

FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN CHINA: RESEARCH STATUS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide reference for the study of female leadership by combining the research status of Chinese female leadership. Through the literature analysis, the research finds that the research on female leadership in China mainly focuses on the characteristics of female leadership, the influencing factors and the promotion of female leadership. The study explored femininity from the female perspective and the male perspective. This paper summarizes the factors that affect the development and promotion of female leadership, including biological differences, family responsibilities, stereotypes, social concepts and personal will. Finally, this paper puts forward the future research direction of female leadership: research perspective, research object and research method.

Keywords: Female Leadership, Influence factor, Development Tendency

INTRODUCTION

In China, with the development and progress of economy and society, the rapid change of society and culture, and the advancement of people's thinking, women have gained more understanding and respect than before. The scope and proportion of women's participation in various industries and work fields have been continuously expanded, and remarkable achievements have been made, and their work status has been greatly improved. The continuous emergence of terms such as "female half of the sky" and "her era" confirms the improvement of women's social status to some extent, especially that female leaders are no longer synonymous with "scarce animals". This development has led to a focus on female leadership in management.

In recent years, Chinese scholars have conducted many researches on female leadership, and female leadership has become an important branch of leadership research. In view of this, this paper will, from the perspectives of the research significance, leadership characteristics, influencing factors and promotion strategies of female leadership, systematically review the existing researches and look forward to the future research direction of female leadership, in order to provide reference and reference for female leadership researchers. The author hopes to further study the measurement and quantitative research of female leadership.

The Importance of Female Leadership

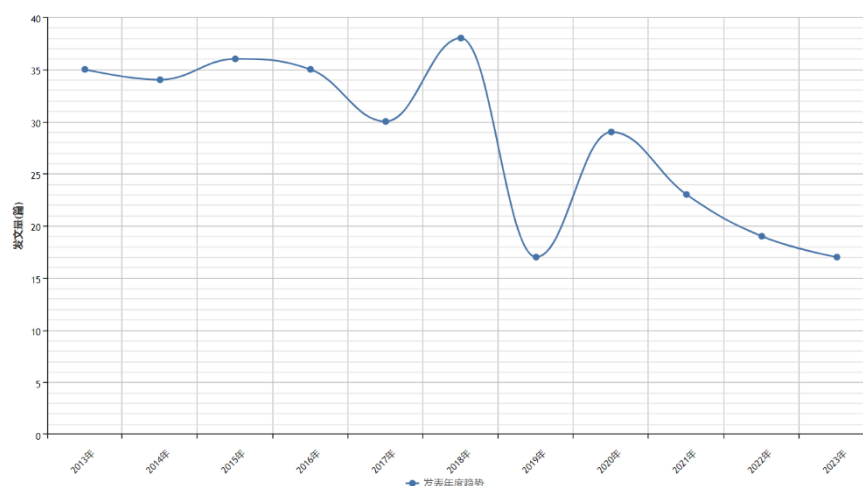
Although the study of female leadership is the product of the detailed cross-development of Western feminism and leadership, with its expansion and improvement in a broader perspective, as a new field of leadership research, the positive significance of the study of female leadership is very obvious. First of all, it is the product of the intersection of leadership and feminism. Women in leadership have long been the subject of low attention, and in political and managerial life around the world, women's power and women's rights are hard-won. The rise of the study of female leadership opens a new window for the study of leadership, which not only deepens and expands the research field of leadership, but also enriches and improves the study of leadership. Secondly, the study of Chinese women's leadership, especially the discussion of the promotion of women's leadership, will be helpful to promote the development of various undertakings in China in the objective practice.

The research on female leadership is not only the enrichment and expansion of leadership theory, but also the realistic exploration of gender differentiation. With the continuous development of society and economy, women's education level continues to increase, the number and proportion of women participating in social and economic activities are increasing simultaneously, and the scene of women participating in organizational decision-making as organizational managers is expanding. A certain number of female leaders have emerged in many fields of society. At the same time, the issue of how to improve female leadership is studied. To help them form their own unique leadership advantages, exercise their leadership ability and achieve a high level of comprehensive quality will also play a certain positive significance in maintaining the healthy growth of female groups, improving women's social status, and further setting up a good model of female career development.

