REVEALING LEADERSHIP STEREOTYPES:
CHALLENGING GENDER EQUALITY IN ACHIEVING KEY POSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

This Article, titled "Revealing Leadership Stereotypes: Challenging Gender Equality in Achieving Key Positions," addresses the persistent gender inequality in leadership roles, a critical issue in contemporary organizational structures. This article focuses on the challenge of gender equality in leadership and aims to revealing leadership stereotypes that prevent women from achieving leadership opportunities, identify and analyze how gender stereotypes affect perceptions and challenges in achieving leadership positions, and how this impacts women's opportunities to develop and achieve gender equality in the process of achieving their leadership positions. The research method used in this study uses a library research approach, which is carried out by reviewing and/or exploring several journals, books, and documents (both printed and electronic) as well as other sources of data and/or information deemed relevant to the research or study, namely a literature review that explores various sources to understand how gender stereotypes affect women's leadership, including studies on transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles and how these stereotypes affect self-perception and leadership performance. The results of this study show that gender stereotypes can influence perceptions and challenges in achieving leadership positions, and have a significant impact on women's opportunities to develop and achieve gender equality in the process of achieving their leadership positions.

Keywords: Leadership Stereotypes. Gender Equality, Organizational Structures

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INTRODUCTION

Gender equality in the context of leadership is one of the problems that is often encountered among Indonesian society, especially in the scope of organizations or agencies. One of the main causes of this problematic gender equality is due to the emergence of certain gender stereotypes that can influence people's views on a person's leadership skills. This is based on the differences in characteristics between men and women, where existing stereotypes link masculine traits to leadership such as assertiveness, confidence, and aggression. In addition, men tend to be seen as assertive, while women tend to be seen as more concerned with feelings. It is this assumption that causes the emergence of stereotypes in society that men are seen as more capable of being a leader figure than a woman. Therefore, this is a challenge to gender equality in achieving positions in a particular organization or agency (Baiduri et al., 2023).

In general, stereotyping is the marking or labeling of a particular group (Fakih, 2012: 16 in Amirullah et al., 2022). Stereotypes can also mean "ideas in our minds" that form a belief. Specifically, the term gender and gender role stereotypes are studied through attributes and roles (society, work, and family) that individuals tend to associate with certain genders, so gender stereotypes are perceptions of the roles society assigns to certain genders (Mills, 2012 in Sany & Rahardja, 2016). Gender stereotypes create assumptions about how to treat a particular gender, but do not always correspond to the truth. For example, women are weak while men are strong, but in reality not all women are weak and not all men are strong. Socially, gender creates differences in all aspects of life, be it socialization, means of livelihood, politics, and so on.

The existence of gender stereotypes in the context of leadership is often an obstacle to the progressivity of women in achieving leadership positions. One example of the phenomenon of gender stereotypes in the context of leadership in Indonesia is the low number of women who occupy leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. Women are also still seen as underrepresented in leadership positions, even though Indonesia has laws on gender equality and seeks to promote gender equality in leadership positions. For example, in the political sphere, there are many cases where political parties seem reluctant to comply with the requirement of at least 30% representation of women as legislative candidates, as mandated by Law Number 7/2017 on General Elections, Article 245. This unwillingness is reflected in the preparation of legislative candidate lists that place female candidates at the bottom of the list. In addition, there are also vague attempts by political parties to convince women not to push too hard to fulfill the 30% quota. All of this suggests that there is pressure being felt due to the obligation to fulfill the requirements of the law. From these examples, we hope that in the future, fulfilling the 30% quota is not only done because of pressure, but because it is realized as a logical step in realizing a society that fully participates in the life of the country (Halizah & Faralita, 2023).

Meanwhile, in the private sector, there is also the same injustice, where even though the working hours are the same, women still earn less than men. This discrimination can occur overtly or covertly, due to the assumption that women's main role is in domestic or household affairs, so work to earn income is only considered as "additional work" to support the husband (Halizah & Faralita, 2023). And with almost half of Indonesia's population being women, it is rational to give them a role comparable to men in the life together as a nation and state. As guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution Article 27, that "the position of

women is equal to that of men in the field of law and governance" which shows the importance of women's role in politics and governance".

