

# Advancing Women in Educational Leadership: A Comprehensive Analysis of Factors Influencing Female Leaders in Shaanxi's Vocational Colleges

Xi Yao<sup>1</sup> and Thada Siththada<sup>2</sup>

Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

E-mail: xyao919@126.com, Thada.si@ssru.ac.th

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was: 1) To study the level of female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province 2) To study the levels of factors of female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province 3) To examine the relationship between factor of female leadership and female leadership in higher vocational college in Shaanxi province. 4) To analyze factors affecting female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province. 5) To propose the guidelines for developing female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province. The study utilized a mixed-method approach, distributing 432 questionnaires and interviewing 9 experts, combining questionnaires, interviews and statistical analysis to evaluate the impact of individual, family, organizational, social and Culture Factors on leadership traits such as influence, decisiveness and control. Descriptive analysis was used to assess the levels of seven female leadership and factors of Female leadership, and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analysis and stepwise multiple regression analysis were used to explore the relationship between female leadership and factors of Female leadership. Regression analysis was then used to explore the academic management factors that affect student performance in order to fully understand the importance of these factors.

The result of the research is: 1) the overall female leadership in Shaanxi's vocational colleges is high, signifying well - developed leadership traits. Flexible leadership charm ( $\bar{X} = 4.33$ , S.D. = 0.39) ranks first followed by motivation ability ( $\bar{X} = 4.27$ , S.D. = 0.41), personality-caring ability ( $\bar{X} = 4.18$ , S.D. = 0.42), and intelligent stimulation ability ( $\bar{X} = 4.12$ , S.D. = 0.42), and emotional intelligence ( $\bar{X} = 4.00$ , S.D. = 0.44). 2) The factors of female leadership are overall at a high level. Among these factors, culture ( $\bar{X} = 4.24$ , S.D. = 0.42) and family support ( $\bar{X} = 4.22$ , S.D. = 0.40) have the most significant influence. 3) Pearson correlation coefficient data ( $R^2 = 0.696$ ) show that the female leadership factors in Shaanxi vocational colleges are significantly positively correlated with overall female leadership, and emphasize that colleges should strengthen relevant aspects to empower female leaders and improve the leadership success rate in vocational education. 4) Analysis shows that overall female leadership in Shaanxi vocational colleges is high with flexible leadership charm leading the way, and the

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model reveals that factors such as Work-Life Balance, Family Support, Personal Factors, Organizational Factors, Policy Support, Cultural Factors, and Social Factors significantly explain the variation in female leadership.<sup>5)</sup> The analysis showed that women's leadership can be strengthened by balancing professional and personal life, providing support, fostering confidence, providing training and fair policies, promoting growth, promoting gender inclusion, mentoring and networking to enhance leadership.

**Keywords:** Female Leadership; Higher Vocational Colleges; Shaanxi Province

## Introduction

Vocational education in China is one of the important parts of national education and talent development. Vocational and technical education has been identified by the central government as an important engine to promote economic development, social development, and educational innovation (State Council Information Office of the PRC, 2025). According to the latest data, China has the largest vocational education system in the world, with an order of magnitude of about 11,200 institutions and tens of millions of students, playing an increasingly important role in socioeconomic development and career mobility (iChongqing, 2022). In the context of higher education, the occupational status of women in universities has some characteristics of gender stratification, that is, the status between senior and junior levels is unbalanced, and women hold more deputy positions but less principal positions (Bao, 2024; Wang, 2025). Statistical analysis reveals that women account for a small proportion of senior administrators and are clustered in the middle and lower management levels of universities. This uneven distribution limits their participation in decision-making and other processes, maintaining the “female instruction and male administration” phenomenon (Horta & Tang, 2023).

