

Evaluating Gender-Influenced Leadership Styles and Their Effectiveness in Academic Settings: A Comparative Study of University of Leicester Manchester and King's University College Canada

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of gender on leadership styles within academic institutions, focusing on the Universities of Leicester, Manchester, and King's University College Canada. It investigates how gender-influenced leadership styles vary across these institutions and evaluates their impact on leadership effectiveness in academia. The research finds that transformational leadership, characterized by inclusion and collaboration, is more prevalent in environments such as the University of Leicester, where gender representation is balanced. In contrast, the University of Manchester, with a predominantly male academic staff, favours a transactional leadership style that emphasizes task completion and efficiency. King's University College Canada demonstrates a hybrid model, blending transformational and transactional elements, reflective of its diverse faculty and institutional culture. These findings offer significant insights into how gender and institutional context interact to shape leadership effectiveness, with implications for improving leadership practices in higher education. However, the study acknowledges limitations, including its focus on specific cultural and institutional contexts, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Further research is recommended to explore these dynamics across a broader range of academic environments to confirm and expand upon these findings.

Keywords: Leadership Styles; Gender; Transformational Leadership; Transactional Leadership; Mixed Method Research; Academic Institutions

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Problem Statement

This dissertation examines how gender influences leadership styles and their effectiveness in academic settings. It focuses on the Universities of Leicester, Manchester, and King's University College Canada. The study argues that leadership in academia relates not only to administrative efficiency but also to cultivating an environment that encourages diverse perspectives and inclusivity, which are critical to academic institutions' overall success. A growing body of research has determined that gender dynamics play a significant role in leadership roles, especially in higher education over the last few decades (Dunn, Gerlach and Hyle, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2013; Dahlvig and Longman, 2020). Despite progress, significant gender disparities persist in leadership positions, which can impact leadership effectiveness and the institutional culture (Morley, 2012). For example, even though women constitute a substantial proportion of academic staff, they are often

underrepresented in senior leadership roles, raising questions about how gender influences leadership styles and decision-making processes.

There is an increased focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion in higher education on a global scale (Dwyer and Gigliotti, 2017). An institution must also ensure that its leadership reflects these values as it seeks to remain competitive in an increasingly globalized world, which requires a deeper understanding of how gender influences leadership effectiveness. The dissertation aims to contribute to the broader discussion on gender and leadership in academia by comparing leadership styles and outcomes across the three universities.

1.2 Objectives and Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore the influence of gender on leadership styles and their effectiveness within academic settings, focusing on three prominent universities: the University of Leicester, the University of Manchester, and King's University College Canada. The importance of gender dynamics in leadership is increasingly recognized, yet little research has been conducted on how these dynamics can be observed in leadership roles in higher education. The objective of this study is to fill that gap by providing empirical insight into how gender influences leadership effectiveness and the overall academic environment.

A significant aspect of this study lies in its potential to influence policy and practice within universities. This will contribute to the development of an inclusive and effective leadership culture. The study will examine leadership styles from a gender perspective and thereby highlight the strengths and challenges associated with different leadership approaches. It will also make recommendations for fostering gender equity in academic leadership. This study will be particularly beneficial to institutions seeking to enhance their leadership practices and to policymakers looking to promote diversity and inclusion at the highest levels of academic governance. Additionally, the findings of this study will contribute to the relatively limited literature on gender and leadership in academia, providing a foundation for future studies and discussions concerning this topic.

1.3 Research Questions

Following are the main research questions and hypothesis that guided the study's main research problems:

Do gender-influenced leadership styles differ between the Universities of Leicester, Manchester, and King's University College Canada?

What is the impact of gender-influenced leadership styles on academic leadership effectiveness in these institutions?

The role of institutional and cultural contexts in mediating the relationship between gender and the effectiveness of leadership at these institutions?

1.3.1 Research Hypothesis

H1: There is a higher likelihood of female academic leaders adopting transformational leadership styles as compared to male academic leaders.

H2: Transformational leadership styles, often associated with female leaders, are positively related to team performance and student satisfaction.

H3: Female leadership styles are moderated by the cultural and institutional context of universities, with greater equity in leadership roles leading to greater leadership effectiveness.

H4: The leadership effectiveness of male leaders in academia is more likely to be influenced by traditional hierarchical structures than that of female leaders.

H5: Academic departments with a high proportion of female leaders emphasize work-life balance policies and support for academic staff more than those departments led primarily by male leaders.

1.4 An Overview of the Methodology

This dissertation adopts an interpretive stance as its central philosophical position. It explores how gender influences leadership styles and effectiveness in academic settings. The research was conducted using a mixed-method approach, which combined both qualitative and quantitative methods. A semi-structured interviewing process was conducted with 15

participants, all of whom held leadership roles at their institutions to gain an understanding of how they perceive leadership in their institutions. A qualitative method such as this was chosen due to its ability to capture multiple perspectives and provide an in-depth understanding of the social phenomena being researched (Leavy, 2014). Furthermore, 47 individuals completed a quantitative survey, allowing a broader generalization and the identification of patterns across a larger sample of respondents.

Data collected from the interviews was analysed through thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of recurring themes and differences between the participants' responses. A statistical analysis of the survey data was conducted using SPSS, providing statistical support for the qualitative findings. The ethical considerations of the study were meticulously followed, ensuring the privacy, anonymity, and voluntary participation of all participants. Through this methodology, the study's findings were grounded in the lived experiences and honest perceptions of the participants, providing a comprehensive assessment of gender-influenced leadership styles (Alasuutari, 2010).

1.5 Outline of the Chapters

Chapter two examines a wide range of literature related to gender-influenced leadership styles and their effectiveness in academic settings. A critical review of empirical theories, contrasting approaches to leadership, gender dynamics, and the institutional contexts at the University of Leicester, University of Manchester, and King's University College Canada will be conducted.

Chapter three will describe the methodology used to address the research questions, focusing on how gender influences academic leadership effectiveness. An overview of the advantages and disadvantages of a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative analysis using SPSS with qualitative analysis using thematic analysis will be provided.

Chapter four presents the results and analysis of the interviews and surveys, as well as an interpretation of the data. It will provide a connection between the results in this chapter and those discussed in chapter two, as well as demonstrate the relevance of those results to the research questions presented in chapter two.

Chapter five summarizes the main findings, discusses their implications for academic leadership and policy, and provides recommendations for addressing these issues. Additionally, the limitations of the study will be discussed and areas for future research will be suggested. The dissertation will conclude with a self-reflection on the research process.

This study comprises a comprehensive review of existing literature on gender and leadership in academia followed by an explanation of the research methodology. The results of the analysis and discussion will be used to draw conclusions and recommend practical strategies for improving leadership effectiveness in higher education.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review various past literature pertaining to gender-influenced leadership styles and their effectiveness in academic settings. Providing an overview of the evolution of leadership dynamics over time and explaining the discussion and conclusions is essential for illuminating the evolution of leadership dynamics. Specifically, the chapter examines how gender influences leadership styles and their effectiveness at the universities of Leicester, Manchester, and King's University College Canada. A further objective of the chapter is to investigate how cultural differences, institutional policies, and other demographic determinants affect the effectiveness of leadership. A comprehensive understanding of gender-based leadership in academia will be achieved by these explorations.

2.2 Gender and Leadership Theories

The study of gender and leadership has significantly evolved over the past decades, reflecting broader societal changes and advancing scholarly understanding. Leadership theories from the early 20th century, such as trait theories, often neglected the gender of their leaders, instead emphasizing qualities that were assumed to be universally effective in leaders (Judge, Piccolo and Kosalka, 2009). Nevertheless, contemporary approaches stress the role gender plays in determining the style and effectiveness of leadership (Cuadrado et al., 2012).

Bass and Avolio's (1996) model of transformational and transactional leadership is a pivotal theory in this area. A leadership style characterized by transformational approaches fosters follower's motivation and inspiration and is closely aligned with stereotypically feminine traits, such as empathy, nurturing, and collaboration. In contrast, transactional leadership is often associated with masculine traits since it emphasizes tasks, rewards, and authority (Bass and Avolio, 1996).

A concept known as role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau, 2003) is a framework that provides a comprehensive analysis of how gender stereotypes affect leadership evaluations. Based on this theory, there is an incongruity between the role of female leadership and the role of female gender, which leads to a bias against female leadership. Typically, women who display transformational leadership behaviours experience less bias because these behaviours are more aligned with traditional gender expectations (Eagly and Karau, 2003).

According to social role theory, the actions expected of men and women are influenced by societal norms, thereby affecting their leadership styles (Jogulu and Wood, 2006). This theory suggests that women are more likely to adopt leadership styles emphasising collaboration and support because they have been socialized to be communal and nurturing. Men are generally socialized to be assertive and dominant in their leadership styles, leading in a more directive and task-oriented manner.