Ultimately, the social constructs that develop in society validate that gender stereotypes against women in the public sphere have more to do with established gender stereotypes and less about the lack of quality of the women themselves. Therefore, the more women who are brave and able to demonstrate their abilities in public will have a major impact in reducing the gender stereotypes that have long hampered them. This is an important step towards restoring women's position as human beings who have the opportunity to be leaders on earth.

METHOD

The method used in this study uses a library method or approach (library research), Library studies or literature can be defined as a series of activities related to library data collection methods, reading and recording and processing research materials. Based on the above, data collection in the study was carried out by reviewing and / or exploring several journals, books, and documents (both printed and electronic) as well as other sources of data and / or information deemed relevant to the research or study.

The article's literature review research method involved an in-depth literature review to understand how gender stereotypes affect women's leadership. The research included analyzing multiple sources to understand the influence of gender stereotypes on women's leadership, including studies on transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles and how these stereotypes affect self-perception and leadership performance. The research provides new insights into how to overcome such barriers to achieve gender equality in leadership.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. **Gender Stereotypes in Leadership**

   A. *Leadership Concept*

   To date, clear boundaries regarding leadership remain elusive. This ambiguity is caused by the inconsistent use of terms, such as power, authority, management, administration, control, and supervision, which are often used to explain various leadership-related phenomena (Yukl, 1989). Definitions of leadership also often depend on the individual goals of the authors and researchers concerned.

   The word "leadership" comes from the root word "pimpin", which refers to the process of guiding or directing. This concept involves two parties, the led and the leader. A leader is an individual who uses authority and communication to influence others to act in accordance with the same goal, with the aim of influencing and persuading others to take certain steps to achieve the desired goal (Kusumawati, 2007).

   The various definitions of leadership that have been proposed by previous authors and researchers show differences in understanding. This difference arises because the definition of leadership is related to people who have influence, goals, and ways to influence others. Although

leadership behavior can be understood in various dimensions, most of its content can be presented through two concepts derived from the Ohio State approach to leadership (Yukl, 1989).

B. *Gender Concept*

Gender can be explained as a visible difference between male and female individuals in terms of values and behavior (Kusumawati, 2007). This concept is in line with the definition proposed by the Women's Studies Encyclopedia in Kusumawati (2007), which describes gender as a cultural concept that aims to create differences in terms of roles, behaviors, mindsets, and emotional characteristics between men and women that are formed in society. The use of the term gender also refers to the division of tasks between men and women, especially in the context of leadership. Several studies in the literature have reviewed gender issues by considering gender stereotypes and roles. Gender stereotypes refer to the social, anthropological and cultural aspects associated with feminine and masculine roles. Meanwhile, gender roles refer to the expectations, determinations or prohibitions associated with one particular gender. In other words, gender stereotypes include psychological traits and characteristics considered appropriate for men and women, while gender roles include behaviors exhibited in the social roles they play (Handayani and Novianto, 2004).

Jackson and Parry (2011) addressed the question of the differences between male and female leaders and the reasons behind them. Initially, research on organizational leadership mostly examined male leadership. However, this research began to be criticized for being too focused on masculine perspectives. In the 1990s, a trend of research on more feminine leadership emerged, which was seen as a superior strategy for improving organizational effectiveness (Jackson and Parry, 2011). Transformational leadership is also considered to have more feminine elements and is recognized as an advantage in leadership. According to Boatwright and Forrest (2007) as cited by Handriana (2011), women tend to prefer the concept of transformational leadership, while men are more inclined to transactional leadership styles. Transformational leadership is defined as a process in which leaders and followers encourage each other to achieve higher levels of morality and motivation (Yukl, 1989).

In the context of gender and leadership, a critical view of gender stereotypes is still relevant. Many women leaders experience challenges in their career journeys. Women's leadership challenges are often due to the traditional roles attached to women, such as childcare responsibilities and roles that tend to be perceived as backseat. This is a result of dominant societal and cultural structures that cut across organizations and countries (Schedilizki and Edwars, 2014). A further question is whether our focus on gender differences should refer to sex (such as male or female), or to personal characteristics (such as feminine or masculine), or perhaps be determined by the interaction between the two.

