

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT STYLES THROUGH THE LENS OF WOMEN MANAGERS IN SOFTWARE COMPANIES, CEBU, PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative research study investigates the leadership and management styles from the perspective of Women Leaders in Software Companies in Cebu Business Park, Cebu, Philippines. This study aims to shed light on the experiences of female executives in the software sector and to pinpoint the elements that contributed to their success. Fifteen female leaders with at least three years of experience in the IT industry were chosen by purposive sampling to participate in the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis and the results showed that Women Managers in Cebu's Software Firms displayed a variety of leadership and management styles including democratic, paternalistic, authoritative, and laissez-faire management styles. The study also considered that the participants dealt with difficulties in their employment which included lack



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of work-life balance, career advancement issues, health concerns from work stressors, lack of support networks, and gender bias. Results of this study may help address these challenges in Software Companies by guiding the creation of leadership development programs and support groups, enhancing flexible work arrangements, programs to address gender bias against women, and other initiatives specific for the women leaders in Cebu Business Park. This study shows the need for more research on the leadership in this profession and help understand the experiences and leadership by the women leaders in the IT industry.

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in organizations and society in general is evolving. There has been an increase in the prominence of women in leadership positions over the recent decades. Many more women are serving as leaders in businesses, higher education, nonprofit ventures, government, and other areas of life worldwide. In contemporary discourse, specifically in the Software Industry, the experiences and possibilities available to Women Managers are greatly impacted by the applied leadership and management styles. Comprehending the subtleties of leadership and management becomes crucial for these firms as they maneuver through complex technology environments and fiercely competitive markets, especially when considering gender relations. In recent years, women have become more prominent in leadership roles, indicating a larger social development towards gender equality and inclusion. Even with the development in place, inequalities, and obstacles still affect women managers and their careers in the Software Industry. In light of this, studying the relationship between management styles, leadership, and experiences of Women Managers in the Software Industry adds to the body of knowledge already in existence. It has application to organizational practices, policies, and initiatives that promote gender diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace.

According to Drucker, “organization is a tool for making people productive when working together.” The author forecasted that the understanding of knowledge workers could be the center of the management of people. However, he realized that in most organizations in the 21st century, there should be a leader for a team aside from just managing the people (Drucker, 2012).

In the past years, it became clear that his forecasts needed to be corrected. There are numerous interrelationships that globalization has brought into a business that have altered not only the focus from people management to team leading but also the scope of leadership and the leader’s responsibilities (Carter & Greer, 2013)

Leadership and management styles provide the different approaches leaders take to support and guide a team in an organization. All leaders have the same responsibilities, but management styles describe how different types

of leaders specifically use their managerial and leadership skills to motivate team members. Common management styles include Paternalist, Democratic, Autocratic, and Laissez-Faire, which are not only limited to a business-organization setup but to a wide range of organizations (Malkoc & Dal, 2021).

Related Literature. Politics, business, and social activity are just a few areas where women leaders have been critical to growth and change. With their leadership, boundaries, and preconceptions have been challenged, as well as the traditional gender roles. Several studies have demonstrated the benefits of having more women in leadership roles for organizational performance and effectiveness and for advancing gender equality and diversity. In her book *Lean In*, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg stated that “fairer treatment for all women will lead to greater female leadership, and more female leaders will lead to fair treatment for all women.” (Sandberg, 2013)

Despite efforts to participate in leadership roles, women are still underrepresented in such roles in businesses, higher education institutions, and the political sphere. They bring to the exercise of leadership an arsenal of strengths that are increasingly received to benefit the organizations they lead nationally or globally (Alotaibi, Cutting, & Morgan, 2017).

In the recent meta-analysis by Pew Research Center, it was found that female leaders are likelier than male leaders to display compassion, particularly in leadership effectiveness behavior. The authors speculate that this might be because society expects women to be nurturing and caring. They are more likely to encounter bias and discrimination at work, which may make them more sympathetic to other people, (Horowitz, Igielink, & Parker, 2018)

This is because compassion contributes to developing a welcoming and secure work environment. Compassionate leadership has also been connected to reducing workplace stress and burnout (Kim, et al., 2018).

In 2021, the Society for Human Resource Management highlights the progress made by women in leadership positions and their increasing representation in Fortune 500 companies. The article notes that women’s representation on corporate boards has also increased, with 29% of board seats in the Fortune 500 held by women in 2020 (Hincliffe, 2023). The article attributes this progress to a combination of factors, including the growing recognition of the business case for diversity and inclusion, the advocacy efforts of women’s groups and initiatives to promote gender equality, and the increasing pool of highly qualified women leaders.

Businesses should understand that gender diversity in leadership teams can improve decision-making. Women’s opinions help us explore possibilities more thoroughly and consider potential outcomes more broadly. Organizations should make a concerted effort to build diverse leadership teams in terms of backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints. This entails combating prejudices, providing equal opportunities, and fostering inclusivity. The existence of varied opinions is consistent with collaborative leadership styles that value open communication and teamwork (Duguid, 2011).

Women Leaders are frequently characterized as being more inclusive, compassionate, and collaborative than men. They are more likely to embrace a transformational leadership style, which stresses empowering and encouraging followers to attain their goals (Eagly & Carli, 2018). Women are also more likely to embrace a democratic leadership style, prioritizing group participation and decision-making.

