

Breaking Barriers: A comparative analysis of the challenges faced by women in traditional leadership positions in South Africa and Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This concept paper confers a comparative analysis of the obstacles encountered by women in conventional leadership positions in different cultures within South Africa and Zimbabwe. Despite tremendous strides in the direction of gender equality, women still face systematic obstacles that hinder their rise into leadership roles. This article emphasizes the cultural, social, and institutional elements that play a role in these challenges, using existing material from various geographic locations. The analysis shows that cultural norms, gender biases, and Intersectional identities significantly affect women's experiences in leadership, creating distinct challenges that differ among various societies. Moreover, the emotional demands linked to leadership positions disproportionately impact women, making it difficult for them to manage these challenges efficiently. This study utilizes a systematic literature review (SLR) to investigate the obstacles women encounter in traditional leadership roles in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The literature review adhered to a systematic and clear approach to guarantee the incorporation of pertinent and reliable sources. The results highlight the need for customized strategies considering the unique cultural factors affecting women's leadership experiences. By cultivating inclusive settings and encouraging gender equality, organizations can establish routes for women's progress in leadership positions. This study seeks to add to the current dialogue on women's leadership by recognizing prevalent challenges and suggesting future research paths that delve deeper into the intersection of gender and leadership in various cultures.

Keywords: *Gender inequality, Patriarchy in leadership, Gender and leadership, Traditional leadership roles and leadership barriers.*

Introduction

The worldwide dialogue concerning gender equality has gained significant momentum over recent decades, highlighting various facets of women's participation in leadership roles (Aaron, 2020). Nonetheless, despite progress in dismantling obstacles in various fields, the conventional domain of leadership continues to be a fascinating yet frequently neglected aspect (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). Despite global efforts to promote gender equality, women's involvement in traditional leadership roles continues to be an underexplored and persistently challenging facet of societal development. Dolan et al. (2021) concur that traditional domains still represent complex realms where gender inequalities are ongoing.

The basis of conventional leadership largely relies on cultural and traditional matters, which are intricately tied to patriarchy (September, 2023). Consequently, patriarchy maintains the final power in choosing the heir to the throne, reinforcing gender hierarchies that diminish women's positions in leadership. Considering that roles in traditional leadership remain largely held by men, it is essential to give substantial attention to women's involvement in these positions. Nambiar et al. (2022) argue that patriarchy, as a societal framework, favors male dominance and reinforces the idea that leadership is fundamentally a male characteristic, thus establishing considerable obstacles for women seeking leadership roles.

Patriarchy systems are firmly ingrained in numerous societies, affecting the choice of leaders and the roles assigned to women within these frameworks. Adongo et al. (2023) point out that in patriarchal societies, women frequently struggle to manage work, family, and societal expectations, primarily obstructing their path to leadership roles. Enyiukwu (2020) concedes that this disparity is exacerbated by cultural norms that position women primarily as caregivers and homemakers, thereby strengthening their lower status in leadership positions, and the belief that men are inherently more adept at leading than women persist to this day.

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The obstacles women encounter in traditional leadership roles are complicated and profoundly embedded in cultural, social, and economic settings. The issue at stake in the obvious barriers that prevent women from attaining, engaging in, and excelling in these traditional leadership positions, which obstruct the creation of a genuinely inclusive and representative leadership structure (Chitando, 2023). This study intends to examine these difficulties from a comparative viewpoint, emphasizing their significance on a global level. The significance of this analysis is highlighted by the increasing acknowledgment of women's leadership as a vital element in attaining gender equity and sustainable development globally. Current research has recognized multiple obstacles, such as gender stereotypes, cultural standards, and institutional prejudices, that hinder women's progress in leadership positions (Nambiar et al. 2022). Nonetheless, a deficiency of comparative studies exploring these challenges in various cultural contexts persists which this paper aims to tackle.