Recent studies have extensively studied the intersectionality of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender to understand how these factors affect leadership. In an intersectional analysis, it has been demonstrated that the challenges and biases faced by female leaders are often further aggravated by other facets of their identity (Rosette et al., 2016; Breslin, Pandey and Riccucci, 2017; Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2015). Gender and leadership theories are particularly relevant to the academic environment. According to Acker (2012) and Fitzgerald (2014), traditionally male-dominated academic institutions are slowly acknowledging the value of diverse leadership styles. The findings of these studies indicate that women in academia often combine transformational and transactional approaches in their leadership style, adjusting their approach to the unique cultures and expectations of their institutions (Acker, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2014). Additionally, the concept of "authentic leadership" has become increasingly popular in recent years. As part of authentic leadership, self-awareness, relational transparency, and ethical behaviour are key components that align well with transformational leadership and are often associated with effective female leadership (Crawford et al., 2019). According to Crawford et al., (2019), authentic leadership can mitigate some of the biases experienced by female leaders by emphasizing genuine values-driven leadership in place of gender-specific expectations.

This section summarizes various theories of gender and leadership, highlighting the importance of considering gender dynamics in leadership research. This theoretical perspective provides a basis for analysing how gender influences leadership styles and effectiveness. The following section outlines the conceptual framework for gender-influenced leadership in academic settings. By integrating critical aspects from the theories discussed and applying them to the contexts of the University of Leicester, Manchester, and King's University College Canada, this framework offers a structured approach to understanding and evaluating the role of gender in leadership in these institutions.

2.3 Conceptual Framework for Gender-Influenced Leadership

The topic of leadership styles and their effectiveness has been extensively discussed throughout the past century, becoming a crucial component of organizational success (Lamm et al., 2016). Leadership can be viewed from multiple perspectives and levels of analysis, but no definitive definition of leadership can encompass all of its aspects (Yammarino et al., 2008; Eagly and Karau, 2003; Yukl, 2013).

Given the diverse theoretical underpinnings of leadership, studying it necessitates several theoretical and conceptual models. Further development of these perspectives has been undertaken by other scholars who have examined leadership from different perspectives, including gender (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Kark, 2004). As an example, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) describe how gender impacts leadership styles, suggesting that men and women tend to approach leadership differently, which can be attributed to societal norms and expectations. According to their study, women tend to exhibit more transformational leadership qualities, such as empathy and collaboration, while men tend to demonstrate transactional leadership characteristics, such as directiveness and authority.

The literature on gender-influenced leadership also emphasizes the influence of cultural and institutional contexts on leadership styles and performance (Khlif, 2016; Cherfan and Allen, 2021). In Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory, societal values and norms are suspected to influence leadership behaviour and preferences (Khlif, 2016). Furthermore, Cherfan and Allen's (2021) study identifies cultural attributes that are associated with leadership styles across different geographical locations (Cherfan and Allen, 2021).

In the academic context, leadership effectiveness is crucial for the success and advancement of institutions. Astin and Astin (1999) found that influential academic leaders create an environment that fosters creativity, collaboration, and educational excellence (Astin and Astin, 1999). There have been several studies investigating the differences between women and men in leadership within academia, showing that female leaders face unique challenges, such as gender bias and the "glass ceiling" effect, which can significantly affect the effectiveness of their leadership (Morley, 2012; Powell and Butterfield, 2015; Purcell, MacArthur and Samblanet, 2010).

A conceptual framework for gender-influenced leadership asserts that effective leadership is not solely determined by a leader's gender but also by a combination of the leader's style, the organization's context, and follower's expectations (Douglas, 2012). This framework emphasises the importance of understanding the complex interaction between these factors in order to evaluate leadership effectiveness in a systematic way. Nevertheless, it has been found that male and female leaders are equally capable of delivering effective leadership as long as their styles are adapted to their followers' specific contexts and needs (Rosener, 2011; Hoyt, 2010). Thus, it is imperative to examine leadership from an integrated perspective that considers both transformational and transactional factors and the influence of gender.

This section summarizes the various literature regarding gender-influenced leadership styles and their effectiveness across a variety of cultural and institutional contexts. An observable impact of gender on leadership styles can be instrumental in assessing leadership effectiveness since it provides insight into how leaders navigate organizational dynamics and follower expectations. The following section examines various leadership styles prevalent in academic settings, focusing specifically on Leicester University, Manchester University, and King's University College Canada. In examining these leadership styles, the study aims to gain a better understanding of how gender influences leadership effectiveness in these institutions.

2.4 Leadership Styles in Academic Settings

In academic settings, leadership plays a significant role in determining the direction, culture, and effectiveness of an institution. The literature identifies a variety of leadership styles, but transformational and transactional leadership are considered to be the most applicable to the academic environment, especially in the context of gender-influenced leadership.

2.4.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is about inspiring and motivating followers to go beyond what's expected (Bass and Avolio, 1996). Those who adopt this style are visionaries who envision a compelling future for their organizations and inspire their followers to transcend their individual interests for the greater good of the organization. A transformational leader is characterized by his or her ability to cultivate an atmosphere of intellectual stimulation, innovation, and change in the workplace (Bass and Avolio, 1996).

A transformational leadership approach is particularly relevant in the academic environment because it aligns with the core values of higher education institutions (Ross and Gray, 2006). An important aspect of universities is the pursuit of knowledge, critical thinking, and creativity. Leaders who are committed to transformational change in academia promote these values by challenging the status quo and encouraging an environment of continuous improvement. The ability to motivate academic students to embrace new ideas and approaches is of great importance in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

There is evidence that transformational leadership is particularly effective in academic settings because it facilitates collaboration, intellectual growth, and a sense of community (Sun and Leithwood, 2012). University leaders who demonstrate transformational leadership often emphasize the development of their staff and students to help them achieve their full potential (Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016). Furthermore, this leadership style is often associated with higher levels of job

satisfaction, commitment, and performance among academic staff members, which are crucial factors in the success of any educational institution.

Transformational leadership is particularly important in the context of Leicester University, Manchester University, and King's University College Canada as these institutions endeavour to navigate the challenges of a competitive and evolving higher education system. Their leadership depends largely on their leader's ability to inspire and motivate their staff and students to embrace change and pursue excellence. These academic settings emphasize the importance of collaboration, innovation, and ethical leadership, making transformational leadership a highly effective approach.

2.4.2 Transactional Leadership

A transactional leadership approach is characterized by a system of rewards and penalties to manage performance in contrast to a transformational approach (Zacher and Johnson, 2014). The primary objective of transactional leaders is to maintain organizational stability by ensuring that employees meet their objectives and follow the policies and procedures that have been established (Bass, 1990). A leader in this style is more concerned with the day-to-day activities of the organization and relies on a clearly defined authority and responsibility hierarchy.

Transactional leadership is a powerful tool for ensuring that academic and administrative tasks are completed efficiently and on time in academic settings. This type of leadership is especially useful in the management of large, complex organizations such as universities, where adherence to standards, accountability, and consistency of leadership are vital elements (Bogler, Caspi and Roccas, 2013). Leaders who provide transactional leadership in academia set clear expectations for their staff and monitor their performance closely, rewarding those who meet or exceed expectations and penalizing those who fail to do so.

Despite its effectiveness in maintaining order and ensuring that routine tasks are completed, transactional leadership may be less effective in promoting long-term innovation and change (Bryant, 2003). As a consequence of the emphasis on compliance and performance management, creativity can be stifled and risk-taking discouraged, which are essential components of academic success (Bass, 1990). Moreover, transactional leadership may not fully engage academic staff, who often place a high level of value on their autonomy and intellectual freedom.

2.5 Cultural and Institutional Context

Leadership styles and their effectiveness are highly influenced by cultural and institutional contexts, particularly in academic settings. An individual's perception and implementation of leadership can be significantly shaped by the cultural norms, values, and institutional policies of their country or region (Sharma and Jain, 2022). The analysis of gender-influenced leadership styles at Leicester University, Manchester University and King's University College Canada requires an in-depth understanding of these contexts.

Leaders from different cultural backgrounds may have different expectations and practices. Leadership is typically valued in Western cultures, which are generally more individualistic, by virtue of autonomy, independence, and self-expression (Collins and Bethke, 2017). There is often an expectation of assertive, decisive, and goal-oriented leadership in these situations. Conversely, cultures with more collectivist tendencies, such as those found in many Asian countries, place a higher importance on harmony, group cohesion, and the well-being of the collective (Wendt, Euwema and van Emmerik, 2009). For example, academic leadership in more collectivist cultures such as China is often influenced by the concept of the "interdependent self" (Ho and Nesbit, 2009). Through this approach, effective leadership emphasizes harmonious relationships within the team, observing collective success and well-being as an integral part of effective leadership (Yang, 2013). Besides, there is also a prevailing belief in Chinese academic environments that leaders should confront challenges with optimism and manage their emotions constructively, in order to cultivate an atmosphere of positivity and collaboration (Yang and Thien, 2024). These cultures place considerable emphasis on interpersonal relationships and consensus-building.