The under-representation of women in organizations especially in IT leadership positions is a significant challenge for the industry. Women face several challenges in these positions, including gender bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. However, having women in IT leadership positions can benefit IT companies significantly, including increased innovation and financial performance. Employing strategies such as promoting diversity and inclusion and providing leadership development programs for women can help increase the number of women in IT leadership roles. As organizations increasingly recognize the value of diverse leadership, it is evident that fostering the growth, development, and representation of women leaders in IT companies is not only a matter of equity but a strategic imperative for innovation and success in the digital age.

Related Studies. Many studies have been conducted on women in leadership roles, exploring topics such as the impact of gender on leadership effectiveness, the barriers women face in ascending to leadership positions, and the unique leadership styles and traits of women leaders.

A study by Eagly and Carli (2007) found that while men are more inclined to take a directive and authoritarian approach, women tend to have a more democratic and participative leadership style emphasizing teamwork and collaboration. This suggests that gender differences in leadership styles can impact on organizational outcomes.

Another study examined the impact of gender on leadership effectiveness, finding that though female leaders may encounter additional obstacles to success due to gender preconceptions and bias, they can be just as productive as male leaders, (Eagly et al., 1995).

Additionally, another study found that women's emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience in leadership roles tend to be higher than those of men, which can help foster inclusive and collaborative work settings, (Catalyst, 2018).

Women's representation in organizations, specifically in the IT industry has been a research topic for many years. One study analyzed women's experiences in management positions in the IT industry. The study found that women in management frequently struggle with issues like loneliness, a lack of support from peers, and unfavorable stereotypes. However, the study also found elements that assist women in overcoming these obstacles, such as having a solid support system, taking charge of their professional advancement, and being proactive in forging connections with coworkers, (Warne, Bandias, & Fuller, 2011).

The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles has driven the need for targeted development programs. Another point in the study by Catalyst underscores the business case for gender diversity in leadership and shows that teams of executives in firms with diversity typically perform better. This justification has prompted the establishment of initiatives intended to remove obstacles and improve women's leadership potential, (Catalyst, 2018).

The "glass ceiling" metaphor represents the invisible hurdles that prevent women from advancing to high-level positions. Catalyst's study (2018) shows that the glass ceiling, which restricts women's advancement in organizations, is frequently created by societal expectations. The report stressed the need to question these assumptions and give women pathways to leadership positions.

Overall, these studies suggest that women managers in the IT industry face unique challenges but also bring valuable skills and perspectives to their roles. To increase the representation of women in IT management, it is important to address the factors that contribute to gender bias and to create more supportive and inclusive workplace cultures.

This research aims to shed light on women's leadership and management styles in Software Companies, examining the perspectives of Women Managers on their leadership philosophies in organizations where men predominate. Women have twice as many obstacles to overcome when climbing the corporate ladder in a company where men make up most of all positions, from top executives to lower-level managers. This study aims to uncover the possibilities that women leaders face and the daily obstacles they must overcome to fulfill their positions. This research adds to a deeper knowledge of effective leadership practices by discovering particular leadership skills and traits in women who have successfully executed change, primarily inside the Software Industry. Moreover, the study aims to evaluate the effects of this study on the Organization's daily operations and encourage the adoption of more gender-inclusive leadership practices. The findings of this study will guide the creation of improvement and intervention plans meant to improve and achieve better leadership and management through increased representation of women in the Organization.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is qualitative phenomenological approach and it employs in-depth semi-structured interviews to gather data aligned to determine the existing Leadership Characteristics and Management Styles of the Key Informants.

The study focuses on Software Companies in Cebu Business Park, Cebu, Philippines. Cebu Business Park (CBP) is the central business district of Cebu, developed by Ayala Land subsidiary, Cebu Holdings Inc.

The Key Informants include selected Top-, Middle-, and Low-level Managers of the determined Software Companies in Cebu Business Park. This study focused on Women Employees who are classified as Leads or

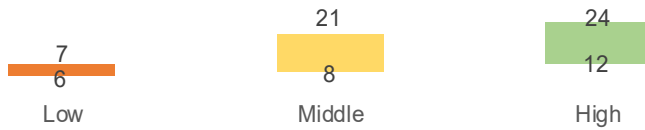
Managers and are tasked to lead or manage a specific group based on their job description. Below is the breakdown of the Key Informants per Management Level:

Table 1. *Key Informants Distribution*

Key Informants	Frequency
Low-level	3
Mid-level	6
Top-level	6

The Key Informants of this study represent a range of demographic characteristics such as years in the IT Industry and current designation ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the local Software Industry.

Figure 1. *Key Informants Years of Service*



Below are the ranges for the years of service the Women Managers have per management level:

The Low-level Managers present at least six (6) to seven (7) years of service. Mid-level has at least eight (8) to twenty-one (21) and Top-level managers raise a span from twelve (12) years to an ongoing twenty-four (24) years in the Software Industry.