In terms of gender equality, it can be seen from the spirit of the relevant provisions that women and men have equal opportunities for promotion and access to resources, but the status of leadership is not symmetrical in reality. A study of Chinese universities indicates that female faculty have lower career satisfaction and less influence than male faculty in leadership and recognition networks, which can lead to the long-standing imbalance between instructors and university leadership (Horta & Tang, 2023; Tang & Horta, 2023). It can be said that there is a lack of effective mechanism of women's decision-making power and access to university management. In a global context, it is somewhat ironic that the imbalance of women's university leadership endures and even widens, even as their overall higher-education participation has grown to the point where the majority of students in many countries are now women. The latest data from UNESCO shows that in 2022, the global gross tertiary enrollment rate of women (approximately 45%) surpassed that of men (approximately 39%) (UNESCO, 2025). In 2023, women made up 52% of those enrolled in higher education,

and the proportion of women to men was roughly 113 to 100, but the proportion of women in top leadership roles remains low (IFC, 2025). In China, both qualitative and quantitative data indicate discrimination in recruitment and promotions, including some officials' attitudes towards women that are not in line with gender equality, and that men predominate at the top of most universities, including the most prestigious ones (Horta & Tang, 2023; Wang, 2021).

Through the lens of transformational leadership theory, the most commonly used classification of women leaders is the “Four I’s”: individualized consideration, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. According to a meta-analysis, women as a group have slightly higher transformational leadership scores than men. This includes tending to be more attentive to their followers' higher-order needs, modeling and enacting values, and so on, as well as paying attention to motivation and creativity, which are more likely to lead to creativity and innovation in academic leaders (Eagly et al., 2003; QIC-WD, n.d.).

Nevertheless, at the same time, it is expected that women leaders in Shaanxi's universities may also encounter a number of challenges from the structural perspective, in line with the situation of their counterparts in other parts of China. For example, gender stereotypes about traditional male and female roles often lead to women's decisions and styles being questioned, dual social role expectations increase the psychological pressure on women, and the traditional governance concept has a certain impact on women's career development. Women have a small proportion of the “pipeline” in the internal circle of university leadership, so there are not enough channels for them to take on leading positions (USCC, 2023; Horta & Tang, 2023; Bao, 2024). This situation also reveals that it is the combination of gender stereotypes, gender bias, and unclear gender equality policies that affect the realization of women's full potential.

Two pivotal research questions emerge from this context: (1) What institutional mechanisms perpetuate the vertical segregation preventing female academics from attaining apex leadership positions? (2) Through what policy interventions can universities cultivate gender-inclusive succession pipelines for administrative roles? These inquiries demand urgent scholarly attention and evidence-based solutions.

### **Research objectives**

1. To study the level of female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.
2. To study the levels of factors of female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.
3. To examine the relationship between factor of female leadership toward female leadership in higher vocational college in Shaanxi province.

4. To analyze factors affecting female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

5. To propose the guidelines for developing female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Population and Sample**

The population used in this research was female leaders in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province. A total of 40 higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province. The sample consisted of 500 female administrators in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province, which is considered a good number (Comrey, A. L., & Lee, H. B., 1992). The key informants in the first in-depth interview to study the variables related to female leadership components were 5 experts, and the key informants in the second in-depth interview to consider the proposed female leadership model were 9 people.

### **Research Instruments**

The questionnaire on the personal status of the respondents, the questionnaire on the level of female leadership on higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province, and the semi-structured questionnaire for the in-depth interview. The questionnaire was verified by five experts for content validity, and a consistency analysis was conducted on 133 questions. The IOC was greater than 0.60, indicating that the content was accurate. The results showed that the consistency index of the questionnaire questions affecting female leadership in vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province was between 0.60 and 1.00, which met the use standards. The researchers removed 13 questions that did not meet the requirements.

### **Statistics used for data analysis**

The statistics used in data analysis were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA), and content analysis.

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The content of research outlines the data collection procedure for research aimed at understanding and addressing current situation among teachers in vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province. The research employs a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic view of female leadership. The researcher determines the population for this research encompasses administrators and teachers A total of 40 vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province. The researcher determined the sample size using the Comrey, A. L. & Lee, H. B. (1992). The sample size was vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province, there are 500 respondents.