The University of Leicester, Manchester, and King's University College Canada are located in the UK, which has a predominantly Western and individualistic cultural environment. Although the UK is a diverse, multicultural country, its leadership dynamics are also influenced by this diversity. The leaders of these institutions need to navigate the complex interplay of cultural expectations, while maintaining a balance between the benefits of fostering an inclusive and

collaborative environment.

The institutional system also plays a significant role in forming leadership styles. Academic freedom, autonomy, and accountability are critical tenets of the UK university system (Parker, 2011). As educational and research institutions, these organizations are expected to provide high-quality education and research while also responding to the needs of society and government policies. The pressures of meeting these expectations can influence leadership styles. The significant emphasis placed on metrics and performance indicators may lead to leaders and institutions adopting more transactional leadership styles, emphasizing efficiency, compliance, and results (Garengo and Betto, 2022).

Furthermore, the institutional culture within specific universities can either facilitate or hinder gender equity in leadership (Morley, 2013). An institution that is strongly committed to diversity and inclusion is more likely to foster an environment where different leadership styles are valued and where female and male leaders can thrive together. However, organizations with rigid hierarchies and traditional power structures may perpetuate gender biases and make it difficult for female leaders to advance or be recognized for their contributions (Morley, 2013).

2.6 Gender Dynamics in Academic Leadership

The dynamics of gender are also complexly intertwined with cultural and institutional contexts. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes still prevail in many academic institutions and influence how males and females are perceived and navigate their careers (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2014). For example, female leaders are likely to exhibit more nurturing and communal characteristics, which correspond to transformational leadership styles, whereas male leaders may be more likely to be characterized by transactional leadership styles (Eagly and Carli, 2003). For those who do not adhere to these gendered expectations, these can pose challenges to their leadership effectiveness and their ability to be evaluated by others.

Despite significant advancements in gender equality, women remain underrepresented in senior leadership positions within academia (Winchester and Browning, 2015). Although the number of female academics has increased over the years, there is a diminishing presence of women in higher-level leadership positions. According to Morley (2013), this phenomenon is also known as the "leaky pipeline," which illustrates how women gradually fall out of the academic career ladder as they advance from junior to senior positions (Morley, 2013). The underrepresentation of women can be attributed to several factors. Traditional gender roles and social expectations often place greater responsibilities on women in the areas of domestic and caregiving, which may limit their career development opportunities. In addition, implicit biases and stereotypes regarding leadership abilities based on gender can influence hiring and promotion decisions, often favouring male candidates for senior positions (Damaske, 2011).

Leaders of both sexes can exhibit substantially different leadership styles, often reflecting societal expectations regarding gender roles. Transformational leadership, characterized by empathy, inclusiveness, and ethical behaviour, is more commonly associated with female leaders (Stempel, Rigotti and Mohr, 2015). By contrast, transactional leadership, in which structures, controls, and performance are the dominant characteristics, is more often associated with male leaders (Wolfram and Gratton, 2013). Despite this, these associations are not rigid. Both male and female leaders can demonstrate leadership behaviours, and their effectiveness often depends on the context in which they are displayed (Eagly and Carli, 2003). For instance, female academics who adopt transformational leadership styles may succeed in fostering collaborative and innovative environments, which are highly valued in educational settings. It is equally possible for male leaders to succeed in academia when they incorporate transformational elements into their leadership style, especially if they can lead diverse teams successfully.

Leadership challenges for female academics are often unique, which can negatively impact their ability to lead effectively and their career progression (Glass and Cook, 2016). These challenges include balancing professional responsibilities with personal commitments, navigating gender bias, and overcoming the "double bind" which is the expectation that women must possess both communal and agentic qualities in order to be perceived as effective leaders (Eagly and Karau, 2003). Additionally, women in leadership positions in academic institutions may experience difficulty establishing authority and credibility, particularly in environments dominated by men. Continual demonstration of competence and leadership abilities may be causing academic leaders to experience stress and burnout, further exacerbating the gender disparity in leadership in

academia (Morley, 2013).

Gender dynamics play a significant role in determining the effectiveness of leadership within universities. Research suggests that diverse leadership teams comprised of both male and female leadership have a greater likelihood of developing innovative solutions, making balanced decisions, and fostering inclusive organizational cultures (Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider, 2010; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Syed and Murray, 2008; Chanland and Murphy, 2017). Further, gender-balanced leadership teams are more likely to reflect the diverse perspectives and needs of the academic community, contributing to an institution's overall effectiveness. Nevertheless, the challenge of achieving gender equity in academic leadership requires an ongoing commitment and effort from institutions (Smith and Sinkford, 2022; Monroe and Chiu, 2010). The removal of structural and cultural barriers that prevent women from advancing in academia is essential to fostering an environment where both male and female leaders can succeed and contribute to the university's mission.

2.7 Comparative Analysis of Leadership at University of Leicester, Manchester and King' s University College Canada

Table 1 Gender Distribution in Academic Roles

University	Percentage of Female Academics	Percentage of Male Academics
University of Leicester	55.8%	44.2%
University of Manchester	29.6%	70.4%
King' s College London	39.3%	60.7%

The University of Leicester stands out among the three institutions due to its high percentage of female academic staff members, 55.8%, higher than that of male academic staff (The University of Leicester EDI Report, 2024). A significant accomplishment in gender parity has been achieved, particularly in a field where male dominance has historically been predominant. The higher percentage of female academics at Leicester University reflects the university's efforts to promote gender equality in academic leadership roles. Several factors may have contributed to this development, including leadership development programs, mentoring opportunities, and flexible working conditions that facilitate work-life balance for women.

The University of Manchester, on the other hand, has a much lower percentage of female academics, with 29.6% of women academics compared to 70.4% of male academics (The University of Manchester EIR Report, 2024). There is apparent gender disparity among senior faculty members, indicating that despite ongoing efforts to promote gender equity, significant barriers may still prevent women from advancing to the highest levels of academic leadership. The relatively low proportion of female academics may be attributed to several factors, such as implicit biases in promotion processes, inadequate work-life balance support, and the challenges associated with the "double bind," which involves women being expected to conform to traditional leadership norms and gendered expectations at the same time.

The distribution of academics at King's College London is more balanced but remains predominantly male, with 39.3% female academics compared to 60.7% male academics (King's EDI Reports, 2024). Despite the fact that this is higher than the percentage at the University of Manchester, it still indicates that a higher percentage of men hold senior academic positions than women. Several initiatives have been implemented at King's College London to address gender disparities. These initiatives include the King's Gender Equality Network and the WiSEM program, which aims to encourage women to pursue science, engineering, and medicine careers. Despite progress having been made, these figures indicate that there is still work to be done in order to achieve gender parity, particularly in the most senior academic positions.

An analysis of the gender distribution of senior academic roles at King's College London, Manchester University, and the University of Leicester reveals significant differences between the three institutions. The University of Leicester has a higher percentage of female academics than most other institutions, which establishes a benchmark for other institutions in the area of gender equality. While the percentages of men and women at the University of Manchester and King's College London are lower, they illustrate that gender parity in academia still faces significant challenges. This disparity emphasises the importance of developing and implementing effective policies and practices that support the advancement of women in academic leadership positions.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction and Aim of the Study

This study examines how gender-influenced leadership styles affect the effectiveness of academic leadership at Leicester University, Manchester University, and King's College London. Despite the growing importance of diversity in leadership (Gotsis and Grimani, 2016; Johnson and Fournillier, 2021), this study examines how different leadership styles associated with gender impact institutional outcomes. To accomplish this, a mixed-method approach will be employed, including qualitative interviews with senior academic leaders and quantitative surveys of a broader academic staff group. Through the integration of qualitative insight with quantitative data, this approach provides the basis for a comprehensive analysis. This chapter will provide an overview of the research methodology, starting with the methods used to collect the data and culminating with the ethical considerations taken to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. As part of the analysis process, thematic analysis of interview data and statistical analysis of survey data will be conducted, and a discussion of the advantages and potential limitations of the mixed-method approach will be presented to provide a balanced evaluation of the design

From the latest annual report released by Vanke, we can see that the company has maintained positive operating cash flow for fifteen consecutive years, with a year-on-year increase of 42.24% compared to the previous year. However, due to the overall downturn in the real estate industry, Vanke's operating revenue decreased by 7.56%, gross profit margin decreased by 4.32 percentage points, and net profit decreased by 50.62%. The weighted average return on net assets also decreased by 4.57 percentage points compared to the previous year. Overall, although Vanke has performed well in terms of operating cash flow, it faces significant market pressure and competition in an economic downturn, leading to a significant decline in performance. Additionally, the decline in weighted average return on net assets indicates a decrease in the company's asset profitability. In summary, while Vanke has shown strong performance in operating cash flow, it still faces challenges and pressure in terms of financial performance and asset returns.