C. *Previous literature on gender in the context of leadership*

Many studies have been conducted on the differences between male and female leaders since the late 1970s, but results have been mixed (Eagly and Carli, 2003; Eagly et al., 1995). There

is no evidence to strongly suggest that female leaders are more or less effective than male leaders, and there are no consistent differences in traits and behaviors between the two (Powell, 1990).

Considerations about gender are inseparable from debates about partnership and equality of social roles between men and women, which are shaped by religion, customs, and culture (Handriana, 2011). Most research and studies on leadership and management have been developed by men, and some organizational theories are also based on surveys conducted on male managers or leaders. This is not new, given that men are more and more normatively integrated with existing cultural and social norms. Meanwhile, research and literature on women and leadership are often perceived as having biases, contradictions and paradoxes. This suggests male dominance in leadership behavior and management dynamics (Elliot and Stead, 2008).

Although stereotypes between men and women are quite strong and stable, the evidence supporting this is limited. A review by Eagly and Johnson (1990) found no confirmation of the stereotypical view that men are more task oriented and women are more relationship oriented. However, they did find that women tend to have a more democratic or participative leadership style, while men tend to have a more authoritarian or directive style, which is in line with stereotypical expectations. Research by Eagly et al. (2003) showed that female managers tend to use a more transformative leadership style and more often show appreciative behavior towards their subordinates, while male managers tend to emphasize attention to the mistakes of their subordinates.

Within organizations, gender inequality remains an ongoing issue, especially at the highest levels of leadership. This poses a challenge for women in achieving leadership positions equal to men. Socio-cultural factors can influence women's ability to achieve leadership positions in government institutions, and affect their opportunities and access to these positions. This also includes the implementation of policies to achieve gender balance with the aim of increasing the number of women represented at various levels in an organization (Baiduri et al., 2023). Adms-Prassl highlights that while the role of women in the workforce has evolved, companies still face challenges in creating an equitable work environment for all individuals. The legacy of gender inequality and traditional roles embedded in society can influence dynamics in the work environment (Leovani et. al., 2023).

The results of research conducted by Kartika and Muarifuddin (2023) show that gender equality in the leadership of student organizations has not yet reached its full point due to the dominance of men in leadership roles. This has implications for the general view that men are considered to have more dominant traits than women (Kartika & Muarifuddin,2023). This finding is in line with the results of research conducted by Bass and Avolio (1992) and Druskat (1994), who asserted that gender differences in transformational leadership are influenced by different approaches between men and women in guiding team members. Druskat also added that transformational leadership tends to be associated with feminism and is more common in

organizations led by women, where they have control over resources and have greater freedom in their leadership style (Lendrawaty, 2021).

Here are some examples of stereotypes that are often encountered in various organizational contexts:

1. **Assertive Leader**: The stereotype states that a leader is expected to be assertive, powerful and dominant when making decisions. This is often associated with stereotypes about the characteristics of masculinity.

2. **Gender Roles in Certain Professions**: Some fields of work are still considered more suitable for one particular gender. For example, there is a stereotype that nurses should be women, while engineers should be men.

3. **Gender-based Career Choices**: This stereotype implies that men are better suited for jobs in technical fields such as technology or engineering, while women are better suited for jobs in social or service sectors such as education or care.

4. **Women as Administrative Task Managers**: Men are more likely to be in management or leadership positions, while women are often in administrative or support roles, such as secretaries or assistants.

5. **Women as Less Ambitious**: This stigma claims that women generally have lower levels of ambition compared to men and prefer to focus on the personal aspects of life rather than pursuing a challenging career.

6. **Men are More Competent in Technical Fields**: There is a common belief that men excel in technical fields, such as computer science or math, while women are considered less competent in these areas.

7. **Men are Better Suited for Leadership Positions**: This stereotype argues that men are better suited for leadership roles as they are believed to possess characteristics such as courage, strength, and risk-taking skills.

8. **Women are More Emotional in Decision Making**: This common view says that women are more likely to be influenced by their feelings when making decisions, while men are more inclined towards rationality.

9. **Highly Ambitious Leaders**: Leaders are often perceived as needing to have high ambitions and spend a lot of time and energy on achieving success, without considering other things in their lives.