The researcher takes questionnaires to adapted from female leadership and influencing factors in Shaanxi Province. Then, it will take in-depth interviews to conduct with 9 expert persons. These interviews aim to gather qualitative insights into the experiences, perceptions, and developmental needs of the participants.

Conceptual framework for research

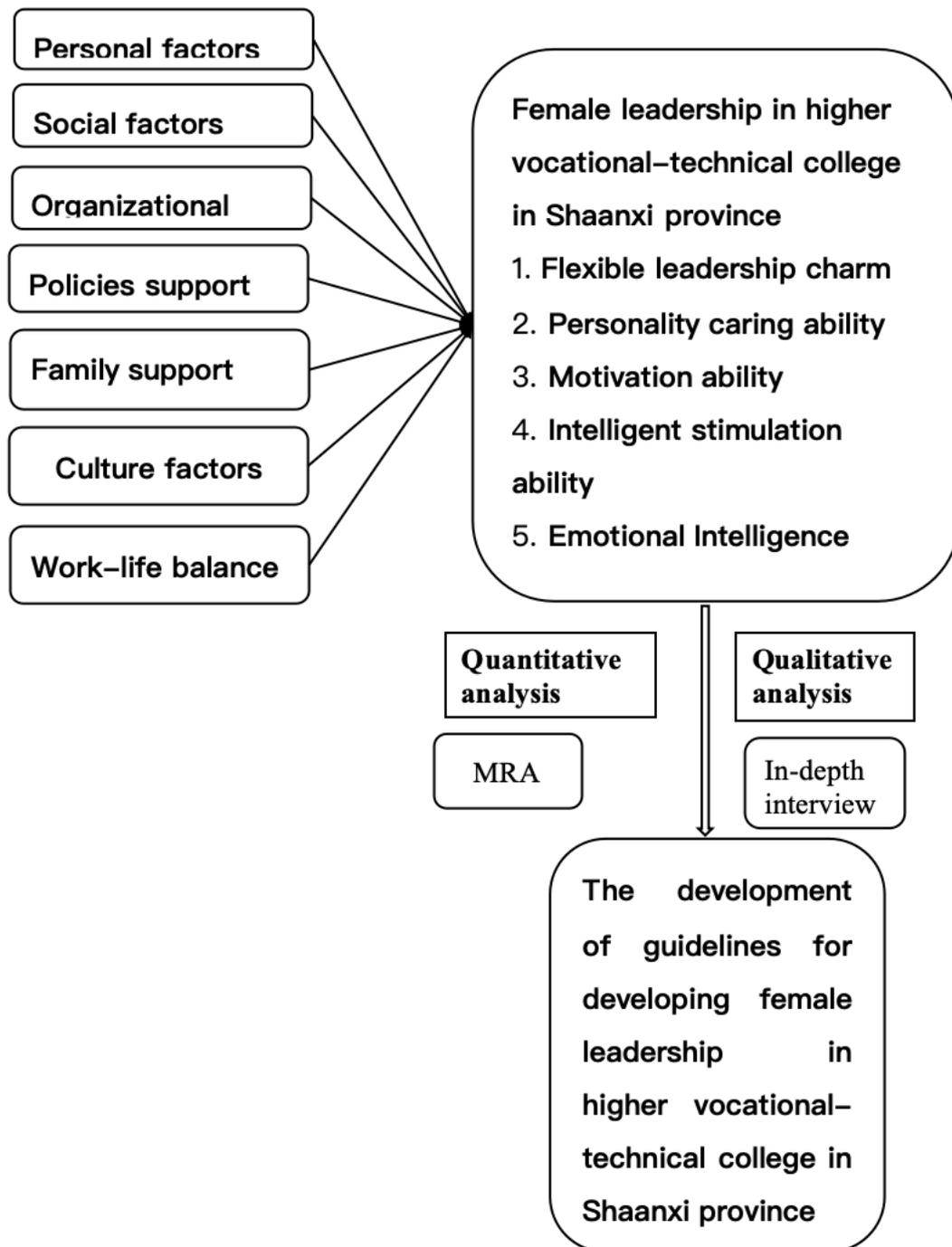


Figure 1 conceptual framework (sourced by the researcher, 2025)