There are different roles that each management level has implemented and adapted therefore the Key Informants designation is complex. Below is the designation of the Key Informants:

Table 2. *Designation of Women Leaders*

Low-level	Mid-level	Top-level
Project Lead	Development Team Lead	Service Delivery Head
Technical Lead	Project Manager	Project Manager Head
	Technical Project Manager	Vice President for Operations
	Business Analyst Manager	Director for Operations
		Assistant Vice President for Service Delivery

It is important to consider that there are Women Managers who were transitioning to a higher position when the study took place; however, their current role as reflected in their Human Resource records, was used in this

study.

The instrument used consists of questions asked during the in-depth semi-structured interview of each Key Informant involved. The questions that were asked were in the English language, but answers were in any dialect as they were most comfortable. Aside from the demographic questions, they were asked to describe how they manage and lead, the opportunities and challenges they encounter as a Woman Leader, their challenges as a woman, and how they balance life outside their work.

The Researcher wrote to the Vice President for Academics and the Dean of the Graduate School of University of Bohol to ask for approval to conduct the study. The Researcher opted to use online query to obtain the total number of registered Software Companies in CBP because the letter addressed to the management of CBP did not receive favorable feedback.

After the Software Companies were identified, the Researcher recruited Women Managers and Leads through LinkedIn. A message was sent to the invited potential Key Informants containing the purpose of the study, the confidentiality and the do-no harm clauses were included to ensure that the potential Key Informants are informed of their rights and expectations of the interview. Once the approval was acquired and the signed Informed Consent, the Researcher sent out a Microsoft Teams invitation for the conduct of the interview. The Key Informants were informed that the interview was to be recorded and transcribed as part of the study's requirements. In case they were not comfortable answering the questions, the interview was stopped and not pushed through.

The data obtained was analyzed by thematic analysis method, specifically the inductive thematic approach where themes and codes were identified based on the transcribed in-depth interview. The Researcher translated the interviews into the English language and transcribed each interview. The Qualitative Research Software, MAXQDA 24 was used to properly arrange the profiles, transcripts, and potential codes and themes.

After the familiarization with the data is the coding of the data. Coding involves systematically identifying and labeling segments of data with descriptive or interpretive labels, known as codes. These codes represent the most basic units of analysis and capture key concepts, ideas, or patterns within the data.

Data themes started appearing after a significant portion of the data were coded. Themes are patterns or clusters of codes that are relevant to the research question or objectives. Potential themes are identified by similarities, differences, or relationships among the codes. The data within each theme was checked if these make sense together and if they contribute to a deeper understanding of the research question. It may be necessary to merge, split, or rename themes based on this review process. After refining the themes, these were named and defined. For this research, the preferred themes will be (1) leadership characteristics; (2) management style; and (3) other factors.

Once the themes have been finalized, the narrative analysis was written. This involved synthesizing the findings within each theme and presenting them in a coherent and organized manner. The explanations and interpretations to illustrate each theme was provided. The narrative was able to tell a compelling story that addresses the research question and highlights the key insights derived from the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Key Informants were asked six (6) questions about their different Leadership and Management styles and their day-to-day experiences in and outside work. Follow-up questions were asked in the middle of each item to further guide the Key Informants in discussing their answers.

Describing One's Leadership and Management Styles

In the first question, the Key informants were asked to describe their Leadership and Management styles and how they lead and manage their Teams. The study's findings showed a multifaceted picture of leadership and management styles among Women Leaders in the Software Industry.

Several themes were identified based on the description provided by the Key Informants during the in-depth interview. The most common themes are their leadership style, where leading by example, empowerment, and collaboration are the most common among the management levels. Another prominent theme is the ability to be adaptable and flexible, where they emphasized the importance of adapting to different situations while still fostering collaboration and open communication within the Team. In the management aspect, Team Management has a heavy weight for Women Managers as they put emphasis on task delegation, priority setting, and managing the performance of the Team to achieve a common goal. Leadership Development as a key theme is also one thing that the Key Informants underscore, having identified that as leaders, it fulfills them to identify and train potential Leaders.

The table below shows the different prominent Leadership characteristic and Management Style along with the identified gaps per Management Level:

Table 3. *How Women Leaders Manage and Lead their Team*

Management Level	Leadership Characteristics	Management Style	Gaps
Low-level	Results-oriented approach prioritizing strategic decision-making and collaboration	Combination of Democratic and Laissez-Faire	Need for more guidance and support in leadership skill development, challenges in building trust, and potential issues in effective task delegation
Mid-level	Emphasis on effective communication, inclusive decision-making and team empowerment	Paternalistic Approach	Challenges in aligning with Agile principles, obstacles in collaboration with higher-level executive and balancing support with accountability.
Top-level	Empowerment. Leading by example	Democratic Approach	Need to explore how empowerment practices are implemented throughout the organization and challenges in determining the impact of leadership styles

At the Low-level, Women Managers prioritize achieving results through strategic decision-making and fostering collaboration within their teams. They aim to empower their team members and create a culture of trust and transparency. However, challenges arise in maintaining trust among their teams, which is crucial for effective leadership. Also, they may struggle with delegating tasks effectively, indicating a potential gap in their leadership capability. While they exhibit a blend of Democratic and Laissez-Faire management styles, they may benefit from more guidance and support in developing their leadership skills and navigating their roles within the organization.

