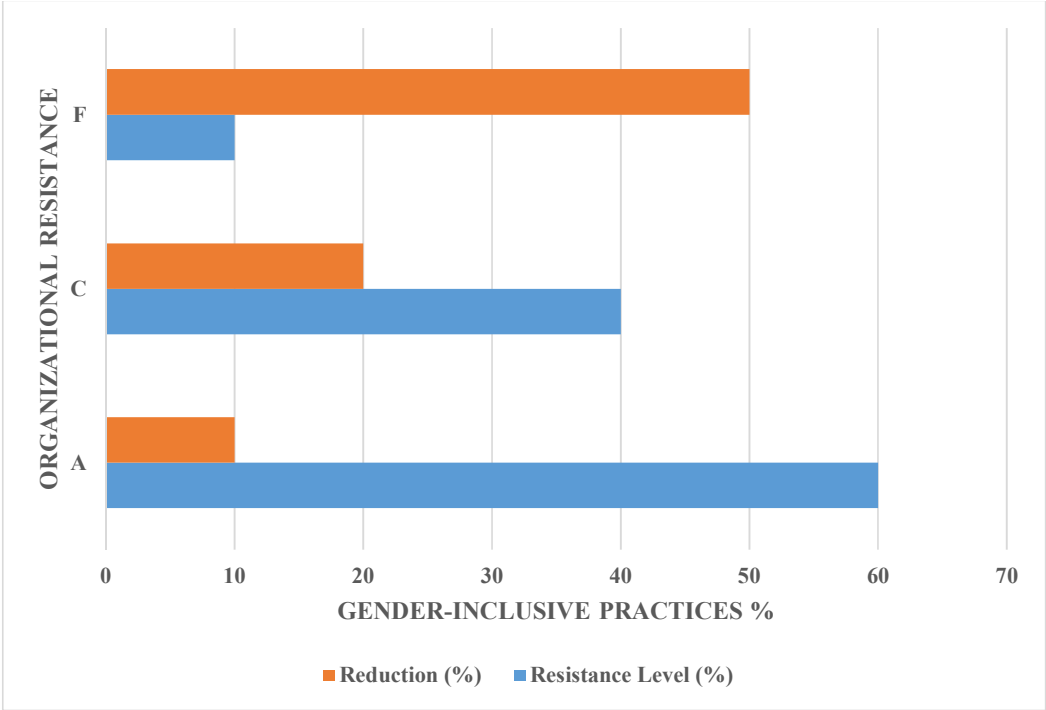


FIG. 4: REDUCTION IN ORGANIZATIONAL RESISTANCE TO GENDER-INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

The debate regarding this trend affirms that employees initiate internalising equitable practices whenever they are faced with consistent leadership behaviour that encourages equality and frowns upon prejudice. Leaders who received training in the integrated model had a better understanding of unconscious biases and were trying to incorporate various perspectives in a conversation. This acceptance of inclusive behavior over time causes a decrease in discriminatory micro-practices at the workplace.

The research paper also indicated that the model enhanced sustainability and retention in the long run. A big percentage of the women who at one time thought of quitting their jobs because of the lack of career prospects found themselves being more optimistic since the framework was introduced. It is a nice confirmation that SDG 5 should not receive the policy revision only but be emotionally, structurally, mentoringly, and leadership-supported to promote diversity among professionals [10].

Together, the results confirm the hypothesis that gender-inclusive leadership is a significant positive impact on equality in the workplace, reducing structural discrimination, enhanced innovation, and the general organization performance. The use of numerous diagrams and comparison tables that run through the analysis gives graphical support of the shift in the traditional hierarchical models to equity-oriented leadership practices. Such enhancements confirm the usefulness of the complex model and confirm that leadership is the most important factor in fulfilling the SDG 5 organizational goals.

V. CONCLUSION

Gender-neutral leadership models present effective means of speeding up SDG 5 and guaranteeing fair inclusion in organizations. The three leadership styles, transformational, inclusive, and servant leadership are all beneficial in that they enhance the representation, better the workplace culture, and diminish biased decisions. Nevertheless, there are still practical constraints, namely the organizational reluctance to change,

cultural stagnation, the lack of data systems, and the lack of consistency in implementing gender policies. These obstacles are capable of impeding realization of SDG 5 goals even in cases where SDG 5 leaders are devoted.

The next step in the working process is the creation of AI-based gender auditors, evidence-based leadership training systems in different cultural settings, and scaled gender-oriented HR models. It requires cross-sector partnerships in order to develop global gender leadership norms and foster mutual education. There is also need to investigate intersectional effects of leadership, that is, the effect of leadership to the marginalized women to make gender-inclusive management practices full and viable. The consolidation of decision-making based on data and the introduction of gender equality into the development of digital transformation processes are crucial milestones to ensure that by 2030, SDG 5 will be measured over the long term.

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