## Research results

### Part 1: The level of female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province

The analysis shows that the overall female leadership level in Shaanxi vocational colleges is high, indicating well-developed leadership qualities. Among components of female leadership, flexible leadership charm has the highest mean score, showing adaptability as a key strength. Motivation ability ranks second, suggesting its role in inspiring teams. Personality caring ability closely follows, reflecting the importance of empathy in leadership. Intelligent stimulation ability highlights the role in promoting critical thinking. Emotional intelligence, though high, has the lowest mean score .

**Table 1** The results of the analysis of data on the level of female leadership

NO	Female leadership in higher vocational colleges	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpret results	Rank
1	Flexible leadership charm	4.33	0.39	High	1
2	Personality caring ability	4.18	0.42	High	3
3	Motivation ability	4.27	0.41	High	2
4	Intelligent stimulation ability	4.12	0.42	High	4
5	Emotional Intelligence	4.00	0.44	High	5
	Total average	4.18	0.33	High	

### Part 2: The level of the factors of female leadership in Shaanxi higher vocational colleges.

**Table 2** The results of the analysis of data on the level of factors affecting female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi

NO	Factors affecting female leadership in higher vocational colleges	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpret results	Rank
1	Personal factors	4.19	0.40	High	4
2	Social factors	4.17	0.45	High	6
3	Organizational factors	4.21	0.44	High	3
4	Policies support	3.98	0.41	High	7
5	Family support	4.22	0.40	High	2
6	Culture factors	4.24	0.42	High	1
7	Work-life balance	4.18	0.61	High	5
	Total average	4.17	0.38	High	

The results of the study on the level of the factors of female leadership in Shaanxi higher vocational colleges overall, are at a high level. When considering each factor in descending order, the highest average score is for culture factors, ranking first, followed by

family support in second place. Organizational factors rank third with an average of, while personal factors rank fourth with. Work-life balance ranks fifth, followed by social factors, which rank sixth. The lowest-ranked factor is policies support, with an average score of but it still falls within the high-level category. These results indicate that cultural and family support play the most significant role in influencing female leadership in higher vocational colleges, whereas policy support, although still significant, has the least impact among the analyzed factors.

### Part 3: Result of analysis of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient

According to Pearson's correlation coefficient data, there is a broad and significant positive correlation between the factors of female leadership and overall female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province. This fully highlights the importance of personal, social, organizational, policy, cultural, and work-life balance factors in shaping female leadership effectiveness. The findings emphasize that institutions should focus on enhancing leadership development programs, promoting gender-inclusive policies, fostering cultural awareness, and ensuring work-life balance to empower female leaders in vocational education. This optimization will help strengthen leadership confidence, decision-making ability, motivation, adaptability, and overall leadership success, ensuring that female leaders can thrive and contribute effectively to their professional environments.

**Table 3** Results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis Between Factors Affecting Female Leadership and Female Leadership in Higher Vocational Colleges in Shaanxi Province

Variable	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>5</sub>	X <sub>6</sub>	X <sub>7</sub>	Y <sub>tot</sub>	Relationship level
X <sub>1</sub>	1							.861**	High
X <sub>2</sub>	.797**	1						.890**	High
X <sub>3</sub>	.725**	.805**	1					.892**	High
X <sub>4</sub>	.531**	.577**	.650**	1				.735**	High
X <sub>5</sub>	.678**	.700**	.755**	.656**	1			.853**	High
X <sub>6</sub>	.803**	.858**	.805**	.618**	.781**	1		.932**	High
X <sub>7</sub>	.618**	.588**	.597**	.426**	.565**	.692**	1	.784**	High
X	.816**	.890**	.892**	.735**	.853**	.932**	.784**	.734**	High