Current Status of Female Leadership Research

With female leadership as the key word and CNKI as the data source, this paper classifies and summarizes relevant research literatures from 2013 to 2023, and finds 313 literatures (Figure 1). By combing the existing research literature, the author finds that the research mainly focuses on the characteristics of female leadership, the influencing factors and the promotion of female leadership (Figure 2). Therefore, this paper aims to reveal the characteristics of the research on female leadership in Chinese academic circles through the review of the current situation of the research on female leadership, and put forward some thinking and exploratory opinions on the future trend of this research.

Figure 1
Ten years of research literature on women in leadership



Research on the Characteristics of Female Leadership

The study of female leadership characteristics is generally influenced by the "leadership trait difference theory" formed by gender differences. This theory emphasizes that men are better suited for leadership jobs than women. Barbara Kellerman & Dekohm L. Rhode et al. (2007) believe that male leaders are characterized by initiative, such as ambition, confidence, decisiveness and strong desire to dominate. On the other hand, female leaders show interpersonal traits, such as kindness, helpfulness, caring for others, warmth and gentleness. In addition, some scholars ascribe the characteristics of female leadership to being expressive, emotional and easy to communicate, which are significantly different from the characteristics of male control, authority and decisiveness. The theory of leadership trait difference has influenced the research of Chinese female leadership to a large extent, which is mainly reflected in two aspects:

The first is to interpret the characteristics of female leadership from a female perspective. From the existing research, scholars focus on the advantages of female traits. Dong Xiaoyan (2009) pointed out that women have strong communication skills, keen intuition, rigorous and meticulous personality characteristics, and flexible and democratic leadership style and style. This trait of female leadership shows her advantages in leadership, especially from the perspective of current organizational development, flexible leadership style is more in line with the needs of relevant organizations. Shi Qinghua, Zhao Xiaohong and Ma Guohua et al. (2012) analyzed the characteristics of female leadership from two aspects: "basic quality" and "leadership ability". They emphasize that women have stronger vitality and resilience than men, higher emotional intelligence, and affinity. At the same time, women are more delicate in thinking and dealing with problems, pay more attention to details, and are good at communication and collaboration; Women are born with the "sixth sense", so that they have a sensitive intuition, conducive to making the right decision; Women's modesty and eagerness to learn also make them have better memory and receptivity. All of these female characteristics help female leaders to show their charismatic side in their work. Wang Leisong(2010), starting from the charismatic characteristics of female leaders, summed up the three characteristics of female leaders: good communication, selfless, firm and persistent.

The second is to examine the characteristics of female leadership from a male perspective. There are also many scholars who study female leadership and compare it from a male perspective to summarize the advantages and disadvantages of women. FangXin and Xu Baogen (2008) describe the leadership characteristics of female leaders with words such as "motherhood, emotional thinking, rich language, delicate and stable, open and extroverted" (Table 1), and enumerates the advantages and disadvantages of female leadership characteristics, such as: advantages mainly include affinity, intuition and other aspects; shortcomings are too emotional and emotional. On the basis of summarizing the characteristics of male leadership, Tong Zhaoying (2004) summarized the basic elements of female leadership: core professional skills, acumen, initiative, organization and creativity. Of course, compared with men, the shortcomings of their leadership mainly include: attachment psychology, poor macro grasp ability, biased to sensibility and broad-minded. The researchers pointed out that although there are many excellent leadership elements in female leadership characteristics, some of them cannot be ignored as stumbling blocks to their promotion. Wang Zhen (2007) believes that compared with men's learning ability, women's learning ability affects the further promotion of female leadership. Qin Xiuqing and Zhang Qi (2012) believe that there is no significant difference in the impact of gender on leadership, and the differences in reality are due to different measurement standards under different social and cultural backgrounds. In addition, some researchers have specifically discussed some characteristics that women

are superior to men, such as superior emotional expression ability, good communication and strong absorption and acceptance ability, and can combine and use the good qualities of male leaders.