10. **The Leader Who Must Always Appear Strong and Invincible** :Many believe that a leader should constantly display courage and resilience, without showing their fragile side or the hardships they are going through.

These stereotypes can affect perceptions, expectations and judgments of individuals in the work environment, which in turn can affect their career opportunities and psychological well-being.

2. **Gender Equality Challenges in Achieving Top Positions**
   A. **Analysis of the barriers faced by women in achieving top leadership positions.**

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Although women have achieved various advances, they are still not comparable to men, especially in terms of leadership. The proportion of women as leaders is still far behind. The concept of leadership has been more often associated with men than women, so men tend to be considered superior and more capable of leading than women.

One of the factors hindering women's advancement is the lack of policies in organizations that support a balance between family and work, especially for women who have family responsibilities. However, many companies have started to become more women-friendly. They provide opportunities for women to advance their careers while still taking care of their families. These companies realize that providing opportunities for women to reach leadership positions is a stratgic and humane step to advance the organization.

B. Comparison of Opportunities and Challenges Faced by Men and Women in Achieving Key Positions (Putranto and Ferdhana, 2018)

Nature/gender	Women Leaders	Male Leader
Communicative	Interpersonal mapping, attachment, kinship, tends to be informal	Blending formal and informal relationships, regarded as colleagues
Empathy	Have more attention to subordinates inside and outside of work	Pay attention to the needs of subordinates related to work
Directive	Provide clear examples	Set an example, set standards, and be more assertive
Development	Trying to develop the abilities of subordinates in various ways	Seeks to develop the abilities and personalities of subordinates by formal and informal means, providing avenues for promotion.
Leadership style	Transformational (Individual Consideration)	Transformational (Individual Consideration) Combined with Transactional (Contingent Reward)

Many people in Indonesia still think that men are best suited to be leaders in all areas of life, especially in the public sector such as in the bureaucracy, especially in strategic positions. Stereotypes against women leaders, such as decision-making based on emotions alone, and other assumptions about women, keep them trapped in a world dominated by men.

3. **The Impact of Gender Stereotypes on Leadership**

The study conducted by Rudman and Glick in 2012 illuminated how gender stereotypes play a significant part in shaping people's views of women in leadership positions. Their findings indicated that despite some progress in the portrayal of women and leadership, lingering perceptions suggesting women are unsuitable for leadership roles persist, impacting how they are assessed. In a culture where conventional gender stereotypes remain entrenched, this perspective can impede the advancement of women in garnering acknowledgment and endorsement as leaders. The negative stereotypes portraying women as less capable or authoritative leaders can impact how women are evaluated and the career prospects available to them in leadership roles. Therefore, it remains crucial to persist in challenging erroneous gender stereotypes and fostering recognition of women's potential and capabilities as impactful leaders. In reality, women have the capacity to excel as leaders when not constrained by conventional gender biases; what they require are opportunities and encouragement to cultivate their potential.

Research by Eagly and Carli (2013) highlights the importance of social change in achieving gender equality in leadership. Their research suggested that fostering a more inclusive society and promoting broader shifts in gender roles could mitigate biases and facilitate the progression of women in leadership roles. Comprehensive social transformation, encompassing education, family dynamics, organizational structures, and public policy, can establish a conducive environment for nurturing women's leadership roles. As an illustration, educational initiatives advocating for gender equality and fostering women's leadership ambitions can play a pivotal role in reshaping perceptions and aspirations regarding women's capabilities as leaders. Moreover, organizational measures endorsing work-life balance, mitigating bias in recruitment and advancement processes, and guaranteeing equitable access to career growth opportunities, are instrumental in cultivating an atmosphere conducive to women's progression in leadership roles. Social transformation also contributes to surmounting obstacles linked to traditional gender roles and responsibilities. In a culture where women are still predominantly associated with domestic and nurturing duties, they may encounter challenges when assuming more assertive or task-focused leadership positions. Therefore, by promoting social shifts that advocate for the dismantling of rigid gender norms, women can feel more empowered to embrace leadership approaches that align with their individual personalities and competencies.