Mid-level Women Managers strongly emphasize effective communication, inclusive decision-making, and team empowerment. They strive to create an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and contribute to better outcomes. However, challenge exists in aligning their management approach with Agile Management Principles and in fostering collaboration with higher-level management. Balancing support and accountability for team performance also presents a significant challenge for them. Despite these obstacles, they remain adaptable to change and resilient in navigating the industry.

Top-level Managers lead by example, demonstrating integrity, dedication, and a commitment to excellence in their actions and decisions. They promote a Democratic Management style, encouraging collaboration and participation among their teams in decision-making processes. However, challenges arise in implementing empowerment practices throughout the organization and measuring the impact of leadership styles. Top-level Women Managers recognize the importance of adaptability and flexibility in leadership, particularly in challenging times, and they are committed to grooming future

leaders.

Despite the differences, all the Management levels underscore the dedication and resilience required to navigate the complexities of the software industry while fostering growth and innovation within their teams and organizations.

It could be worth noting that Women Leaders in the Software industry lean more on Collaboration and Inclusivity in their leadership approaches, among others. This is aligned with Eagly and Carli (2007), and Eagly et al. (2003) discussed that women leaders tend to foster a more collaborative leadership approach that underscores teamwork, communication, and inclusivity.

On the other hand, regarding management styles, it is worth considering that Women Managers adapt a democratic management style. This encompasses inclusive decision-making and soliciting input from the Team. Again, Eagly & Carli (2003), expressed that Women Managers are inclined to adopt a more participative and consultative approach to leadership, emphasizing a culture of collaboration and communication.

While there are Women Leaders who adopt a Laissez-faire management approach, it is not the most prevalent style in managing the team as Women Managers promote and prioritize collaboration, empowerment, and active engagement with their teams.

Effectiveness in Enforcing Command

In terms of enforcing command, the Key Informants were asked how they view their leadership and management styles and whether they think they effectively enforce command over their teammates. Common themes include assessing if the Women Leaders believe they are effective in enforcing command and its relationship to effective communication.

The table below shows the perspectives of the Women Leaders in enforcing command along with the identified gaps per Management Level:

Table 4. *Effectiveness in Enforcing Command in Teams*

Management Level	Leadership Characteristics	Management Style	Gaps
Low-level	Collaboration and empowerment	Combination of Paternalistic and Autocratic Styles	Lack of clarity and consistency in leadership practices, challenges in building trust, and issues with task delegation
Mid-level	Collaboration, empowerment, and shared decision-making	Varied. Some leaning to Autocratic Style and other towards Democratic approach	Facing gender bias, stereotype threat, and limited opportunities for advancement
Top-level	Empowerment, collaboration, and trust-building	Mostly Democratic with some elements of Autocratic Management Style	Pressure to conform to traditional leadership norms in male-dominated industries, challenges in implementing empowerment practices throughout the organization

Low-level Managers prioritize collaboration and empowerment within their Teams. They adopt a combination of Paternalistic and Autocratic Style, emphasizing clear instructions and expectations. However, challenges arise in maintaining consistency and clarity in leadership practices and building trust among their Team. Also, issues with effective task delegation may hinder team productivity and development. Despite these challenges, Low-level Women Managers believe in the effectiveness of their leadership and management styles, which are rooted in their individual beliefs and experiences.

Mid-level Women Managers emphasize collaboration, empowerment, and shared decision-making processes. While some may adopt an Autocratic approach in enforcing commands, others lean towards more collaborative and Democratic approaches. These managers face unique challenges such as gender bias and limited advancement approaches. Additionally, aligning with Agile Management Principles poses challenges, requiring them to adapt and innovate in their leadership approaches. Despite these obstacles, Mid-level Managers remain resilient and focused on translating organizational goals into actionable plans.

At the Top-level Management, Women Leaders prioritize collaboration, empowerment, and trust-building. They tend to adopt collaboration or Democratic Management Style, with the elements of Autocratic Leadership when necessary. These managers face pressure to conform to traditional leadership norms in male-dominated industries, but they remain committed to creating inclusive environments where Women Leaders can thrive. Challenges include implementing empowerment practices throughout the organization and navigating complexities in enforcing commands while promoting collaboration and shared decision-making processes.

Across Management Levels, Women Managers display a spectrum of Leadership Styles, ranging from directive to participative. While some Managers are firm believers in the effectiveness of enforcing commands,

others recognize the need for flexibility and adaptation in their approach. They understand that not only the Leadership Style employed determines the effectiveness of enforcing commands but also other factors such as organizational culture, team dynamics, and the nature of tasks at hand.

Opportunities Encountered as a Leader

Being a leader has its benefits. The Key Informants were asked about the different opportunities they encountered when they took on the leadership role.