Literature Review

Traditionally, in several African societies, leadership systems are primarily controlled by men. (Detjen, 2021) concur that concept of masculinity is linked to leadership positions, and the belief that men are inherently more capable leaders than women remain common today. Corpuz et al. (2023) contends that these systems were disrupted during the colonial period, which marginalized women from roles of power. Folbre, (2021) notes that, since gaining independence, efforts have been undertaken to achieve gender equality in traditional leadership positions, reflecting a wish to recognize and utilize the contributions of women. Nonetheless, it remains quite difficult because of society's patriarchal framework, which has traditionally benefited men over women, leading to women often being overlooked in the succession selection process (Folbre, 2021). Mulaudzi & Kriel, (2021) state that women who are entitled to be chosen as successors by their lineage are occasionally deprived of that chance. Chitando (2023) highlights that traditional leaders are hereditary community heads chosen according to succession laws. This choice varies based on the traditional norms and modern laws of each country (Claassens & O'Regan, 2021). A complex combination of factors that differ greatly among cultures is revealed by the literature on women's leadership issues. For instance, Oktayiani's study underscores how dominant femininity influences women's leadership experiences in Indonesia, stressing the importance of recognizing femininity's part in sustaining traditional gender norms (Srivastava & Nalawade, 2023). Likewise, research conducted in Kerala, India, demonstrates how overlapping identities like caste and religion intensify the challenges that women leaders encounter in the health sector (Nambiar et al. 2022). Conversely, studies in Northern Ghana show that patriarchal social frameworks enforce traditional gender roles that clash with women's ambitions for leadership (Adongo et al. 2023). These studies highlight the importance of a detailed understanding of how cultural contexts affect women's experiences in leadership roles.

Similarly, it is comparable to nations like Lesotho, which possesses a vibrant tradition closely linked to its leadership and the patriarchal chieftaincy structure. (Ramakhula, 2022). In Lesotho, similar to various African cultures, the patriarchal system of the monarchy prohibits a girl from ascending to the throne, even if she is the eldest offspring of the royal lineage. Literature suggests that due to gender and sex, women and daughters are barred from the right to inherit chieftainship under customary law, acknowledged by common law (Semuli, 2024). Feminist theory highlights the existence of gender bias and stereotypes that influence societal expectations and norms. Sales et al. (2020) highlight that women in traditional leadership roles frequently encounter biases that undermine from their capabilities and leadership skills.

The patriarchal system of the monarchies in South Africa and Zimbabwe, just similar to many African cultures, prevents a girl child from ascending to kinship, even if she is the eldest child in the royal lineage (Malepe & Odeku, 2023). Rather, she is usually given the role of Vho-Makhadzi who takes part in the King's selection process. The word "Makhadzi" denotes a women traditional leader in the Venda community, representing an important position in traditional governance (Mulaudzi & Kriel, 2021). This position is essential for upholding social order, cultural traditions, and community leadership within the Venda community. It could be contended that if she is capable of performing this duty successfully, what would stop her from thriving as a Chief?. Sukhdeo (2022) assert that, because of deeply established patriarchal

traditions in numerous ethnic groups, women have typically occupied few traditional leadership roles in South Africa.

The traditional leadership systems in the nation have often focused on males, with leadership positions transmitted through male lineages, not due to women's inability but simply because they were "women". Researchers like Semuli (2024) contend that within many black South African ethnic groups, culture served as a justification primarily to exclude females from inheritance while favoring male offspring. For example, regarding the role of a traditional leader, the family typically prefers to wait for the male child to mature, allowing another grown man (regent/ Khosi pfareli) to present him, even if there is a capable female adult child of the deceased, thereby disregarding women (Corpuz, et al. 2023). The kinship system in South Africa, similar to other African nations, is patriarchal and poses considerable obstacles for women aspiring to leadership positions.

Conversely, Semuli (2024) demonstrates that the transition to chieftaincy or traditional authority is frequently marked by a contest against paternalism in many African cultural practices due to the customary principle of male primogeniture. This custom is firmly rooted in the cultural and social frameworks of both nations, posing difficulties for women to assume these positions. As highlighted in the literature, the concept of a woman in a leadership role frequently clashes with traditional views linking leadership to masculinity, a perception that has largely gone unexamined over the years (Mutangirwa, 2016). I support this perspective with the example of the Vhavenda royal conflict between King Toni Ramabulana and Masindi Mphephu, as she contested and asserted her legitimate claim to chieftaincy that she was barred from due to being a woman (Mulaudzi & Kriel, 2021).