A. **Gender Differences in Leadership**.

Gender disparities manifest in various forms, such as pay gaps and instances of sexual harassment, hindering women's career advancement significantly. Following their recruitment, women often find themselves in positions that offer lesser financial rewards compared to men, with disparities persisting in pay even within leadership roles. Women frequently encounter sexual

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harassment in professional settings, impeding their career progression. Over half of female employees have noted a rise in incidents of sexual harassment over time, with 53% subjected to inappropriate remarks, gestures, and jokes in the workplace. The majority of survey participants expressed reluctance to continue working in environments where sexual harassment takes place, indicating a potential unwillingness to remain in such circumstances (Sarkar, 2019). Due to these obstacles, women frequently experience a decline in motivation and commitment to advancing their careers in the workplace. Research suggests that women often exhibit a preference for roles as facilitators or organizers rather than positioning themselves as leaders.

Women aspiring to leadership positions are often perceived as less socially acceptable and are less likely to be hired. Consequently, numerous women feel discouraged from striving for leadership roles and opt not to advance themselves due to the social repercussions associated with ambition. The gender disparity in leadership arises from the inherent differences between women and men, contributing to distinct leadership styles and effectiveness among women compared to men. Women are inadequately represented in management positions and are often perceived more as romantic partners than professional colleagues. However, according to Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen, research indicates that while men and women may exhibit slightly different leadership styles, their effectiveness as leaders is equal. Thus, this assertion lacks validity. Rao, C. R. (2022) suggests that the effectiveness of leadership primarily hinges on how followers react to the leader. Moreover, when female leaders are conspicuous, followers frequently exhibit reluctance to acknowledge authority and influence from someone who doesn't fit the conventional leader archetype. Consequently, men are more readily acknowledged as leaders, whereas women tend to assume more informal roles.

B. Prejudice in Leadership.

It has been found that the gender leadership gap is also caused by the traditional perception that "women care and men are responsible" (Hoyt and Chemers, 2008). Gender stereotypes involve making broad assumptions about the characteristics of a particular group solely based on their gender. Gender stereotypes also dictate the qualities and traits expected of individuals based on their gender. Stereotypes about gender are based on observing their behavior in gender-specific social roles. Social norms are often gender-bound, encompassing societal perceptions of the typical traits associated with men and women within a socio-cultural context. While the notion of leadership being exclusively masculine is diminishing, there remains a discernible association between leadership and traits traditionally considered masculine. Therefore, women face a dilemma when navigating between masculine and feminine traits, as utilizing masculine traits may label them as "too masculine," while demonstrating feminine traits may lead to being perceived as "unfit" for leadership roles. The prevalence of gender stereotypes that disadvantage women offers insight into the statistical disparity in female leadership representation. A mindset influenced by gender bias might predominantly perceive leadership as a role reserved for males, and this bias significantly impacts decision-making and leader appointments. Research indicates that men possess the requisite skills for managerial roles,

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irrespective of whether these skills are traditionally perceived as masculine or feminine in other cultures. This frequently leads to women being deemed unqualified or incapable of assuming leadership positions, contributing to a significant gender gap in leadership roles.

C. Debunking Perception Myths.

Starting from the myth that women have to choose between work and family. According to Bratby, in 2018 it was a common misperception that women had to choose between career and home life. Assuming that women must make a choice between either pursuing a career or focusing solely on family overlooks the fact that women have the agency to balance both work and family responsibilities. The presence of children in a woman's life should not imply an inability to work, just as the absence of children doesn't restrict a woman from taking on extra professional responsibilities.

Second, the stereotype that women are overly emotional is debunked by Noland et al. (2016), who argue that women's capacity for empathy, nurturing, and intuition is not a weakness but rather fosters a positive work atmosphere and guards against impulsive emotional decision-making. The presence of women in corporate leadership roles has been shown to positively impact profitability, highlighting the importance of gender diversity. Additionally, it's crucial to recognize that women's leadership is equally esteemed as men's leadership. Women frequently face scrutiny and criticism, often based on the characteristics they display. Variances in leadership styles are commonly attributed to femininity rather than managerial competence. Women are often unfairly labeled as either too masculine or lacking capability, leading to constant scrutiny and discussion about their performance. Ultimately, the misconception that women lack interest in male-dominated fields like technology and industry is being dispelled. Instead, women are making significant strides in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), with projections indicating a potential 40 percent representation in tech roles worldwide within the next five to ten years. Back in 2016, investments totaling $1.46 billion were directed towards companies led by women. By 2018, women occupied 20 percent of IT positions and 26 percent of computing jobs worldwide, while only comprising 5 percent of startup founders according to Lynkova (2019). These figures indicate a clear inclination among women towards tech-related professions, with expectations pointing towards a rise in their representation in the near future.