\* Significant correlation at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

\*\* Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

**Part 4: Results of analyze factors affecting female leadership and female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi province by using stepwise multiple regression analysis.**

The model reveals that the identified factors significantly explain the variation in female leadership in Shaanxi higher vocational colleges. Key factors include Work-Life Balance, which is crucial for effective leadership by balancing professional and personal aspects. Family Support provides emotional and logistical backing, enhancing leadership confidence. Personal Factors foster self-confidence, decision-making, and leadership aspirations. Organizational

Factors offer structured training, fair promotion policies, and inclusive environments. Policy Support contributes to leadership growth through flexible work and career policies. Cultural Factors promote gender inclusivity and break traditional stereotypes. Social Factors enhance leadership via mentorship, networking, and collaborative work settings.

**Table 4** Pattern analysis results of factors affecting female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province by analysis Stepwise multiple regression

Model summaries <sup>h</sup>						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
X <sub>5</sub>	.727	.529	.528	.230	482.207	<.001**
X <sub>5</sub> , X <sub>1</sub>	.773	.596	.596	.213	319.136	<.001**
X <sub>5</sub> , X <sub>1</sub> , X <sub>7</sub>	.799	.638	.636	.202	251.838	<.001**
X <sub>5</sub> , X <sub>1</sub> , X <sub>7</sub> , X <sub>3</sub> ,	.820	.673	.670	.193	219.889	<.001**
X <sub>5</sub> , X <sub>1</sub> , X <sub>7</sub> , X <sub>3</sub> , X <sub>4</sub>	.829	.688	.684	.188	187.782	<.001**
X <sub>5</sub> , X <sub>1</sub> , X <sub>7</sub> , X <sub>3</sub> , X <sub>4</sub> X <sub>6</sub>	.830	.689	.683	.185	155.531	<.001**
X <sub>5</sub> , X <sub>1</sub> , X <sub>7</sub> , X <sub>3</sub> , X <sub>4</sub> X <sub>6</sub> , X <sub>2</sub>	.834	.696	.691	.186	161.951	<.001**

a. Predictors: (Constant), Family support

b. Predictors: (Constant), Family support, Personal factors

c. Predictors: (Constant), Family support, Personal factors, Work-life balance

d. Predictors: (Constant), Family support, Personal factors, Work-life balance, Organizational factors

e. Predictors: (Constant), Family support, Personal factors, Work-life balance, Organizational factors, Policies support

f. Predictors: (Constant), Family support, Personal factors, Work-life balance, Organizational factors, Policies support, Culture factors

g. Predictors: (Constant), Family support, Personal factors, Work-life balance, Organizational factors, Policies support, Culture factors, social factors

h. Dependent Variable: Female leadership

### Part 5: Results of recommendation the factors affecting female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province.

The study of female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province showed that seven key factors jointly predicted female leadership. These factors include family support, personal factors, work-life balance, organizational factors, policies support, culture factors, and social factors. The model had a strong multiple correlation, explaining a significant portion of the variance in female leadership. Among them, work-life balance was the most influential factor, closely followed by family support and personal factors. Organizational, policy, cultural, and social factors also had positive impacts.