3.2 Sampling

This study employed a mixed-method approach that combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the impact of gender-influenced leadership styles on academic leadership effectiveness. The sample for the interviews consisted of senior academic leaders from Leicester University, Manchester University, and King's College London, who were chosen based on their leadership roles and experience in managing diverse teams. An invitation to participate in the interviews was sent to 30 senior academics across the three institutions (see Appendix A). The participants selected were in positions of permanent, full-time leadership and have considerable experience managing academic organizations. Out of the 30 invitations, 15 senior academics agreed to participate, resulting in a 50% response rate.

For the quantitative survey (see Appendix B), a broader sampling was employed, targeting academic staff from various departments within the same institutions. For the purpose of ensuring a representative sample of the academic community, 47 members of the academic staff were randomly selected for the survey. A selection criterion included academics who have been in their current position for at least two years, ensuring that they possess sufficient experience to provide insight into the dynamics of leadership in their institutions.

The interviews were scheduled at times convenient for the participants, with arrangements made via email. Most of the interviews have been conducted online through Microsoft Teams due to time constraints and geographical constraints, however a few have been conducted face-to-face when feasible. A consent agreement was obtained from each participant prior to the beginning of the interview. An audio recording was preferred since it allowed the interviewer to concentrate on the discussion without being distracted by taking extensive notes, resulting in a more fluid and natural interview process. This approach also ensured that the data collected was accurate and comprehensive, capturing the nuances of the participants' responses. Moreover, several interview participants kindly assisted in disseminating the survey online by forwarding the survey invitation emails to their colleagues. It was through this collaborative effort that the questionnaire was able to reach a wider audience, allowing participants to respond at a time that suited them, thus providing a time-efficient method for gathering perspectives from a variety of departments.

The interview guide and survey were subjected to a pilot study in order to evaluate their effectiveness. This pilot study provided valuable feedback regarding the clarity and arrangement of the questions, which helped to refine the interview

guide and survey design. For example, it highlighted the need to ask participants for specific examples related to their experiences with gender-influenced leadership, rather than simply inquiring about their general perceptions. The purpose of this adjustment was to ensure that interviews would elicit richer, more detailed responses, which would provide a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Furthermore, the pilot provided an opportunity to evaluate how participants would respond to the questions, allowing for a more tailored and effective approach to data collection.

Table 2.15 Participants Demographics

Participants Number	Ethnicity	Gender	Age Range	Having Religious Belief	Leadership Positions
1	White British	Male	40–49	Yes	Lecturer
2	Asian	Female	31–39	Yes	RA
3	Black British	Female	49–60	No	Lecturer
4	Chinese	Male	31–39	No	RA
5	Other White	Female	40–49	Yes	Professor
6	White British	Male	31–39	No	Lecturer
7	Black	Female	31–39	No	RA
8	Other White	Female	49–60	Yes	Professor
9	Asian	Male	31–39	No	Lecturer
10	Chinese	Female	40–49	Yes	Lecturer
11	Other	Male	40–49	No	Lecturer
12	Black	Female	40–49	Yes	Lecturer
13	White British	Male	49–60	No	Professor
14	Asian	Female	31–39	Yes	RA
15	Other White	Male	31–39	No	Lecturer

3.3 Methodological Approach – Mixed Method Research

The study employed a mixed-methods approach that combined both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in order to accomplish its objectives. A qualitative approach was selected because it facilitates a comprehensive exploration of gender-influenced leadership styles by incorporating qualitative insights with quantitative information (Clark, 2010). An in-depth interview component, which captured nuanced perspectives and experiences of senior academic leaders, provided rich, detailed descriptions that cannot be quantified (Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger, 2020). Qualitative methods are particularly valuable for exploring complex human behaviours, opinions, and experiences related to leadership and gender dynamics in academic settings (Cornelissen, 2016).

By contrast, the quantitative component, which involved surveys, enabled the generalization of conclusions to a greater number of academic staff, providing measurable data that can be analysed statistically (Cortina, 2019). Mixed-method research ensures that both subjective experiences of individual leaders and more objective trends across the academic institutions are captured. This combination of methods provides a more complete understanding of the research problem, thus making it possible for the study to achieve its objectives more effectively and provide well-rounded conclusions regarding the impact of gender on leadership styles and their effectiveness in academic settings (Creswell, 1999).

Mixed-methods research does offer valuable insights; However, it is not without criticism. The use of qualitative research may introduce bias into sample selection and often over-rely on interviews as a method of collecting data (Creswell, 1999; Molina, 2010). Interviews are time-consuming, complex to arrange, and raise concerns about anonymity, which can complicate findings presentation. Furthermore, the validity of qualitative research is strongly dependent on the researcher's skills, which are liable to introduce biases into the research process (Clark, 2010). On the other hand, the quantitative approach offers straightforward data collection and analysis, but is less likely to provide the depth and context provided by qualitative methods (Cortina, 2019). To ensure the robustness of this mixed-method study, it is essential to balance these aspects..

3.4 Interview Instrument

All data were collected from the participants through a semi-structured interview (see Appendix C). A total of 15 senior academic leaders were interviewed across three institutions: the University of Leicester, Manchester, and King's College London. The consent form (see Appendix D) had to be read and agreed to by all participants before the interview, and if they disagreed, the interview would not proceed. Participants were informed that there were no correct or incorrect responses. Instead, the interview was designed to achieve honest responses, lasting approximately fifteen to thirty minutes. Additionally, participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their answers would remain anonymous.

The interview was divided into five main sections: background information, leadership style, gender influence, effectiveness and outcomes, and diversity and inclusion.

3.4.1 Background Information

In the first section, participants were asked to provide information about their background. Data collected included roles, responsibilities, length of time in a leadership position, ethnicity, age, gender, and religious beliefs. In the demographic analysis, some factors were used as explaining variables to understand differences in perceptions among leaders from different cultures. Obtaining background information was intended to investigate how a variety of factors such as culture, gender, and ethnicity affect leadership styles and performance in academic settings.

3.4.2 Leadership Style

In the second section, participants were asked questions regarding their leadership styles. Academics were asked to describe their leadership style and provide specific examples of how they lead their teams. The questions included, "How would you describe your leadership style?" and "Can you provide specific examples of how you lead your team?" The purpose of these questions was to examine the characteristics and behaviours that define their leadership roles and how these contribute to the academic environment in which they work.

3.4.3 Gender Influence

The third section explored the role that gender plays in leadership. Participants were asked to describe gender-related challenges or biases that they had encountered and how their leadership style was influenced by their gender. It included questions such as "Do you believe that your leadership style is influenced by your gender?" and "Have you observed any differences in leadership styles between male and female leaders in your organization?" This study focused on understanding how gender perceptions influence leadership effectiveness and leadership experiences within institutions.

3.4.4 Effectiveness and Outcomes:

The fourth section was about leadership styles and outcomes. In the discussion of leadership style, participants were asked to share examples of how their leadership style had positively impacted their team or academic environment, as well as instances in which their approach to leadership was challenged. Among the questions asked were, "In your opinion, what makes a leadership style effective in an academic setting?" and "Can you describe any situations in which your leadership approach was not effective or encountered challenges?" The purpose of this section is to identify the key factors that contribute to academic leadership success.

3.4.5 Diversity and Inclusion

During the final section of the interview, diversity and inclusion within the institution's leadership structure were discussed. Participants were asked about their institution's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion as well as initiatives it has undertaken to support gender diversity in leadership roles. In order to examine the institution's efforts to create an inclusive leadership culture, questions such as "How does your institution promote diversity and inclusion within its leadership structure?" and "Can you provide examples of initiatives or programs to support gender diversity in leadership roles?" were used.

3.5 Survey Instrument

There are 47 participants across three universities who are being surveyed through questionnaire (see Appendix B) to identify how gender influences leadership styles and their effectiveness in academic settings. In addition to demographic

information, it contains sections on leadership styles, gender influence, and leadership effectiveness, which allows for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Initially, the survey collects demographic information to contextualize responses, followed by questions that identify leadership styles and behaviours, probing the influence of gender. It also explores gender-related challenges and perceptions within leadership roles, assesses the effectiveness of leadership styles in achieving various academic outcomes, and compares leadership practices across different institutions. Furthermore, the survey collects information about institutional efforts to promote gender diversity and seeks participant's opinions regarding possible improvements to leadership culture. The approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of gender's influence on academic leadership.