Table 1

A comparison of male and female leadership traits and styles

	MALE	FEMALE
peculiarity	strong	emotional
	Rational, intelligent	Emotional, intuitive
	Strong and confident	Have compassion
	High self-esteem and dominance	Strong affinity
style	Single task, clear goal	Capable of multitasking
	task-oriented	Interpersonal relationship orientation
	Opinionated and self-righteous	Good at words and committed to reaching agreement
	Focus on goals, strategies	Focus on groups, relationships
	Command + control	Encouragement + communication

From the current situation of research on female leadership in China, the existing research results have further enriched the research framework of female leadership by exploring the characteristics of female leadership. However, it is regrettable that some scholars overgeneralize the advantages of female leadership traits in the research process, which undoubtedly affects the in-depth exploration of the unique characteristics of female leadership. Moreover, from the perspective of current studies on female leadership traits, many researchers have ignored the "field" of female leadership -- organization, and ignored whether female leadership traits match the needs of organizations. Therefore, the adaptability of female leadership traits is questionable. At the same time, the existing researches are based on positive gender stereotypes, and most of the researches on femininity apply the basic principles of trait theory to the theoretical research on female leadership, which undoubtedly has a negative or negative impact on the promotion of female leadership and its effective leadership. Although some researchers have analyzed the shortcomings of female characteristics and advocated combining the advantages of male characteristics to help female leaders achieve a balance between flexibility and rigidity, they have not put forward corresponding requirements for male leaders in this aspect. To some extent, such research conclusions put more heavy "shackles" on women, which is a manifestation of inequality in the field of leadership research, leading to more severe challenges for female leadership.

Research On Influencing Factors of Female Leadership

In the process of exploring the problems faced by women's leadership development, scholars' research perspective has undergone a shift from the perspective of individual difference factors to the perspective of intra-organization factors and then to the perspective of diverse influencing factors, that is, the research on women's leadership has realized a shift from the "homogenized paradigm" of equal rights between men and women to the "staggered paradigm" of multiple interactions. By combing the existing literature, this paper summarizes the factors that affect the development and promotion of female leadership, including five factors: biological differences, family responsibilities, stereotypes, social concepts and personal wishes.

1. Biological differences

Because men have certain advantages in physical strength compared with women, women naturally enter the position of lower productivity in the work. As a result, women have fewer opportunities to enter key positions and perform complex tasks at work, which makes it harder for them to exercise, develop leadership and gain opportunities for advancement. Although with the development of social productive forces, the proportion of labor or work that simply relies on physical strength has gradually decreased, there are still a considerable part of work that can be completed with certain physical support. Due to physical disadvantage, women in this kind of work have weak competitiveness, lack of promotion opportunities, and cannot exercise and develop their leadership.

2. Family responsibilities

Due to concerns such as childbearing and family responsibilities, women are able to devote less time and energy to work, and are at a disadvantage in competition for leadership positions and promotion. Secondly, some organizations have stipulated the time investment, performance requirements and age limits for the promotion of leaders at each stage. Among the competitors for leadership positions in the same age group, the work performance of female competitors may be slightly lower than that of male competitors in an average sense due to their dedication to childbirth and family. Thirdly, women of different ages in the same leadership position will face the responsibility of childbirth or family, and some women may choose to sacrifice certain personal career development and devote more energy to the family, resulting in a lack of motivation and planning for leadership development.

3. Gender bias

Gender bias and stereotype may affect the competition for female leadership positions and leadership development. For example, "men rule outside, women rule inside", "women without talent is virtuous" and so on. Gender bias and stereotype tend to make subordinates biased against the personal ability of female leaders and adopt double evaluation criteria, which increases the difficulty of accepting and understanding female leadership decisions, and thus reduces the execution efficiency of female leadership decisions. Gender bias may also interfere with female leaders' feedback and cognition of their leadership, resulting in female leaders having doubts about their decision-making and leadership abilities, thus adding unnecessary cognitive burden to female leaders and limiting the development of female leadership.