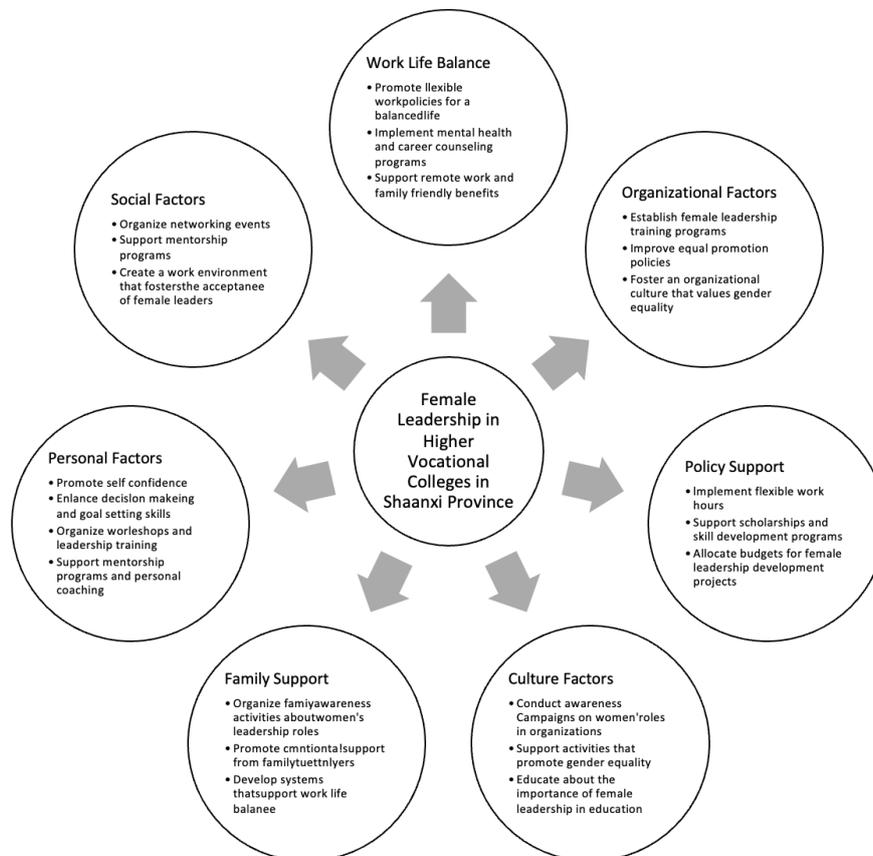


Each coefficient in the model represents the change in female leadership with a unit change in the corresponding variable. Family support gives emotional and logistical help for leadership confidence. Personal factors involve self-confidence, decision - making, and leadership aspirations. Work-life balance is crucial for sustained leadership. Organizational factors stress leadership training, and a supportive work environment Policy support focuses on flexible work and career development. Cultural factors break stereotypes, and social factors promote leadership through mentorship and networking.

Based on the analysis results, the development of female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province has been formulated as follows:

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Based on the analysis results, the development of female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province has been formulated as follows:



**Figure 2** The development of female leadership in higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province (sourced by the researcher 2025)

## Discussion

### 1) Female leadership levels in Shaanxi higher vocational colleges are high

Based on the quantitative findings, five factors reflected female leadership characteristics in Shaanxi higher vocational colleges, namely, Flexible Leadership Charm, Motivation Ability, Personality Caring Ability, Intellectual Stimulation Ability, and Emotional Intelligence. The results showed that among all the dimensions in female leadership, Flexible Leadership Charm was the highest, Motivation Ability was the second highest, Personality Caring Ability was the third highest, Intellectual Stimulation Ability was the fourth highest, and Emotional Intelligence was the lowest. In general, the order of the factors corresponded to the results reported in related literature. The factor structure of the female leadership measurement was consistent with scale development and validation in the literature (Comrey & Lee, 1992). In conclusion, in Shaanxi higher vocational colleges, the characteristics of female leaders were more evident, and in the next stage, a series of measures should be taken to further improve the corresponding index.