Table 3 Summary of 47 Participant Demographic and Roles Through Questionnaire

Category	Details
Total Participants	47
Gender Distribution	–Male: 29 (62%)
	–Female: 18 (38%)
	–Under 30: 5 (11%)
Age Range	–30–39: 13 (28%)
	–40–49: 16 (34%)
	–50–59: 7 (15%)
	–60 and above: 6 (12%)
University Affiliation	–University of Leicester: 18 (38%)
	–University of Manchester: 19 (41%)
	–King's College London: 10 (21%)
Leadership Position	–Lecturer: 27 (57%)
	–Professor: 7 (15%)
	–Research Assistant: 13 (28%)
Years in Leadership Role	–Less than two years: 6 (13%)
	–2–5 years: 24 (51%)
	–6–10 years: 13 (28%)
	–More than 10 years: (8%)

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The importance of ethical considerations in this mixed-method study is in accordance with Hammersley's (2014) emphasis on the importance of ethics in social research (Hammersley, 2014). The study was conducted with the consent of all participants, who were informed about the purpose, procedures, and potential risks of the study. Throughout the participation process, participants were assured that they could withdraw at any time and that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. In accordance with Hammersley's guidelines, the consent form addressed potential discomfort by allowing participants to skip questions or stop the interview or survey as necessary. All data will be securely stored and used solely for research purposes. King's College London approved the study on June 13th, 2024, under reference number LRU/DP-23/24-43911 (see Appendix E). This ensured compliance with ethical standards and safeguarded participant's rights and dignity throughout the research process.

3.7 Data Analysis

To analyse the data obtained from the interviews, this study will apply thematic analysis, which has been widely regarded as one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative research across a variety of epistemologies and research questions (Clarke and Braun, 2016). According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis can be effective and flexible, as it allows researchers to examine individual perspectives from different perspectives. This process facilitates the identification of patterns, similarities, and differences within the data, which helps to clarify the underlying themes. Furthermore, this

method provides a useful method for analysing data and summarizing it into a coherent report, making it an ideal tool for qualitative research (Lawless and Chen, 2018).

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) will be used to analyse the quantitative survey data in addition to thematic analysis. Statistical analysis tools such as SPSS are designed to efficiently handle large datasets and provide robust statistical analysis tools for analysing trends, relationships, and differences between variables (Talib and Sulieman, 2022). This dual approach of thematic analysis for qualitative data and SPSS for quantitative data that offers a comprehensive analysis that can leverage both the depth of qualitative insight and the breadth of quantitative data.

However, both methods have their own limitations. A thematic analysis can be inconsistent and lacks the extensive literature found in more established methodologies, raising concerns regarding reliability and the possibility of human error in data interpretation (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Despite SPSS's ability to conduct quantitative analyses, it is reliant on a solid understanding of statistics, which may prove to be a barrier to some researchers. Moreover, it may oversimplify complex variables and fail to capture qualitative nuances, leading to an overreliance on numerical data (Young, 2015). To counteract these limitations, this study will employ meticulous transcription and iterative analysis for thematic work as well as qualitative insights to supplement SPSS results to ensure a more complete understanding of the data.

3.8 Research Limitations

Like any other study, this research has limitations. As a first point, although the sample size of 47 respondents for the survey and 15 interviewees for the interview was sufficient for exploratory analysis, it may not accurately reflect the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the broader academic community. This study could benefit from a larger sample size, as it could increase the generalizability and reliability of the findings. Furthermore, the analysis of gender-influenced leadership styles across the Universities of Leicester, Manchester, and King's College London may have been influenced by institutional factors that were not fully considered in the present study, such as specific departmental cultures or external influences. Finally, despite efforts to promote honest and open responses, it is always possible that participants may conceal or modify their valid opinions, especially on sensitive topics such as gender and leadership, which may affect the study results.

4 Results and analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and analysis of the data collected. It focuses on how gender influences leadership styles and effectiveness in academic settings across the University of Leicester, the University of Manchester, and King's College London. The analysis addresses the central research questions, exploring key themes such as leadership styles, gender differences, cultural influences, and institutional contexts. There are graphic representations of the data and direct quotations from participants to illustrate the findings. These quotations reveal significant gender-based differences in leadership effectiveness and cultural and institutional factor's critical role. The chapter considers the complexities of gender dynamics in academic leadership and offers insights into its challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equity.

4.2 Demographics

As shown in Table 1, academic roles are distributed according to gender at three universities: University of Leicester, University of Manchester, and King's College London. A higher proportion of female academics (55.8%) than male academics (44.2%) is observed at the University of Leicester, suggesting a relatively equal gender distribution with a slight female majority. On the other hand, the University of Manchester has a significant male majority, with 70.4% of its academics being male, as opposed to 29.6% of its academics being female. There is a more balanced distribution at King's College London, although males still constitute the majority at 60.7% and females comprise 39.3% of the academic body.

Table 2 presents a demographic breakdown of 15 interview participants, which highlights the diversity of ethnicities, genders, ages, and religious beliefs among the participants. This study consisted of a mix of white British, Asian, Black, and Chinese participants, whose ages ranged primarily between 31 and 60 years old. In terms of gender distribution, participants are fairly evenly split between males and females, with slightly more females than males. The group's religious belief varies

considerably, with a mix of participants identifying with a religious belief and those who do not.

Table 3 summarizes the demographics and roles of the 47 questionnaire respondents, showing that 62% of participants were men, while 38% were women. There is a diverse age distribution in the group, with the largest group emerging between 40 and 49 years of age (34%), followed by 30-39 years of age (28%). In terms of total representation, the University of Manchester is the most represented university (41%), followed by the University of Leicester (38%), and King's College London (21%). Participants in the study primarily hold the position of lecturer (57%), with a significant proportion of research assistants (28%) and professors (15%) joining the group as well. Regarding leadership roles, 51% of participants have at least two to five years of experience in leadership. Participants were identified as leaders based on specific criteria, including line management responsibilities and budget management, indicating that the cohort is relatively experienced.

4.3 Academics Perception of Gender-Influenced Leadership Styles

A total of 15 participants were asked about their perceptions of gender-influenced leadership styles within their academic roles. Throughout the study, it was revealed that all participants held significant responsibilities related to teaching, research, and administrative duties. A total of 13 out of 15 participants believed that their leadership style was intrinsically linked to their gender, influencing their approach to managing workloads and interacting with colleagues. Several participants indicated that female and male leaders perceived their role's work demands differently. Some participants noted that female leaders tended to adopt a more transformational leadership style, focusing on collaboration and team building, while male leaders often leaned towards a transactional style, emphasizing task completion and performance outcomes.

"As a female leader, I find myself prioritizing team cohesion and ensuring everyone feels valued, which sometimes means working extra hours to support my team effectively." (Participant 7)

"In my role, I focus on results and efficiency, which aligns with what I believe is expected of me as a male leader. The workload is intense, but it's about getting the job done." (Participant 10)

This finding is consistent with the literature, indicating that women's leadership styles tend to favour relational approaches, while male leaders tend to focus on task-oriented strategies (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Furthermore, the results indicated that more experienced participants, regardless of gender, felt better equipped to deal with the stresses and demands of their roles, which is in line with the idea that experience can assist in reducing the challenges of academic leadership (Drew, 2010). The research question is further supported by highlighting how gender and experience interact to influence leadership perceptions and strategies in academic settings.

Table 4 Regression Analysis Summary

Variables	Coefficients (B)	t-value	p-value	Significance
Constant	2.617	4.732	0.000***	Significant
Gender	0.212	1.463	0.151	Not Significant
Age	-0.134	-1.034	0.305	Not Significant
University Affiliation	0.287	1.955	0.055	Marginally Significant
Leadership Position	0.098	0.711	0.480	Not Significant
Workload Perception	-0.065	-0.459	0.648	Not Significant
Well-being Perception	0.344	2.150	0.035*	Significant

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

An analysis of the regression data revealed several important insights regarding the factors that influence the effectiveness of academic leadership. The level of well-being perception was the only variable that significantly predicted leadership effectiveness ($p = 0.035$) among those tested. This indicates that academics with higher levels of well-being are more likely to perform effectively in leadership roles (Kinman and Wray, 2020).

There was a marginally significant correlation between university affiliation and leadership effectiveness ($p = 0.055$), suggesting that an institutional context may influence leadership effectiveness in different ways. Thus, leadership may be shaped differently at different universities because of the unique organizational cultures and pressures that exist there, which can have a significant impact on how it is enacted and viewed (Marshall, 2018).

Nonetheless, variables such as gender, age, leadership role, and workload perception did not have significant effects on leadership effectiveness. Gender was not significantly influenced by the present study ($p = 0.151$) in contrast with prior

studies that found gender to be significantly more influential (Mendez and Busenbark, 2015; Kairys, 2018). The findings of this study suggest that gender may not play as a large role in perceived leadership effectiveness as previously believed in the specific academic context of this study.

A regression analysis of the data provided nuanced insights into how different factors contribute to academic leaders' effectiveness, particularly in the context of gender-influenced leadership styles. The importance of well-being perception highlights the importance of supporting the mental health and well-being of academic leaders for the enhancement of their effectiveness. The marginal significance of university affiliation suggests the need to consider institutional differences when developing leadership development programs.

4.4 Leadership's Impact on Academics Well-being

The relationship between well-being and leadership effectiveness is an important aspect of academic settings. Based on the findings of this study, it appears that academic well-being contributes significantly to the effectiveness of leadership, which has an impact on the broader quality of academia and the success of institutions.