4. Social concepts

In the male-dominated social culture or organizational environment, the image and behavior mode of leaders are mostly shaped or defined by men, and male leadership style and mode are in the mainstream position and have been familiar and accepted by organization members. When the female leadership style or model conflicts with the existing norms, the female leadership characteristics and performance are difficult to be recognized and accepted. In addition, as the proportion of male leadership and decision-making weight in some organizations are significantly higher than that of female leaders, major decisions and leadership behaviors of organizations are mostly dominated by men, and female leaders have less opportunities and influence to participate in major decisions of organizations. Research has shown that female leaders' performance is negatively affected in male-dominated organizational environments, resulting in a significant reduction in their leadership effectiveness.

5. Personal wishes

With the development of behavioral science and psychological science, researches on the influencing factors of female leadership development and career promotion gradually focus on the psychological characteristics and behavioral motivation of women themselves, focusing on the influence of factors such as risk preference, self-interest preference, self-confidence, negotiation behavior,

competitive preference, self-recommendation and leadership willingness on female leadership development willingness. First of all, research suggests that women generally have a preference for stability and are unwilling to take on leadership jobs or positions that may bring greater risks. Secondly, compared with men, women are less willing to compete and are more likely to underestimate themselves in self-evaluation or self-recommendation. They are not easy to obtain leadership positions in job competition and are also at a disadvantage when facing competitive affairs in leadership development.

Research on Female Leadership Advancement

Leadership development has always been a practical combination of management and leadership studies, and it pays attention to the group of female leaders. No matter the research on female leadership model, influencing factors or leadership style of female leadership, the focus is on how female leadership can be better played and further improved. The existing literature not only discusses the influencing factors of female leadership, but also many scholars have expressed their views on how to improve female leadership.

Most of the research provides suggestions for female leadership development from the perspectives of individuals, organizations and society. The research holds that female leaders should give full play to the strengths of women's personal characteristics and charm. Liu Feng believes that female cadres should develop their strengths and avoid their weaknesses, and enhance their awareness of fighting against attacks. Female cadres generally have high emotional intelligence, good communication skills, strong personality charm and influence, and achieve the leadership art of taking into account both circumference and circumference and coming from the masses to the masses.

Some scholars have discussed how to improve female leadership from the individual perspective. Wei Xiangyang (2020) believes that the key to improving female leadership is to strengthen learning, actively make up for their weaknesses, improve their vision pattern, focus on the overall situation and build their own good image and authority as much as possible. Xin Aixing and Li Yeqi "(2019) proposed that female leaders should constantly improve their knowledge reserves, accumulate more professional knowledge, and increase their personal charm and team cohesion by shaping the image of expert leaders. Some scholars have studied how to promote female leadership from the perspective of system. Zhang Lili et al. (2016) found that the key to promoting female leadership lies in breaking the myth of male leadership in the workplace, empowering female leaders, giving women the space to express themselves institutionally and tilting more social resources to female leaders. Li Jing (2012) believes that in order to improve female leadership, it is necessary to actively improve the working willingness and self-confidence of female leaders, enhance women's sense of independence, and improve the personnel system to improve the low proportion of female leaders and the problem of difficult promotion. Yu Qi (2018) pointed out that enterprises should make more efforts to publicize the power of female leadership role models and encourage other female employees in the organization to pursue their own career development.