### 2) The factors influencing female leadership are also at a high level

Quantitative analysis found that there were seven dimensions of factors that affected the female leadership. They were Culture, Family Support, Organizational, Personal, Work-Life Balance, Social, and Policies Support. The results showed that among all the dimensions in affecting female leadership, Culture was the highest, Family Support was the second highest, Organizational was the third highest, Personal was the fourth highest, Work-Life Balance was in the middle, Social was one of the lowest, and Policies Support was the lowest. The order of the factors to some extent showed consistency with the relevant results in related literature. In the literature, it was suggested that social skills, family support, and organizational policies were the critical factors that affected the female leadership (Cimirotić et al., 2017; Yusof et al., 2017). In conclusion, in Shaanxi higher vocational colleges, the influencing factors of female leaders were more obvious, and in the next stage, a series of measures should be taken to further improve the corresponding index.

### 3) Multiple levers can significantly enhance female leadership

The above quantitative research results suggest that Personal, Social, Organizational, Policies Support, Family Support, and Culture factors affect female leadership, that is, the complex effect of the above six factors. Personal resources such as self-confidence, the quality of decision-making, and resilience can help women leaders to deal with various barriers and obstacles in the way and continue to inspire their teams. At the same time, social resources can provide emotional support and professional assistance and help increase the visibility of women leaders. Organization factors, such as formal channels for female leadership succession, clear leadership criteria, and fair leadership opportunities, can all create a more inclusive leadership climate. Policies that support work-life integration can help to improve employee retention and readiness for future opportunities. Family support can also play a positive role by providing an emotional and practical safety net for women leaders, reducing stress and anxiety, and increasing confidence and self-efficacy. In addition, egalitarian and

diverse cultural norms can also expand women's opportunity structures and create a more supportive environment for leadership development. In general, the above quantitative research results are consistent with relevant results in the literature on women's multi-factor pathways to leadership (Yusof et al., 2017). Targeted actions to improve policies, provide structured support, and change the organization and culture to expand women's leadership opportunities in higher vocational colleges are meaningful.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations for Practical Implementation

#### 1) Strengthening Personal Leadership Development

Strengthening personal leadership is key for female leaders in Shaanxi's higher vocational colleges. Leadership training programs focusing on self - confidence, decision - making, and strategic planning are needed. These programs, with interactive workshops, coaching, and simulation - based training, can boost problem - solving skills. Mentorship and coaching help women chart career paths and refine leadership styles. Pairing aspiring leaders with mentors promotes continuous learning. Encouraging participation in networking events and leadership forums enables knowledge sharing and relationship - building. Such initiatives enhance individual leadership and create a supportive leadership ecosystem in vocational institutions.

#### 2) Enhancing Social and Professional Networking

Creating female leadership networks in colleges is vital. These networks facilitate knowledge sharing, problem - solving, and professional growth among female leaders. Mentorship programs, connecting experienced with aspiring leaders, boost confidence and career prospects. Promoting inclusive workplace cultures is essential. Institutions should implement gender - equity policies, offer leadership chances to women, and celebrate their successes. An inclusive culture, valuing diversity and collaboration, empowers female leaders and improves vocational institutions' effectiveness.

#### 3) Enhancing Family and Community Support for Women Leaders

Strengthening family and community support is crucial for female leaders. Family engagement programs can educate families on supporting female leadership and breaking gender - role barriers. Emotional and psychological support within organizations and communities helps women handle leadership and personal tasks. Promoting family - friendly workplace cultures ease the pressure on female leaders, allowing them to balance career and family. All these efforts create an inclusive environment for women's professional and personal success.

#### 4) Promoting Cultural Change to Support Female Leadership

Cultural attitudes and gender norms impede female leadership. Awareness campaigns and seminars on gender equality in leadership can change mindsets and boost acceptance of women in executive positions. Institutions should recognize and celebrate female leadership feats, emphasizing women's key role in decision - making and success. Also, policies

challenging gender stereotypes in vocational education can create a fairer academic and professional environment. By fostering a diverse and inclusive culture, vocational institutions can embolden more women to assume leadership roles with confidence and institutional backing.