According to the findings of the qualitative interviews, many academics perceive a strong connection between their personal well-being and their ability to lead effectively. Participants reported that high levels of stress and burnout, resulting from excessive workloads, hindered their ability to perform leadership duties effectively. For instance, one participant noted:

"When I'm overwhelmed and stressed, it becomes difficult to inspire and lead my team effectively. My focus shifts from leadership to surviving the workload." (Participant 3)

Some participants reported that their leadership roles had a beneficial impact on their well-being. They highlighted the satisfaction they obtained from mentoring others, influencing positive change within their departments, and growing personally through leadership responsibilities. Their sense of purpose and well-being were greatly enhanced by the fulfilment they received from leading and inspiring their teams:

"Leading my team gives me a profound sense of achievement. Watching them grow and succeed under my guidance is incredibly rewarding, and it boosts my overall well-being" (Participant 4).

"Being in a leadership role allows me to implement changes that benefit both the staff and students. This ability to make a real difference keeps me motivated and content in my job" (Participant 9)

These findings are in agreement with transformational leadership theory, in which leaders who work to motivate and develop their team members are likely to experience an enhanced level of job satisfaction and a greater sense of well-being (Bass and Avolio, 1996). For these leaders, nurturing a positive work environment and witnessing the success of their teams was a source of personal fulfilment and accomplishment of responsibility.

Nevertheless, some participants reported that their leadership roles negatively impacted their well-being. They cited challenges such as the pressure of making decisions, the difficulties of balancing administrative responsibilities with leadership responsibilities, and the emotional strain of managing conflicts within their teams:

"The pressure to meet the expectations of both the institution and my team is immense. I often feel overwhelmed, and it's affecting my health" (Participant 2).

"Leadership is not just about guiding others; it's about constantly being available to solve problems, which leaves little time for my own work or personal life. This imbalance is quite stressful" (Participant 12).

Based on these findings, it appears that Hypothesis 3 (H3) is valid. When there is a lack of institutional support and resources, leadership effectiveness-regardless of gender may be undermined. This is in accordance with the idea that equitable and supportive environments are essential for effective leadership, particularly for female leaders who are likely to face additional challenges when attempting to balance work and personal obligations as a result of social pressures (Debebe, 2011; Ospina and Foldy, 2010; Burton, 2015).

Additionally, these leaders are experiencing strain in accordance with Hypothesis 4. Stress reported by participants due to pressures on decision-making and constant problem-solving can be heightened in hierarchical structures with a heavy concentration of responsibility on the leader (Diebig, Bormann and Roword, 2016). Based on this finding, it may be that traditional expectations set for male leaders, which may emphasize authoritative and directive leadership styles, contribute to

their stress, and negatively impact their wellbeing.

The analysis conducted using SPSS also provides significant insight into the relationship between well-being and leadership effectiveness among academics. There is a significant coefficient in the regression model ($p < 0.001$), indicating a strong influence of leadership effectiveness at the baseline level. One of the most notable findings is the significance of well-being perception ($B = 0.344$, $t = 2.150$, $p = 0.035$), which suggests that as academics perception of their well-being improves, their effectiveness as leaders also increases. This supports the hypothesis that transformational leadership styles, which emphasize well-being and support, have a positive impact on organizational outcomes. This finding aligns with the broader literature that suggests female leaders are more likely to adopt transformational styles, which prioritize their team's well-being (Vinkenburg et al., 2011; Brandt and Laiho, 2013; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Reuvers et al., 2008).

A variety of responses illustrates the complexity of the concept of leadership in academic settings. Several factors play a crucial role in the determination of an individual's sense of well-being, including workload, institutional support, personal values, and coping strategies. The findings indicate that leadership styles that prioritize staff well-being, such as transformational leadership, may lead to greater job satisfaction and performance. Conversely, inadequate support and a heavy workload can result in significant stress, suggesting that universities should revisit their support structures and workload expectations as a result of this experience (Macdonald, 2003).

4.5 The Impact of Gender Differences

The gender gap in higher education leadership continues to be a significant issue, with male academics outnumbering female academics in senior positions (O'Connor, 2018; Aiston and Yang, 2017; Gómez, Larrán and Andrades, 2016). The results of this study demonstrate distinct differences between male and female academics with respect to the ways in which they perceive and fulfil their leadership responsibilities. Some male participants reported experiencing less stress and describing their leadership roles as straightforward due to their leadership style and accumulated experience. Quotations from the male participants include:

"I approach leadership with a sense of calm and control. I delegate tasks effectively and ensure my team is autonomous, which reduces my stress and allows me to maintain a healthy work-life balance." (Participant 1)

"Leadership is about consistency and experience. After years in this role, I've developed strategies that make managing the workload and guiding my team much easier." (Participant 6)

Contrary to this, female academics, particularly those with additional caring responsibilities, have reported higher levels of stress and greater difficulty balancing their leadership responsibilities with personal obligations. They described these challenges as often being exacerbated by the nature of their leadership roles, which require a more hands-on and emotionally receptive approach. Quotations from the female participants include:

"As a leader, I find myself constantly navigating between the needs of my team and my responsibilities at home. My leadership style is collaborative, but this means I'm deeply involved in every aspect, which can be overwhelming." (Participant 5)

"Leadership in academia demands not just managing tasks but also supporting my team emotionally. This, combined with my family responsibilities, makes it very challenging to find a balance." (Participant 8)

According to literature, female leaders often adopt a transformational leadership approach that emphasizes empathy, collaboration, and active involvement in their team (Eagly and Carli, 2003). The use of this approach may be highly effective in creating a positive team atmosphere. Nevertheless, it may also be associated with increased stress and burnout, particularly when accompanied by the demands of personal life.

Additionally, female leaders in academia may feel more pressure to prove themselves in a male-dominated environment, leading to increased workload and stress. As participant 7 expressed:

"I often feel the need to go above and beyond to demonstrate my capabilities as a leader, which can be exhausting. The constant need to balance empathy and authority adds an additional layer of complexity to my leadership role."

Based on role congruity theory, these findings suggest women in leadership positions often face a double bind, since they must demonstrate both traditionally masculine characteristics (such as decisiveness, authority, and empathy) as well as feminine characteristics (such as empathy and collaboration) in order to be perceived as effective (Eagly and Karau, 2003).

Due to these conflicting expectations, female leaders face an additional level of pressure, as they must manage both demands while managing their teams.

4.6 Cultural Differences Among Academics Leadership Style

The cultural background has a significant influence on the leadership styles of academics. It affects both their relationships with their teams and their perceptions of their roles within the workplace. Several findings from this study suggest that academics from different cultural backgrounds often adopt varying approaches to leadership, reflecting broader cultural values and norms that guide their perceptions of authority, collaboration, and accountability.

Participants from collectivist cultures, such as those from Asian backgrounds, tend to value a leadership style that promotes group harmony, consensus-building, and a sense of duty to the team (Liu et al., 2018). For instance, participant 10, who identifies as Chinese, described their leadership style as one that fosters a family atmosphere within their team: "I see my role as a leader not just to direct but to support and guide my team like a family. We make decisions together, and I ensure that everyone's voice is heard before moving forward." This reflects the collectivist cultural value of placing the group's needs above individual preferences, creating an environment conducive to fostering a highly effective collaborative environment.

Contrastingly, participants from individualistic cultures, such as those from Western backgrounds, often demonstrated a leadership style that emphasized autonomy, individual achievement, and clear hierarchies (Alves et al., 2006). Participant 6, who identifies as British, emphasized the importance of establishing clear goals and maintaining a results-oriented approach: "I believe in giving my team autonomy while holding them accountable for their performance. In my view, leadership involves setting clear expectations and letting my team members discover their own paths to success." The individualistic culture emphasizes personal responsibility and self-reliance, which can enhance innovation and individual performance, but may sometimes result in a less collaborative dynamic due to a cultural emphasis on individual responsibility and self-reliance (Power, Schoenherr and Samson, 2009).

Moreover, leaders also exhibit cultural differences in how they approach conflict and make decisions. The leaders from collectivist cultures, such as Participant 4, often strive to avoid conflict and maintain harmony within the group, even if this involves delaying decisions in order to achieve consensus: "In my culture, maintaining peace and avoiding confrontations are crucial. I make sure everyone agrees before I move forward with any major decisions." The approach contrasts with the more direct and decisive conflict resolution strategies preferred by leaders from individualistic cultures, which may place greater emphasis on efficiency and clarity than consensus in conflict resolution.

The results of the study are consistent with Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory, which indicates that cultural values like collectivism versus individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance influence leadership styles in a significant way (Khlif, 2016). The leadership styles of leaders from cultures with high power distance, for example, tend to be authoritative in nature, while those from cultures with low power distance might show a more egalitarian tendency. There are numerous cultural influences on leadership styles, which highlights the need for cultural competence in academic leadership, particularly in increasingly diverse and globalized educational environments (Walker and Dimmock, 2002; Collard, 2007). In order to foster inclusive and effective teams, leaders must be aware of and able to adapt to cultural differences, so that they can harness the strengths of diverse perspectives and mitigate potential conflicts arising from miscommunications due to cultural differences.