The table below shows the opportunities encountered by the Women along with the identified gaps per Management Level:

Table 5. *Opportunities Encountered as a Leader*

Management Level	Opportunities	Leadership Characteristics	Management Style	Gaps
Low-level	Personal and Professional Growth	Resilience and adaptability	Combination of Autocratic and Democratic	Lack of broader understanding of organizational impact and strategic thinking
Mid-level	Driving Organizational changes, process improvement, strategic leadership, and mentoring future leaders	Collaboration	Democratic	Limited emphasis on driving organizational change and strategic initiatives
Top-level	Leveraging Professional Networks, driving Organizational impact, strategic initiatives, and mentoring future leaders	Empowerment and Collaboration	Democratic	Need for more specificity in leveraging opportunities for professional growth and driving organizational impact

Low-level Managers have the opportunities to focus on personal and professional growth, understanding broad organizational impact, and strategic thinking. However, there's a need to cultivate intrinsic motivation and strategic vision rather than relying solely on external validation. At the same time, they exhibit resilience and adaptability, exploring with flexibility and adapting to changing circumstances. They also tend to adopt a combination of Autocratic and Democratic management styles, providing clear instructions while remaining open to adjustments as needed. However, a gap exists in understanding broader organizational impact and strategic thinking. While personal growth and recognition are values, there's a need to develop a deeper strategic vision and intrinsic motivation.

Mid-level Managers identify opportunities such as driving organizational change, processing improvement, and strategic leadership. However, there is a need to focus more on leading change initiatives and managing transitions effectively aside from personal growth. They also prioritize collaboration and

synergy, fostering a culture of team work and cooperation to achieve common goals. They also prefer a Democratic Management approach, promoting teamwork and flexibility to embrace change and innovation. Concerns are expressed about limited emphasis on driving organizational change and strategic initiatives. There is a need for more focus on leading change initiatives and managing transitions effectively aside from personal growth.

Top-level Managers have the opportunity to leverage professional networks, drive organizational impact, and strategic initiatives. However, there is a need to align these opportunities more closely with leadership effectiveness and organizational success. Confidence and collaboration are notable leadership characteristics among this level, inspiring their teams to achieve success. Moreover, they exhibit Democratic approach, prioritizing collaboration and empowerment to create an environment where every team feels valued and supported. However, there is a need for more specificity in leveraging opportunities for professional growth and driving organizational impact. While personal and professional development are values, there is a need to align these opportunities more closely with leadership effectiveness and organizational success.

Like any other Management Level, continuous learning is integral to personal growth, with Key Informants wanting to stay updated and expand their skill sets. Work-life balance is prioritized, acknowledging the importance of personal well-being with professional responsibilities on the side.

As observed, collaboration plays a recurring theme across all management levels. Women Leaders in the Software Industry underscore the importance of collaborating within and outside their organizations to adopt innovation, achieve common goals, and promote professional and personal advancement.

While it has not been openly stated, there is an accent on supporting and guiding colleagues, fostering future leaders, and distinguishing individual contributions which propose a compassionate and empathic leadership approach.

The most prominent management style displayed in this sub-theme is Democratic Management, where Women Managers take a democratic approach by involving the Team in the decision-making process, supporting their development and advancement, and fostering a culture of appreciation and empowerment. Inclusivity is also evident in the emphasis on collaboration and mentorship. This prioritizes the creation of a conducive work environment where every member feels valued and supported.

Challenges Faced as a Woman Leader in the Working Environment

If there are opportunities, as leaders, Women Managers also face challenges in their day-to-day operations. Based on the in-depth interviews, their experiences revealing different themes, specifically their challenges, which shape their leadership journey.

The table below shows the challenges of the Women Leaders in the working environment per Management Level:

Table 6. *Challenges Faced as a Woman Leader in the Working Environment*

Management Level	Leadership Characteristics related to Identified Challenge	Management Style related to identified Challenge	Challenges and Gaps
Low-level	Resilience, adaptability, and compassion	Democratic and Paternalistic	Challenges in motivating teams, balancing stakeholder needs, time and resource management, and effective communication
Mid-level	Collaboration and empowerment	Democratic and Paternalistic	Fostering a culture of excellence, balancing stakeholder needs, time and resource management, and effective communication
Top-level	Collaboration and empowerment	Democratic and Paternalistic	Aligning individual efforts with organizational goals, balancing stakeholder needs, time and resource management, and effective communication

Low-level Women Managers face the daunting task of adapting to their newfound roles. In the process, they exhibit resilience in the face of challenges, particularly motivating teams and balancing stakeholder needs. Providing clear instructions while maintaining compassion and empathy towards team members' struggles becomes their defining trait, as they explore and balancing leadership responsibilities.

As Mid-level Managers ascend the corporate ladder, their focus shifts towards mentorship and development. They prioritize guiding their teams towards excellence, often juggling multiple projects and competing demands. Their Democratic and Paternalistic management approach fosters a culture of collaboration and accountability, although challenges persist in managing stakeholder needs and effective communication amidst the hustle of leadership responsibilities.

For Top-level Women Managers, they wield strategic vision as their main leadership characteristic. They set the course for the organization's future, navigating complex stakeholder dynamics with adaptability and empathy. Challenges at this level include aligning individual efforts with overarching goals, optimizing time and resource management, and maintaining effective communication channels in the face of diverse stakeholder needs.

While there are similar challenges that Women Managers across all levels face, there are also other challenges that each face depending on the circumstances. However, since the IT Industry is fast-paced, each Women Leader has the initiative to be adaptable and flexible to cater to the needs of the specific situation at hand.