Unfortunately, she lacked adequate support from both her family and society, as many rural communities in South Africa continue to strongly resist women occupying traditional leadership roles (Corpuz et al. 2023). This recent legal conflict within the Mphephu royal family arises because this action is unparalleled in any royal family. Indeed, numerous women continue to merit support while encountering considerable challenges in their efforts, similar to Masindi Mphephu (Mulaudzi & Kriel, 2021). This clearly demonstrates that, regardless of the South African constitution, individuals maintain varied views on women's involvement in traditional leadership roles (Pondayi, 2020).

Taking a closer look at Zimbabwe for example, customary laws and practices determine that chieftaincy is inherited from father to son, thereby excluding women from these positions despite being direct descendants (Thondhlana & Machiridza, 2020). Although these challenges remain, the literature indicates that women have taken on traditional leadership roles in Zimbabwe at times. Nevertheless, it can be contended that following Zimbabwe's political independence in 1980, just five female chiefs have been appointed. Chief Ketso Mathe from Gwanda, Chief Sinqobile Mabhena of Umzingwane, and Chief Nonhlanhla Sibandaf from Insiza hail from Matabeleland South Province, whereas Chiefs Charehwa and Chihukoko are both located in Mutoko, Mashonaland East region (Claassens & O'Regan, 2021). The Zimbabwean government's Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender, and Community Development has been engaged in initiatives that promote women's involvement in leadership roles (Pondayi, 2020). This entails encouraging greater representation of women in traditional roles (Ackon, 2020). Chitando (2023) agrees that while legal frameworks offer a straight point, social acceptance, and successful execution are more important for significant transformation in these nations.

Likewise, in South Africa, even with laws designed to foster gender equality, cultural norms still favor male inheritance of traditional leadership positions. Semuli (2024) agrees that the majority of traditional leadership in South Africa still practices male primogeniture, meaning women remain deemed ineligible for traditional leadership positions regardless of their seniority. Research shows that when a male heir isn't present, communities may opt for more distant male relatives instead of choosing a capable female candidate from the immediate family (Mulaudzi & Kriel, 2021). Literature accentuates the denial of succession rights to women and highlights more profound problems related to gender inequality, power structures, and the enduring effects of patriarchal customs in both Zimbabwe and South Africa (Mutangirwa, 2016).

This study is grounded in Intersectionality Theory and African Feminism, as these viewpoints offer a crucial framework for examining the obstacles women encounter in traditional leadership systems (Crenshaw, 2013). African feminism places gender conflicts within the historical and cultural frameworks of Africa. Additionally, this theory recognizes both the repressive elements of traditional leadership frameworks and the ability of African women to maneuver within these systems. Conversely, Intersectionality theory explores how the interplay of overlapping identities (such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity) influences women's experiences. The framework of this research clarifies how customary law, patriarchy, and past injustices converge to sideline women in traditional leadership roles. Both theories are essential in understanding the results from the literature. African feminism disputes the Eurocentric perspective of dominant feminist theories by acknowledging that the challenges faced by African women are closely linked to cultural factors, colonial legacies, and Indigenous governance frameworks (Msila, 2021). This viewpoint aids in comprehending women's agency in traditional leadership instead of perceiving them solely as victims of patriarchy.

Aim of the study

The primary aim of this paper is to perform an extensive comparative evaluation of the issues the challenges faced by women in traditional leadership roles in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Through an examination of current literature, this research seeks to uncover the cultural, social, and institutional elements contributing to the insufficient representation of women in traditional leadership roles and investigate how these obstacles influence their effectiveness as leaders and their career goals. This research seeks to shed light on the distinct challenges faced by aspiring women leaders across various cultural settings by analyzing their experiences, including gender stereotypes, financial limitations, and insufficient support networks. Additionally, the study will emphasize effective strategies and initiatives that can enable women in leadership positions, thereby fostering a more just and inclusive leadership environment throughout Africa.

Methodology

The study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) to explore the obstacles encountered by women in traditional leadership roles in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The literature review was conducted using a systematic and clear approach to guarantee the inclusion of pertinent and trustworthy sources (Coper et al. 2018). Academic databases like Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Scopus were utilized. A mix of keywords and Boolean operators (AND, OR) was employed to enhance the search.

Screening process

Concerning the screening procedure, Titles and abstracts were examined to assess their relevance to the research. The articles that advanced past the initial phase were thoroughly reviewed to evaluate their relevance to the research subject.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion were utilized to guarantee the choice of pertinent, high-quality literature.