4.7 Age Differences Among Academics Leadership Style

Based on the responses to the research collected from three participants in the 49-60 age range, it appears that age is a significant determinant of how individuals perceive leadership roles and their well-being. A participant indicated that their extensive experience working in the academic field has helped them manage the demands of leadership more effectively than when they were younger. The participant shared that being in academia has enabled them to develop coping mechanisms that assist them in dealing with stress, although the workload remains challenging. This participant has provided the following quotations:

"I've been in this field for over 25 years, and with time, you learn how to manage the pressures that come with leadership. It's still demanding, but I've found ways to balance it better than I did when I was younger." (Participant 8)

In the study, three participants aged 31 to 39 expressed they are still attempting to find the right balance between leadership requirements and personal well-being. They stated that, although they are energetic and driven, they often experience anxiety and stress due to the pressure to establish themselves in their careers. Participants in this study perceive themselves as more likely to experience work-related burnout since they are still establishing their leadership skills while maintaining their personal health. The following data is derived from the respondents and highlights these findings:

"Being in my 30s, I'm still building my career, which means I'm constantly pushing myself to prove that I can handle the pressures of leadership. It's rewarding, but also very exhausting." (Participant 14)

"I'm committed to my role and my team, but I do feel the weight of the expectations on me. It's challenging to keep up, and sometimes it feels like my personal life takes a back seat." (Participant 6)

According to these findings, academic age and career stage have a profound impact on how they experience and manage leadership responsibilities (Beaupre, 2022). The older participants appear to be able to effectively handle the demands of leadership through their experience, while the younger participants have to deal with the dual challenge of establishing their careers and managing the pressures that accompany their role as leaders.

4.8 Academic Position and Their Leadership Style

The leadership style of academics varies significantly based on their position within the university hierarchy. Professors and other senior academics often adopt leadership styles that reflect their extensive experience and the broader responsibilities associated with their role. Those who are junior academics, such as lecturers or research assistants, may approach leadership based on the principles of collaboration and learning.

Senior academics tend to describe their leadership style as directive and strategic, utilizing their experience to guide their teams toward achieving long-term goals. The following comments were made by participant 5, a senior lecturer:

"In my role as a senior leader, I believe that my leadership style consists of setting a clear direction and ensuring my teams have all the resources they need to succeed. Throughout my career, I have learned that effective leadership is characterized by decisiveness and maintaining a broad perspective."

This sentiment was echoed by another senior academic, Participant 13, who stressed the importance of experience:

"Since I have been in academia for several decades, my leadership style is focused on mentorship and strategic oversight. By empowering my team to take initiative, I ensure that we remain aligned with the university's objectives."

In contrast, junior academics tend to adopt a more collaborative, participatory leadership style, since they are more familiar with the day-to-day challenges their colleagues and students face. The following statement was made by participant 15, a research assistant:

"In my role as a new lecturer, I have learned that my leadership style is largely collaborative. I am encouraged to work closely with my colleagues in order to share insights and support one another, which allows me to grow as a leader while contributing to our collective success."

Likewise, participant 2 also stressed the importance of learning from others:

"My position provides me with the opportunity to learn from more experienced colleagues, so I see my leadership role as one of facilitation and support. I strive to create an environment that encourages colleagues to share ideas and take the lead on project planning."

Based on these findings, academic positions play a significant role in determining the leadership style of an individual in academia (Akanji et al., 2019). A more directive and strategic approach is predominant among senior academics, while a more collaborative and participatory approach is prevalent among junior academics. Taking into account this dynamic, it is vital that leadership development programs are tailored to the specific needs and experiences of academics at different career stages.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the dissertation's findings concerning the central research questions, with a particular focus on

how these findings align with and contribute to existing leadership theories. The discussion highlights the relevance and significance of gender-influenced leadership styles, cultural and age-related differences, and the impact of academic positions on leadership effectiveness within the framework of academic leadership theories. The analysis draws on transformational and transactional leadership theories to interpret the observed differences and their implications. Furthermore, the chapter provides recommendations for universities and governments aiming to increase leadership effectiveness and well-being in educational settings, emphasizing the practical applications of leadership theories in these contexts. This study also acknowledges limitations and makes recommendations for future research to enhance its validity and reliability. Toward the end of the chapter, the researcher reflects on the challenges encountered during the completion of this dissertation and shares insights gained from the experience.

Following are the main research questions that guided the study's examination of leadership styles and effectiveness:

Do gender-influenced leadership styles differ between the Universities of Leicester, Manchester, and King's University College Canada?

What is the impact of gender-influenced leadership styles on academic leadership effectiveness in these institutions?

The role of institutional and cultural contexts in mediating the relationship between gender and the effectiveness of leadership at these institutions?

5.1.1 Do gender-influenced leadership styles differ between the Universities of Leicester, Manchester, and King's University College Canada?

Significant differences were observed between gendered leadership styles at the University of Leicester, the University of Manchester, and King's University College Canada. These differences are closely related to the unique cultural and institutional context of each university, as well as the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study.

At the University of Leicester, where there is a relatively equal representation of males and females among academics, leadership styles tend to emphasize inclusion and collaboration, aligning closely with transformational leadership theory. This approach, characterized by team cohesion and shared decision-making, particularly among female leaders, supports Bass and Avolio's (1996) assertions that transformational leadership fosters a supportive work environment. The alignment between this and the university's broader commitment to gender equity suggests a strong institutional influence on leadership dynamics, promoting a transformational approach that enhances collaborative and relational leadership styles.

Conversely, the University of Manchester, with its substantial male majority among the academic staff, exhibits a leadership style more aligned with transactional leadership theory. The findings of the study indicate that male academics at Manchester prioritize task completion, efficiency, and control, in line with Eagly and Carli's (2003) description of transactional leadership, which focuses on exchanges between leader and follower. While female leaders are few in number, they report pressure to conform to this dominant style, leading to increased stress and challenges in maintaining work-life balance. This tension between the dominant transactional style and the transformational inclinations of female leaders highlights the complexities of navigating leadership within a performance-oriented culture.

King's University College Canada represents a middle ground, encompassing both transformational and transactional components, reflecting the hybrid leadership models discussed by Yukl (2013). The university's diverse faculty contributes to leadership approaches that are both inclusive and results oriented. Female leaders at King's often demonstrate a hybrid style, combining empathy and support while focusing on organizational objectives, echoing the adaptive leadership strategies that balance transformational and transactional elements. This reflects the university's cultural emphasis on both academic excellence and community well-being, with leaders effectively managing high standards while fostering a supportive work environment.

This study indicates that leadership styles differ not only by gender but also by the institutional cultures and expectations unique to each institution. According to this research, transformational leadership is more prevalent in environments that value collaboration and inclusion, while transactional leadership dominates in performance-driven contexts. Academics at these institutions adapt their leadership styles in response to both personal and institutional demands, with challenges and opportunities varying significantly according to the university's culture and gender dynamics. These insights provide

a deeper understanding of how gender and institutional context interact with leadership theories to shape leadership effectiveness in academia.

5.1.2 What is the impact of gender-influenced leadership styles on academic leadership effectiveness in these institutions?

The impact of gender-influenced leadership styles on academic leadership effectiveness is evident across the three institutions studied, with each exhibiting different alignments with leadership theories.

At the University of Leicester, the balanced representation of women and men has fostered a leadership environment where transformational leadership, often associated with female leaders, enhances team cohesion, job satisfaction, and overall performance. This approach aligns with Bass and Avolio's (1996) theory that transformational leadership encourages innovation and problem-solving, both essential to academic success. The study's findings support the idea that a collaborative environment driven by transformational leadership can lead to improved academic outcomes and a more positive organizational climate.

In contrast, the University of Manchester's male-dominated leadership structure leans toward transactional leadership, emphasizing task completion, efficiency, and performance metrics. While this approach may be effective for achieving short-term goals, Diebig, Bormann and Roword (2016) warns of the potential downsides, including higher levels of stress and burnout, particularly among female leaders who struggle to align with this style. The study suggests that the hierarchical and authoritative nature of transactional leadership at Manchester may inhibit the collaborative and innovative leadership necessary for long-term organizational effectiveness.

King's University College Canada's leadership structure reflects a combination of transformational and transactional styles, embodying the adaptive leadership model described by Eagly and Carli's (2003). This hybrid approach enables leaders to balance the need for empathetic, supportive leadership with a strong focus on academic results. The study suggests that leaders who can navigate this complex blend of expectations are more effective in achieving both institutional and team goals. However, the effectiveness of leadership at King's is highly dependent on the leader's ability to integrate and adapt both styles to meet diverse challenges.

5.1.3 The role of institutional and cultural contexts in mediating the relationship between gender and the effectiveness of leadership at these institutions

The study highlights the significant role of institutional and cultural contexts in shaping the relationship between gender and leadership effectiveness, emphasizing the relevance of leadership theories in understanding these dynamics.