Challenges Faced as a Woman Outside the Working Environment

Outside the work premises and environment, Women Managers play different roles may it be in their families or the community where they belong. Some of the identified key challenges that Women Leaders face focus on Personal and Family Challenges, Health and Well-being, Safety and Security, and Workplace Dynamics.

The table below shows the challenges of the Women Leaders outside the working environment per Management Level:

Table 7. *Challenges outside the Working Environment.*

Management Level	Leadership Characteristics related to Identified Challenge	Management Style related to identified Challenge	Challenges and Gaps
Low-level	Resilience, adaptability, compassion, empathy	Autocratic and Paternalistic	Balancing work and family life, career advancement in a male-dominated industry, and safety concerns
Mid-level	Collaboration and inclusivity	Democratic and Paternalistic	Managing family responsibilities while maintaining work-life balance, gender discrimination and prejudice in the workplace, and feeling vulnerable in public spaces
Top-level	Collaboration	Paternalistic	Balancing family responsibilities with work commitments, maintaining physical and mental well-being amidst job demands, and facing gender bias in career advancement

Low-level Women Managers exhibit resilience and adaptability as they navigate the intricate balance between their leadership roles and their familial responsibilities. Their leadership style is characterized by an Autocratic approach, coupled with compassion and empathy towards their Team. However, they face significant challenges like the struggle to advance their careers in a male-dominated industry and concerns about personal safety during travel or late work hours.

In the Mid-level Management, Women Managers take on the roles of mentors and accountability champions, fostering growth and excellence within their Teams. Their management approach leans towards being Democratic and Paternalistic, empowering team members and valuing their input. Despite their efforts, Mid-level Managers grapple with the persistent issue of work-life balance, gender bias in the workplace, and feelings of vulnerability in public spaces.

For Top-level Women Managers, they demonstrate strategic vision and effective communication skills, guiding their organizations towards success while remaining empathetic and adaptable. Their leadership style is characterized by its course to collaborate, adapt, and empathize, as they

navigate the complexities of balancing family commitments with demanding work responsibilities. However, they face unique challenges including maintaining their physical and mental well-being amidst job demands and confronting gender bias in career advancement.

Women Managers across all management levels also reflect on their experiences of facing gender discrimination and prejudice in the workplace. They emphasize the persistence of gender bias in the male-dominated IT Industry, underscoring the significance of creating an inclusive work environment where their contributions are respected and valued.

In terms of management approaches, the Women Managers, especially at the Mid-level and Top-level positions, express their experiences in managing workload and scheduling time for both work and family affairs. They are engrossed in discussions about career progression, expressing their notions and concerns during meetings and accentuating the need for opportunities for professional growth and recognition.

Approach on Work-life Balance

Since being in a fast-paced environment eats so much of the 24 hours that everyone gets to have, Women Managers still find ways to keep the balance in their lives. Different themes emerged in the process of knowing what the ways Women Managers are keep up the balance between their work and their personal lives. Worthy to mention are the themes that include Time Management and Prioritization, Self-Care and Well-being, Setting Boundaries, Support Systems, and Reflection and Improvement.

The table below shows the approach on Work-life Balance that Women Managers employ along with the gaps to be addressed:

Table 8. *Approach on Work-life Balance*

Management Level	Approach	Leadership Characteristics	Management Style	Gaps
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Low-level	Setting boundaries, limited work-related activities during personal time, practicing self-care	Resilience and adaptability, compassion	Autocratic and Paternalistic	Career Advancement, gender discrimination, personal safety, maintaining work-life balance
Mid-level	Setting boundaries, seeking support from family and friends, avoiding work-related discussions during personal time	Collaboration and inclusivity	Democratic and Paternalistic	Career advancement, gender discrimination, personal safety, and maintaining work-life balance
Top-level	Managing responsibilities effectively, leveraging support networks, delegating tasks, seeking support from family and friends.	Collaboration and empowerment	Democratic and Paternalistic	Managing workload, personal safety, maintaining work-life balance, need for support and advocacy in the workplace

For Low-level Women Managers, the journey to achieve work-life balance is often marked by the challenge of defining clear boundaries between professional duties and personal responsibilities. These managers prioritize self-care practices like setting limits on work hours and engaging in hobbies or activities that promote mental and physical well-being. Despite their efforts, they still encounter obstacles in maintaining these boundaries, as the demands of their roles often spill over into their personal lives. Seeking support from colleagues and superiors becomes important for navigating through these challenges, yet the struggle to prevent work-related stressors from encroaching on personal time persists. Despite these hurdles, low-level managers exhibit resilience, adaptability, and compassion as they navigate the complexities of leadership roles while striving to uphold their own well-being.

Mid-level Women Managers find themselves in the middle of balancing professional aspirations with personal well-being. They place emphasis on setting clear boundaries between work and personal life, recognizing the importance of preserving time for self-care and relaxation. Despite their efforts, the pervasive nature of workplace demands often poses challenges in maintaining these boundaries, leading to increased stress and anxiety. Seeking support from colleagues and friends become crucial in managing these pressures, yet the struggle to prevent work-related stressors from infiltrating personal time persists. Despite these challenges, Mid-level managers embody mentorship and accountability, guiding their teams towards success while fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

In the case of Top-level Women Managers, they face formidable task of balancing professional responsibilities with personal commitments. They prioritize effective time management and delegation of tasks to ensure that

both work and personal obligations are attended. Despite their strategic vision and effective communication skills, the demands of their roles often necessitate seeking support from family members, friends, colleagues. Managing workload and scheduling time for both work and family activities becomes a delicate balancing act, requiring adaptability and empathy. Despite these challenges, Top-level Women Managers exhibit resilience, compassion, and determination as they navigate the intricacies of leadership while striving to maintain their own well-being and that of their teams.