Another part of scholars discussed the promotion strategies of female leadership from a social perspective. According to Hao Zhen(2015), social policies, cultural environment and education have all become important factors affecting women's advancement to leadership positions. It can be seen that social support, public recognition, and educational policies and training strategies for the new generation of female leadership all contribute to the development of female leadership. In addition, Gao Ying (2013) pointed out that it is necessary to break the old concepts that hinder women's participation in decision-making, eliminate gender bias, and establish a correct view of women's political participation in the whole society. In terms of environment, the social environment and policy environment should be

optimized, female leadership should be widely publicized, effective policies for training and selecting female leaders should be formulated, and a good cultural atmosphere should be created for the promotion of female leadership. Generally speaking, the promotion of female leadership is a gradual and relatively long evolution process. At present, the research on the promotion path of female leadership based on the situation in China is still relatively scarce. In order to form effective guidance for the development of female leaders, it is necessary to conduct in-depth and detailed investigation on the promotion strategies of female leadership.

Trends in Women's Leadership Studies

Traditional, imperative and controlling management has been increasingly questioned. There is no doubt that we are entering a "leadership" era, as one of the main bodies of leadership, the research on female leadership in China will usher in a new stage of development. From the perspective of future research trends, it is worth more in-depth exploration in the following three aspects.

1. Research perspective: The integration from a single perspective to multiple perspectives

As the entry point of academic research, the selection of research perspective has a direct effect on whether the research on female leadership can achieve effective results. Based on the analysis of current research results on female leadership, feminism, sociology, management and leadership have taken a dominant position in the research, and the relevant results are also quite fruitful. However, only from a single perspective to examine the female leadership, it is difficult to outline the picture of female leadership research. Therefore, in the future research, we should build a theoretical model of female leadership research by integrating multiple perspectives from multiple disciplines. For example, in the future research on the promotion of female leadership, the theory of human resource development, continuing education and lifelong learning should be applied to the research field of female leadership, and the results will certainly have practical guiding significance and influence on the promotion of female leadership. In addition, through the integration of multiple perspectives, to achieve the "de-genderization" of women's leadership research and eliminate gender discrimination and gender barriers in the field of leadership research should be the direction of future research efforts.

2. Research object: From unique object to popular object

In terms of female leadership research, if we want to make new breakthroughs, we must innovate in the selection of research objects. The current research samples are "mostly limited to the government, state-owned large and medium-sized enterprises, etc., resulting in similar research conclusions." In order to further expand the research on female leadership in China, it is necessary to make full efforts in the selection of research objects, and the differences in regional differences, organizational differences and female characteristics will inevitably lead to the differences in research results, and the research results will be more subjective. What is certain is that as women's leadership gets more attention, we will see a variety of fresh research subjects, and the research results will be diverse.

3. Research methods: From valuing experience to valuing empirical evidence

Future research on female leadership needs a breakthrough in research methods, otherwise it is difficult to achieve new achievements. From the basic situation of the current research on women's leadership, most of the research is still limited to the traditional literature research, and the researchers more often regard themselves as an "outsider" to conduct relevant research, which leads to the inevitable defects in the study of women's leadership in our country: the inaccurate data, the deviation of the point of view, the oneness of the conclusion. Judging from the application of research methods on female leadership in the West, the proportion of quantitative research and qualitative research is increasing. In

this paper, the research methods of female leadership in China need to change the traditional empirical research, and gradually shift to the empirical research focusing on the discovery of objects. In short, through the enrichment of research methods, the conclusions of the research on female leadership will no longer be identical, but detailed and focused, and the conclusions will be as comprehensive as possible. This is of positive significance for effectively expanding the research space of Chinese women's leadership.

DISCUSSION

With the promotion of women's status and the increase of female leadership year by year, the research significance of female leadership has become more and more extensive and profound. In the existing research, most of the articles are theoretical research and sentiment, but the empirical research is quite few, and no detailed framework has been formed. By reviewing a large number of literatures, this paper expounds the research status, influencing factors and improvement of female leadership, and sorts out the leadership characteristics of female leaders. At the same time, in order to focus on the influencing factors of female leadership. The author believes that future studies can pay extensive attention to female leaders in more fields. Secondly, social role theory, human resource development theory and lifelong learning theory are applied to the research field of female leadership, supplemented by empirical research, so as to put forward new directions for the development and promotion strategies of female leadership.

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