D. Removing Gender Barriers in Leadership.

Based on Speranza's (2017) research, demonstrating proficiency indicates appreciation, while active listening aids women in dismantling gender barriers. Nevertheless, it's crucial to acknowledge that these leadership actions are not isolated. Engaging in active listening enables women to comprehend the culture and dynamics of the organization, while demonstrating respect signifies their comprehension of its intricacies. Subsequently, as relationships develop and women have the chance to demonstrate their capabilities, they are recognized as competent. While the obstacles outlined earlier are commonly perceived as detrimental to women, the labyrinth concept can be extended to encompass other marginalized groups, including ethnic, racial, and gender minorities. There are several primary motivations for removing these barriers to achieving higher

levels of leadership. Northouse (2017), initially, the elimination of barriers fulfills the commitment to equal opportunity, allowing individuals from all backgrounds the chance to attain leadership positions, even up to the Senate in government. This expanded and more diverse pool of applicants not only facilitates the discovery of competent personnel but also enhances the likelihood of organizational success. Second, by advocating for a highly diverse array of women in leadership roles, it not only serves to distinguish societal, business, and governmental institutions but also fosters more ethical, productive, innovative, and financially prosperous organizations, characterized by enhanced collective intelligence and reduced conflict.

Despite facing these challenges, as indicated by Northouse (2017), the representation of women in leadership roles has increased. Shifting norms in the workplace and enhanced prospects for female advancement; Equal distribution of household responsibilities leading to increased influence for women, particularly in managing domestic tasks: Impact on female entrepreneurship rates and efficacy; Evolving dynamics between women and leadership resulting in a rise of women occupying prestigious leadership roles. The ongoing pursuit of gender parity in leadership demands sustained endeavors. It's crucial to confront persisting obstacles like gender stereotypes and subconscious prejudices, which may shape perceptions and recognition of women's leadership contributions. We must persist in promoting inclusiveness and parity within the workplace, offering essential backing for women to nurture their leadership capabilities.

4. **Strategies to Overcome Stereotypes and Promote Gender Equality**

Some efforts that need to be made in the future by improving conditions, especially the position of women by :

1. Providing continuous training to women to increase their capacity, so as to create more women leaders.
2. Leaders should prepare their members to understand the issues faced by women, such as issues of sexuality and religion.
3. Conduct program interventions to change community attitudes, decision-makers and policies, with the support of well-capacitated women.
4. Organize regular meetings to share work experiences in their respective areas, strengthening networks based on specific issues.
5. Periodically reflect on the performance of women's organizations and groups, including in terms of leadership and work strategies.

CONCLUSION

This article concludes that gender stereotypes can influence perceptions and challenges in achieving leadership positions, and have a significant impact on women's opportunities to develop and achieve gender equality in the process of achieving their leadership positions, where this research explains new insights that gender is a social construction of men and women's relations built by the system in which they are located. This social construction is considered a social process and social interaction that ultimately creates social reality. Gender differences are actually not a problem as long as they do not cause gender injustice.

If gender injustice occurs, gender discrimination will arise, and the most victimized are women. In addition, gender stereotypes still influence perceptions of leadership qualities, which inhibit women from reaching top leadership positions. These biases can lead to limited opportunities, biased evaluations, and underrepresentation of women in leadership positions.

Therefore, this study explains how to overcome these barriers to achieve gender equality in leadership and for this, social system changes are needed to create gender equality and justice and to promote gender equality, bias awareness training, equal opportunity initiatives, mentoring programs, and inclusive performance evaluation practices can be implemented. It is important to challenge and erase these stereotypes to foster an inclusive and diverse leadership environment.

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