Across all Management levels, Women Managers demonstrate collaborative, compassionate, empathetic, and inclusive leadership characteristics. They prioritize collaboration and cooperation while fostering a culture of teamwork and shared goals within the teams. Furthermore, their compassionate and empathetic approach enables them to comprehend the needs and challenges of their team members, creating a supportive work environment where everyone feels valued and heard. Also, their inclusive leadership approach makes sure that diverse perspectives are respected and integrated, promoting innovation and creativity within the organization.

In terms of their Management Styles, the Women Managers employ a spectrum of different approaches which reflects their dynamic nature in terms of their roles and the diverse needs of their teams.

Autocratic Management Style. In certain situations that require quick decisions or clear direction, the Women Managers may adopt an autocratic style, but they balance this approach with openness to feedback and collaboration, making sure that the team feels empowered and valued despite the hierarchal structure.

Democratic Management Style. The majority of the Women Managers favor this style because it involves the Team in the decision-making processes and encourages open communication and participation. This approach adopts a sense of ownership and accountability among team members, steering innovation and engagement within the organization.

Laissez-Faire Management Style. Women Managers may also foster this style which allows their Team to have greater autonomy and flexibility in how they approach tasks and projects. This approach empowers people to take ownership of their responsibilities and promotes creativity, innovation, and initiative within the team.

Paternalistic Management Style. Some Women Managers exhibit this method by prioritizing the well-being and development of their subordinates. They provide guidance, mentorship, and support to help the Team thrive personally and professionally, creating a nurturing and supportive work environment.

Women Managers in the Software Companies in Cebu Business Park showcase a variety of approaches to leadership and management. Their adoption of various styles is tailored to the needs of their teams and the demands of their roles. Through their Leadership and Management practices,

they inspire their teams to achieve excellence and navigate the challenges of the IT industry with resilience and innovation.

CONCLUSION

The Leadership and Management perspectives of Women Managers in Software Companies in Cebu Business Park are characterized by a nuanced approach that mixes collaboration, empathy, compassion, and inclusion. Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes the importance of inspiring and motivating members through vision, empathy, and empowerment, (Avolio & Bass, 1994). These Women Leaders exhibit these traits by fostering collaboration, compassion, empathy, and inclusion in their teams, hence creating cohesive and innovative work environments (Northouse, 2018).

The Women Leaders' ability to adapt to different Management Styles, such as Democratic, Autocratic, and Paternalistic approaches, tailored to the needs of their teams and positions reflects their adaptive and dynamic nature of Transformational Leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Through their inclusive and compassionate leadership approach, they effectively inspire and empower their teams to achieve organizational goals.

Furthermore, women managers in the software industry emphasize the importance of networking, collaboration, leadership development, personal growth, and recognition for career advancement, which aligns with the principles of Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985). These insights provide valuable guidance for organizations aiming to support and empower Women Managers within the industry's dynamic landscape, resonating with the principles of Change Leadership Theory (Smith, 2019) and Gender Resistance Feminism Theory, (Martin, 2003). Moreover, recognizing achievements and prioritizing work-life balance contribute to a culture of appreciation and well-being, reinforcing the principles of Systems Management Theory (von Betalanffy, 1950) and Complexity Theory (Lewin, 1947).

They also face challenges such as struggles in work-life balance, blockages in career advancement, physical and mental health issues from work stressors, lack of moral support, and gender bias, which they adeptly manage while simultaneously prioritizing the well-being and advancement of their teams.

The Glass Ceiling Theory (Schreiber, 1970), posits that despite their abilities, women face invisible barriers that could hinder their performance and advancement in the organization.

These Women Leaders represent determination and resilience, steering success within their organizations and inspiring greater inclusivity and diversity in the Software Industry.

RECOMMENDATION

As women continue to face various challenges in balancing work and

family obligations, navigating gender biases, and managing health and safety concerns, it is necessary to develop targeted interventions to mitigate these issues effectively. The Recommendations provided offer practical approaches to strengthen present best practices and bridge the gap between current workplace dynamics and the needs of Women Managers. These suggestions will involve a collaborative effort between organizational leaders, HR departments, and teams to make a supportive and inclusive work environment. This will need initiatives such as implementing flexible work arrangements to accommodate family responsibilities, providing mentorship and leadership development programs to support career development, promoting diversity and inclusion training to address gender biases, enhancing health and wellness programs to prioritize the well-being, and creating support networks and affinity groups to practice a sense of culture of inclusivity, support, and empowerment for Women Managers, to improve retention, productivity, and organizational success.