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion of articles

– Inclusion criteria	– Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research published in credible institutional reports, scholarly monographs, and peer-reviewed journals. • To guarantee current relevance, the literature must have been published during the last ten years (2015-2025). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles that concentrate solely on political leadership while neglecting traditional leadership frameworks. • Research that did not specifically address gendered experiences in traditional leadership.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research examining gender and traditional leadership in South Africa and Zimbabwe. • Studies exploring obstacles, legal structures, and societal views of women's leadership in traditional governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinion articles, blogs, and non-scholarly sources unless they offer substantial insights related to policy. • Research that did not specifically address gendered experiences in conventional leadership.
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Data Analysis

The chosen literature was examined through a thematic analysis method, in which significant themes and patterns across various studies were recognized and integrated. The experiences of women in Zimbabwe and South Africa were analyzed to highlight the similarities and differences in the legal, social, and political contexts that influence their leadership experiences.

Major arguments

The comparative analysis of the obstacles encountered by women in traditional leadership roles in South Africa and Zimbabwe demonstrates a complicated interaction of cultural, institutional, and individual hindrances. Both nations pose considerable barriers that hinder women's progress, although the circumstances and expressions of these issues might differ. The following sections accentuate the crucial aspects of these obstacles:

Patriarchal Heritage and Cultural Norms

A key argument of this paper is that cultural norms greatly impact women's experiences in leadership. For instance, in numerous patriarchal cultures, women are frequently conditioned into roles that emphasize caregiving rather than leadership, resulting in ingrained beliefs regarding their abilities (Tatah & Ndakeyo, 2023). Research highlights that these stereotypes strengthen the notion that women are deficient in crucial qualities for leadership, including decisiveness, strength, and wisdom. Sukhdeo (2022) contends that societal views of women in leadership positions are frequently influenced by stereotypes that regard assertiveness and authority as unfavorable qualities for women. Cheryan & Markus (2020) assert that in numerous cultures, traditional gender roles link leadership to masculine characteristics, leading to implicit biases against women who are leaders or wish to lead. They also explain how cultural tightness and the extent to which a culture follows strict norms and tolerates deviance affect the rise of women's skills, resistance to women's leadership approaches, and societal expectations to adhere to conventional gender roles (Cheryan & Markus, 2020).

Women who exhibit self-promoting or authoritative behaviors are frequently viewed as deviating from their anticipated gender roles (Kaymakcioglu & Thomas, 2024). Such perceptions may result in adverse responses within organizational environments. Consequently, female leaders might encounter an unfriendly atmosphere and feel compelled to conform to traditional feminine standards that hinder assertiveness. Existing literature indicates that both South Africa and Zimbabwe display cultural norms and reinforce gender stereotypes, depicting leadership as a male sphere (Seale et al. 2021). Scholars have emphasized that these perspectives are firmly based on colonial and pre-colonial narratives, which oppose leadership as intrinsically masculine (Power, 2020). Feminist theory highlights the existence of gender bias and stereotypes that influence societal expectations and norms. In traditional leadership roles, women frequently encounter prejudices that devalue their competencies and leadership potential (Bower & Wolverton (2023).

Even today, women seeking leadership positions frequently encounter opposition or doubt from community members who see female leadership as an unusual cultural phenomenon. Milazzo & Goldstein (2019) posit that in both nations (South Africa and Zimbabwe), longstanding traditional patriarchal systems have consistently sidelined women, limiting their participation in decision-making roles. In Zimbabwe, women aspiring to political positions frequently encounter disparaging terms that weaken their authority

and credibility (Phiri et al. 2024). Likewise, in South Africa, the belief remains that women are not as capable leaders, making it difficult for them to be accepted in leadership positions. While women have a stronger presence in South Africa's politics compared to Zimbabwe, this view continues to create major obstacles (Storey, 2020). This socialization process is intensified by institutional obstacles like biased hiring practices and insufficient mentorship opportunities, which deepen gender inequalities in leadership (Dodo et al. 2017).