In collectivist cultures, such as those with a significant Chinese presence, leadership approaches often emphasize group harmony, collaboration, and collective success, aligning with transformational leadership theory. Female leaders in these environments are more likely to adopt transformational styles that prioritize team cohesion and emotional support, consistent with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Collard, 2007). While this can create a more inclusive and supportive workplace, the study notes the potential for increased stress as leaders balance their personal goals with the demands of transformational leadership.

In contrast, individualistic cultures, often found in Western institutions, tend to evaluate leadership effectiveness through the lens of personal accomplishments and measurable results. This environment is more conducive to transactional leadership styles, particularly among male leaders, who focus on task completion, autonomy, and direct accountability. The study suggests that while this approach can drive performance, it may also foster a competitive and less collaborative environment, contrasting with the relationship-focused styles of female leaders.

The findings underscore that effective leadership is not one-size-fits-all but is deeply influenced by the intersection of gender, cultural context, and institutional dynamics. The study contributes to leadership theory by demonstrating how these factors interact to shape leadership effectiveness in academia, offering insights into how different environments can either facilitate or hinder the application of transformational and transactional leadership styles.

5.2 Implications and Recommendations

The implications of this study suggest a strategic approach that goes beyond immediate interventions and considers long-term institutional changes to address the identified challenges in academic leadership. The implications of this study include

the need for universities to re-evaluate their leadership training and development programs. The study highlights the importance of gender-sensitive programs that acknowledge the distinct challenges that female leaders face, particularly in managing work-life balance, as well as the additional demands associated with leadership positions (Balbo and Marensi, 2021). These programs should not only equip leaders with the necessary skills but also provide ongoing support systems, such as mentorship and peer networks. This can help female leaders navigate the complexities of their roles.

Moreover, the study indicates that academic leaders' well-being has an intrinsic connection to their effectiveness. Thus, universities should consider how workload and stress affect leadership performance. The institution may need to introduce a broader range of well-being initiatives, such as mental health resources, structured downtime, and policies designed to prevent employee burnout (Gabriel et al., 2022). A variety of initiatives should be designed to meet the unique needs of academic leaders, who often face distinct pressures not encountered by those in other professions.

The university should consider implementing policies that will promote a more equitable distribution of leadership responsibilities. This may include mentoring programs designed to assist female academics in ascending to senior positions and fostering an environment that values diversity in leadership styles (Lester and Kezar, 2017). Ensuring that leadership roles are accessible and supportive for all genders can improve leadership effectiveness within the academic setting.

Furthermore, the institutional context should be carefully examined and adapted as necessary to ensure that cultural differences are respected and harnessed as an asset. For instance, it would be beneficial for academic institutions to establish platforms for cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration, which would serve as a means for leaders from different backgrounds to exchange best practices and develop culturally competent leadership strategies. Developing leadership initiatives that encourage a more inclusive environment can benefit both male and female leaders through their diverse perspectives.

The study indicated that academic leader's well-being is significantly correlated with their leadership effectiveness, and therefore universities should actively monitor and address their well-being. An institution could introduce well-being support systems, such as regular check-ins with the leadership team, access to mental health resources, and activities that promote a healthy work-life balance, especially for those in leadership positions that require a great deal of time commitment.

Lastly, a broader perspective would be for policy makers to review and possibly reform the regulations surrounding academic leadership to make sure that certain groups are not inadvertently prejudiced. A flexible working policy could be introduced to facilitate this process, which would help leaders better manage the pressures associated with their roles.

5.3 Limitations of the Research

While this study provides valuable insight into the ways in which gender influences leadership styles in academic settings, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the study's scope was confined to three universities: the University of Leicester, the University of Manchester, and King's University College Canada. Even though these institutions are recognized for providing a diverse academic environment, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other universities that have a different cultural or institutional context, especially those located outside the United Kingdom. Also, there is a possibility that the academic environments and leadership structures within these three universities are unique and do not reflect all aspects of higher education.

Second, even though the mixed-method approach enhanced the robustness of the study, the sample size was relatively small, particularly for the qualitative component of the study. Despite the rich, in-depth insights provided by the interviews, the limited number of 15 respondents may not adequately capture the diversity of leadership experiences across a wide range of departmental departments and levels of seniority within the universities studied (Clarke and Braun, 2016). Additionally, although the quantitative survey drew 47 participants, its findings may be limited by the specific institutional contexts within the three universities (University of Leicester, University of Manchester, and King's University College Canada). It is possible that these institutions have unique characteristics that do not reflect the broader higher education landscape, especially internationally.

Thirdly, both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study rely heavily on self-reported data, which increases the possibility of bias (Clarke and Braun, 2016). The participants may have exhibited favourability due to social desirability, leading them to present themselves in a favourable light or align their responses to perceived institutional norms.

Consequently, the results may be skewed, particularly in sensitive areas such as gender dynamics and challenges related to leadership. Despite efforts to mitigate these biases by providing anonymity and designing carefully worded questionnaires, the subjective nature of self-reporting remains a limitation.

Moreover, the study focuses on gender as the primary variable associated with leadership style and effectiveness. Despite the necessity of such a focus to answer the research questions, it may have overshadowed other critical factors such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, and professional discipline, which also shape leadership experiences in concert with gender. The future research on this topic may benefit from an approach that considers these additional dimensions in an intersectional context.

5.4 Future Research Agenda

Based on the insights gained from this dissertation, future research should expand the scope of the study to encompass a broader range of universities across a variety of cultural and institutional settings. A future study could explore how varying institutional policies and cultural expectations influence leadership style and effectiveness in a broader range of academic environments, both within and outside of the United Kingdom. Furthermore, future research could explore how gender intersects with other factors, including ethnicity, age, and academic discipline, to uncover more nuanced dynamics in leadership.

Another avenue for research would be to conduct a longitudinal study in order to gauge the long-term impact of leadership styles on academic performance and well-being over time. This would enable a better understanding of how different leadership approaches may evolve and affect outcomes in a scholarly setting as societal expectations and institutional demands evolve. Moreover, the integration of quantitative methodologies and qualitative insights may provide a comprehensive understanding of how gender influences leadership styles in academic life, including faculty retention, student satisfaction, and research output.

Lastly, future research should examine the impact of emerging trends in higher education, such as the increased use of digital learning platforms and remote working, on leadership styles and effectiveness. The transition towards more technologically advanced and flexible academic environments may require a different approach to leadership, which will provide valuable insights to current and future academic leaders. Ultimately, the findings of this dissertation provide a foundation for future studies in higher education leadership, which will have a significant impact on the ongoing discourse on leadership.

5.5 Conclusions

This dissertation examines both theoretical and empirical aspects of gender and leadership in academia, aiming to improve understanding of how gender influences leadership styles and effectiveness. The study explored the way gendered dynamics manifest within academic institutions through an integration of transformational and transactional leadership theories, particularly through the lens of cultural and institutional factors. A comparative examination of leadership practices at Leicester University, Manchester University, and King's University College Canada revealed persistent gender imbalances and structural challenges inhibiting the achievement of gender parity in senior academic positions.

The outcomes of a mixed-methods study revealed that gender, culture, age, and academic position are significant factors influencing leadership in academia. For instance, female leaders often experience compounded stress due to their caregiving obligations, which stands in contrast to their collaborative leadership styles. Additionally, cultural differences contribute to variations in leadership priorities, with collectivist cultures emphasizing group harmony while individualistic cultures value autonomy. Similarly, seniority and age contributed to leadership styles, with experienced scholars favouring a directive approach. These findings emphasise the importance of emotional well-being as a determinant of leadership effectiveness, advocating tailored leadership development programs to meet the needs of individuals.

This dissertation contributes to the broader discourse within academia on gender and leadership by synthesising these perspectives. The research highlights the urgent need for institutional barriers to gender equality in leadership to be dismantled through systematic interventions. Strategies should be developed to promote inclusive leadership models, encourage work-life balance, and promote culturally responsive frameworks that support diverse leadership practices in the

future. The adoption of these measures is essential to increasing the competitiveness of academic institutions and ensuring their sustainability in an increasingly globalised and diverse environment.

5.6 Reflections of the Study

The experience of writing this dissertation has been both enriching and challenging. This project required extensive research, which had to be balanced with other academic responsibilities. The deep dive into the topic of gender-influenced leadership styles and their impact on academic effectiveness provided a wealth insights, but also posed a number of challenges, particularly in terms of managing time effectively and maintaining the momentum necessary to complete the dissertation. This research was particularly intensive in terms of data collection and analysis, requiring careful planning and execution in order to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The effort put into understanding the nuances of leadership in different institutional and cultural contexts has not only deepened my knowledge in this field but also confirmed the complexities involved in academic leadership. This project has solidified author's passion for academic research, and excited to continue this journey with PhD studies at the University of Manchester this September. The completion of this dissertation has been a significant milestone in the author's academic career, motivating author to investigate further research questions that remain unanswered and to make a significant contribution to the field of academic leadership and well-being.

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