To strengthen the best practices that have already been revealed in this study, the following are recommended:

Flexible Work Policies. Enhance flexible work arrangements to support Women Managers in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Initiatives such as remote work alternatives, flexible hours, and compressed workweeks could be sustainable to support this. These policies will enable Women Managers to better balance their professional obligations with personal responsibilities like childcare and family support. By providing flexibility, organizations are committed to supporting the work-life balance, which can lead to improved job satisfaction and retention among Women Managers.

Establish Support Networks. Initiatives such as mentorship programs, affinity groups, and peer support circles create and enhance support networks personalized to Women Managers' needs. These networks allow for women to connect, share experiences, and access enhanced mentorship and guidance from more experienced colleagues. By adopting a sense of belongingness, these networks can help Women managers overcome challenges, build confidence, and accelerate their careers.

Leadership Development. Investing in Leadership Development Programs personalized to the needs of Women Managers can include workshops, training, and coaching programs focused on communication skills, negotiation techniques, and conflict resolution strategies. These programs will empower Women Managers to strengthen their leadership abilities, assertiveness, and decision-making skills, enabling them to thrive in their roles and develop into higher leadership positions.

Enhance Health Initiatives. Expanding health and wellness initiatives to include menstrual health support, stress management workshops, and mental health resources is vital for supporting the holistic well-being of Women Managers. These programs demonstrate a commitment to addressing the

unique health challenges faced by women which include menstrual issues and increased stress levels. In giving access to resources and support services, organizations promote the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of Women Managers enhancing their overall job performance and satisfaction.

Address Gender Bias. Although this generation already embraces inclusivity, companies can implement awareness campaigns, diversity training programs, and inclusive hiring and promotion practices. These initiatives aim to challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and unconscious biases that may block Women Managers’ career development. By practicing a culture of inclusivity and fairness, organizations create a work environment where Women Managers feel valued, empowered, and respected.

Action Plan Matrix on the Implementation of the Recommended Actions

The table below shows the action plan matrix on the recommended actions to address the gaps identified in this study, this includes the actors and the responsible parties to take action of the recommended practices:

Table 9. *Action Plan Matrix*

Areas of Concern	Strategies to strengthen best practices	Actors	Time frame
Enhanced Work-Life Balance	Implement flexible work arrangements such as telecommuting options, flexible hours, and compressed workweeks	Human Resources, Manager	Within six (6) months
Career Advancement	Provide mentorship initiatives pairing Senior Women Leaders with Junior Women Leader counterparts, offer leadership development workshops and skill enhancement training programs	Human Resources, Senior Managers	Ongoing, should be reviewed annually
Creation of Supportive Networks	Establish affinity groups and networking events for Women Managers, initiate mentorship programs, and encourage participation in external women leadership forums	Women Managers, Human Resources	Launch affinity groups within 2 months, ongoing mentorship, and networking activities
Improved Health and Wellness	Enhance existing health and wellness programs by adding mental health support services, organize stress management workshops, and promote work-life balance programs	Employee Assistance Program Providers, Human Resources	Implement within 3 months, ongoing initiative throughout the year
Mitigation of Gender Bias	Conduct diversity and inclusion training sessions focusing on unconscious bias awareness, establish gender-neutral promotion criteria, and monitor promotion processes	Human Resources, Women Managers	Initial sessions within 3 months, ongoing training annually

The following are the suggested mechanics for the implementation of the recommended programs:

Enhanced Work-Life Balance

Mechanics: The Human Resources Department will conduct a survey to assess the employees' preferences and feasibility of flexible work arrangements. Based on the survey results, they will develop and implement policies for telecommuting options and flexible work hours.

Implementation: Managers will be responsible for discussing these options to their teams and ensuring adherence to the new policies. Regular feedback sessions will be held to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed arrangement.

Career Advancement

Mechanics: The Human Resource Department will collaborate with Senior Women Managers to design mentorship programs and leadership development workshops. They will recognize areas for skill enhancement training based on performance evaluations.

Implementation: Senior Managers will mentor Junior counterparts, providing guidance, and support in career development. Human Resources will organize and facilitate leadership workshops and training sessions, monitoring participation and progress.

Creation of Supportive Networks

Mechanics: A committee by the Human Resources focusing on Diversity and Inclusion will establish affinity groups for mentorship programs and encourage participation in external Leadership Forums.

Implementation: Affinity Groups will be launched with inductor meetings and regular gatherings focused on professional development and networking. Mentorship programs will match mentors and mentees based on interests and career goals, with an ongoing support from Committee Members.

Improved Health and Wellness

Mechanics: The Human Resource Department will establish a Health and Wellness Committee to collaborate with Employee Assistance Program Providers to improve existing support services. They will organize stress management workshops and promote work-life balance initiatives.

Implementation: Stress Management workshops will be conducted on-site and virtually, encouraging participation through incentives and recognition programs. Work-life balance initiatives will be promoted through internal communications channels and employee engagement activities.

Mitigation of Gender Biases

Mechanics: The Human Resources department will establish a Diversity

and Inclusion committee that will develop training modules on unconscious bias awareness and gender-neutral promotion criteria and establish metrics to monitor promotion processes for gender equality.

Implementation: Training sessions will be conducted by committee members and external consultants, with follow-up discussions led by the Human Resources. Promotion criteria will be reviewed and revised to ensure fairness and transparency, with regular audits conducted to assess progress.

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