Structural barriers and work-life balance

Women in leadership roles, along with those aiming for these positions, frequently face systemic obstacles, especially because of rigid workplace policies that intensify work-family conflicts (Kaymakcioglu & Thomas, 2024). These challenges are especially evident in areas with deep patriarchal customs, where women frequently feel urged to place family duties above their professional goals (Muleya, 2023). Seale et al. (2021) noted that women in these nations face systemic obstacles that hinder their attainment of leadership roles. Studies show that self-created obstacles, like putting family before career, greatly impede women's efforts to attain leadership positions (Shava & Chasokela, 2021). This dual responsibility presents considerable challenges for women seeking leadership positions, as they frequently anticipated to manage traditional caregiving duties in addition to their career goals (Muleya, 2023).

Phiri et al. (2024) contend that although the institutional structures in both nations appear to endorse women in leadership positions, the actual situation frequently reveals an opposing narrative. For instance, Zimbabwe's legal structure promotes women's involvement in governance; nonetheless, the deep-rooted political culture poses considerable obstacles (Phiri et al. 2024). In South Africa, women face institutional obstacles in organizations that impede their progress, such as discriminatory hiring methods and insufficient mentorship options (Moorosi et al. 2018).

Lack of Mentorship and support networks

The lack of mentorship and support systems poses a significant and serious obstacle for women seeking leadership positions in both nation (Tatah & Ndakeyo, 2023) According to Mashele & Alagidede (2022) women in both nations frequently do not have access to power mentors who can offer advice and assistance in maneuvering the journey toward leadership. The participation of women in leadership roles is vital for fostering an inclusive atmosphere that encourages other women to seek comparable positions (Mashele & Alagidede, 2022). Masindi Mphephu encountered a difficult journey in her quest for the chieftaincy, despite it being her birthright; she faced numerous challenges, including opposition from other women who believed that men were suited to be chiefs while women should fulfill the role of Makhadzi (Mulaudzi & Kriel, 2021).

Studies show that women frequently have limited access to key mentors who can assist them in their professional paths (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). Literature indicates that organizations and institutions with a greater ratio of female leaders are generally more inviting to women, thus improving their presence in leadership (Tatah & Ndakeyo, 2023).

Economic Challenges

The economic obstacles women encounter in leadership roles are substantial and varied, especially within South Africa and Zimbabwe. These obstacles not only obstruct women's progress in leadership positions but it also sustain wider economic disparities. Economic instability, particularly in Zimbabwe, exacerbates the difficulties encountered by women in leadership. Numerous women face economic hardships, restricting their opportunities to seek leadership positions or invest in their career growth (Moyo et al. 2020). According to Adongo et al. (2023), the requirements of leadership roles frequently clash with family obligations, causing numerous women to withdraw from leadership positions to deepen patriarchal systems since women might place family responsibilities above professional goals. In South Africa, economic inequalities also affect women, who frequently manage various duties, such as familial responsibilities, which can impede their ambitions for leadership (Shava & Chasokela, 2021). Cerrato & Cifre (2018) agree

that traditional gender roles allocate main caregiving duties to women, potentially resulting in financial reliance on male partners.

Intersectionality

The Intersectionality of gender with various identities, including race, class, and religion, significantly influences women's leadership experiences. Corpuz et al. (2023) highlight the convergence of culture and gender, pointing out that women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are underrepresented in leadership roles. These cultural limitations can appear as stereotypes regarding women's capabilities, rejection of women's leadership approaches, and societal expectations to adhere to traditional gender roles. (Moorosi et al. (2018) emphasize that women leaders in Kerala encounter distinct challenges stemming from their intersectional identities, complicating their paths to leadership. Likewise, Mandoda's research on female academics in Pakistan demonstrates how cultural factors and gender biases restrict women's involvement in higher-level leadership positions (Madonda, 2022). Sisimayi et al. (2024) disclose that women in Zimbabwe encounter multiple layers of discrimination related to gender, age, class, and marital status, which greatly impacts their political and career prospects. These results indicate that a universal method for tackling women's leadership issues is insufficient; rather, solutions need to be customized to the particular cultural and contextual elements involved.

Additionally, the emotional effort linked to leadership positions presents a major obstacle for women. Research shows that women frequently take on a disproportionate amount of emotional labor, which may hinder their leadership effectiveness and career progression (Sukhdeo, 2022). This emotional weight is intensified by societal norms that dictate that women must be caring and empathetic, resulting in a double bind where they face criticism for being overly assertive or insufficiently compassionate (Folbre, 2021). Tackling these emotional labor issues is crucial for creating a setting where women can excel as leaders.