### **Recommendations for Policy**

#### **1) Strengthening Organizational Policies for Gender Inclusion**

Vocational education institutions need gender - equitable promotion policies. Transparent, merit - based systems should recognize female potential and remove bias. Tailored leadership development programs for women offer training, mentorship, and career growth. Fostering an equality - focused culture through workshops and clear career paths makes the environment more inclusive. This encourages more women in leadership, creating a diverse workforce.

#### **2) Strengthening Institutional Support and Leadership Advancement**

Institutional support is key for female leadership in vocational education. Dedicated funds for female - focused leadership programs close access gaps. Partnerships with national and international bodies boost networking and knowledge sharing. Research on gender and leadership helps evidence - based policy changes. Strengthening the institutional push for gender equity empowers female leaders and aids vocational education progress.

#### **3) Supporting Work - Life Balance for Female Leaders**

Work - life balance is vital for female leaders' success and well - being. Flexible work arrangements like remote work and variable schedules help women balance work and personal life. Family - friendly policies such as maternity, childcare, and parental leave support female leaders during life transitions. Mental health programs reduce stress, leading to higher job satisfaction, better retention of female leaders, and a healthier workplace for all.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

#### **1) Strengthening Leadership Development Programs**

Further research should explore the effectiveness of leadership training programs designed specifically for female professionals in vocational education. This includes assessing the impact of mentorship initiatives, leadership workshops, and executive coaching on career advancement. Additionally, studies should evaluate how peer support networks and leadership forums contribute to increasing confidence and career progression among female leaders.

#### **2) Evaluating Work-Life Balance Policies and Their Impact**

Future studies should investigate the effectiveness of flexible work arrangements, parental leave policies, and mental health support programs in promoting a sustainable work-life balance for female leaders. Research could also explore organizational culture shifts that support work-life integration and measure the long-term impact of these policies on employee retention and job satisfaction.

#### **3) Examining Institutional Gender Inclusion Policies**

Further research should analyze how gender-equitable promotion policies and inclusive career advancement opportunities affect women's leadership growth in vocational education. This includes assessing the effectiveness of policy implementation, workplace culture transformations, and diversity initiatives in reducing gender disparities in leadership roles.

Given that work-life balance emerged as the strongest predictor of female leadership effectiveness ( $\beta=0.43$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), institutions should prioritize implementing flexible work arrangements. Specifically, we recommend that college administrators establish clear policies for remote work options (2-3 days per week) and flexible scheduling, particularly for female leaders with family responsibilities. This recommendation directly addresses the primary barrier identified in our study and aligns with successful practices in other educational contexts (Gao, 2024).

## Conclusion

The role of women in leadership has become a pressing and important topic in the education sector, and women in vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province face difficulties in leadership opportunities. While institutional reforms and policy support have been conducive to increasing women's participation in leadership, gaps remain in terms of up-to-date information, access to leadership training, and organizational support structures. Sociocultural norms, gender bias, and limited mentoring opportunities remain barriers for women who aspire to leadership positions. In addition, balancing professional responsibilities with family obligations remains a challenge, especially in a culture where women tend to take on a large share of household chores.

To address these challenges, vocational colleges must take a more structured approach to developing female leadership. Organizational policies should focus on cultivating a culture of female leadership, implementing mentoring and training programs, and work-life balance policies such as flexible working hours and family-oriented support systems can help female leaders effectively promote the dual responsibilities they undertake. Encouraging a cultural shift toward gender equality in leadership roles is also necessary, requiring a sustained process of advocacy and awareness-raising. This will not only benefit individual institutions but will in turn promote broader educational and social progress across the province.

This study reveals that female leadership development in Shaanxi's vocational colleges requires a holistic approach that addresses both institutional barriers and personal factors. The emergence of work-life balance as the strongest predictor suggests that traditional approaches focusing solely on leadership skills development may be insufficient without addressing the broader social context in which female leaders operate. These findings extend current leadership theory by highlighting the contextual nature of leadership development and the need for culturally-sensitive approaches in the Chinese educational environment.

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