Discussion

The comparative analysis of the difficulties encountered by women in traditional leadership roles in South Africa and Zimbabwe uncovers a complex interplay of cultural, social, and institutional elements that hinder women's progress. This discussion outlines the consequences of these difficulties, points out future research paths, and recognizes the constraints of the current literature.

Implications

The results emphasize the pressing necessity for targeted intervention to tackle the obstacles women encounter in leadership positions in both nations. For instance, deep-rooted cultural norms that perpetuate gender stereotypes need to be confronted with educational initiatives and awareness campaigns that advocate for gender equality and highlight the importance of women in leadership roles (Seale et al. 2021). These efforts can assist in altering community views and foster a more welcoming atmosphere for women aiming for leadership roles, such as that of a chief. Finau (2017) contends that to attain equity in traditional leadership roles, it is necessary to African and intersectionality theory as it offers a wider and more varied framework aimed at comprehending and examining the social, political, and economic experiences of women and other marginalized genders.

Additionally, the lack of mentorship and support networks noted in both situations highlights the necessity for organized mentorship initiatives that link aspiring female leaders with seasoned professionals in their respective fields (Moyo et al. 2020). For instance, organizations may establish focused mentorship programs that tackle the specific obstacles encountered by women in different cultural circumstances (Seale et al. 2021). Furthermore, nurturing inclusive organizational cultures that confront traditional gender norms can facilitate avenues for women's progression into leadership positions. These initiatives can provide support, tools, and motivation, ultimately boosting women's confidence and abilities as they progress through their leadership paths.

Furthermore, tackling the economic challenges encountered by women is essential. Decision-makers ought to explore policies that promote work-life balance, including flexible work schedules and parental leave, which can ease the dual demands of familial and professional obligations that numerous women encounter (Nambiar et al. 2022). Additionally, programs designed to enhance access for both women and men to the chief's position (Musanda) can empower them to seek leadership roles more efficiently.

Future Research

Although existing literature provides important knowledge about the difficulties women encounter in leadership roles, there are numerous gaps that need additional investigation. Future studies ought to prioritize comparative analysis that explores the distinct cultural and social environments of South Africa and Zimbabwe, alongside the ways these environments affect women's leadership experiences. Furthermore, it could be advantageous to incorporate additional African nations in this analysis (Moyo et al. 2020). Additionally, it is essential to conduct intersectional analyses that examine how elements like race, class, and ethnicity combine with gender to influence women's leadership prospects (Stuhlhofer, 2022). This method can offer a deeper comprehension of the obstacles encountered by various groups of women and guide specific interventions.

Moreover, longitudinal research tracking the progress of women in leadership roles over time would be beneficial. These investigations can assist in assessing the efficacy of various strategies and policies aimed at fostering gender equity (Enloe, 2017). Last but not least, studies investigating the experiences of women in informal leadership positions, frequently disregarded, could offer a broader insight into the dynamics of women's leadership in both countries (Nengome & Lambani, 2018).

Limitations

Even though the existing literature regarding women's leadership issues in South Africa and Zimbabwe offers significant insights, it is essential to recognize some limitations. This research is qualitative, offering vivid detail but possibly lacking in broad applicability (Moyo et al. 2020). Additionally, the focus on traditional leadership roles may neglect the experiences of women in non-traditional or informal leadership positions, which are growing in importance today. While both nations encounter substantial obstacles, the extent and character of these challenges vary, illustrating their distinct cultural and institutional backgrounds. Tackling these problems necessitates customized approaches that take into account the unique needs and situations of women in various nations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the obstacles encountered by women in traditional leadership roles are closely linked to cultural standards, organizational structures, and intersecting identities. This comparative examination underscores the necessity of a refined comprehension of these challenges to guide effective approaches to advancing gender equality in leadership. By Acknowledging the distinctive experiences of women leaders in various cultural settings, we can strive to eliminate the obstacles that impede their progress and cultivate a more inclusive leadership environment. The path to achieving gender equity in leadership is intricate, yes with sustained efforts and specific actions, the obstacles that have historically limited women's leadership capabilities can be dismantled.

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