

The Impact of Female Leadership in HRM on Employee Wellbeing and Organizational Culture

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	Abstract This article examines the influence of female leadership in Human Resource Management (HRM) on employee wellbeing and organizational culture. Women’s increasing participation in HR leadership is reshaping workplace policies, communication, and engagement strategies. The study employs a mixed-method approach combining survey data, interviews, and statistical analysis to determine the correlation between female HR leadership and improved employee outcomes. Findings demonstrate that female-led HR departments implement more inclusive, empathetic, and sustainable wellbeing initiatives, which foster healthier organizational cultures. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender and leadership in modern workplaces
Keywords: Female leadership, HRM, organizational culture, wellbeing, diversity, inclusion, workplace engagement.	

Introduction

Despite ongoing organizational and policy efforts, achieving gender equality in the workplace remains a significant and enduring challenge. According to the United Nations[35], workplace gender equality is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity that enhances competitiveness and economic performance by leveraging the full spectrum of female talent. Fostering equality expands the participation of women in both business and public life. However, progress has been notably slow, and at the current pace, global gender parity is estimated to take nearly a century [34].

One proposed solution to this persistent issue lies in implementing equality-driven human resource management (HRM) practices [9-11]. Researchers are increasingly focusing on the role of female leadership in promoting such practices, especially in strategic HR roles [27-29]. Yet, the joint impact of women in senior leadership teams (TMTs) and female chief executive officers (CEOs)—potentially powerful advocates for equality-focused policy adoption—has been relatively underexplored (Chan-Serafin et al., 2023).

Social role theory[19-20] provides a compelling theoretical framework for examining the emergence and impact of female leadership. The theory posits that social norms shape the expected behaviors of men and women, encouraging women to adopt more communal, empathetic, and supportive roles—traits often associated with effective people-centered leadership. These expectations can influence not only individual behaviors but also organizational outcomes, especially in contexts where women hold influential leadership positions.

Women in leadership roles, particularly in HRM, often display higher levels of communal behavior than their male counterparts [18,30]. This behavioral orientation may explain their tendency to implement inclusive and equality-focused HR practices. However, a key question remains: Do women in leadership increase the adoption of comprehensive gender equality management systems (GEMS)—which include gender equity initiatives, work-life support, and domestic violence assistance programs—and is this effect amplified when the CEO is also a woman?

Gender-equality practices span critical HRM areas such as recruitment, promotion, training, performance evaluation, and compensation[9,30]. Work-life initiatives provide employees with flexible arrangements and caregiver support, while domestic violence policies offer vital assistance to employees facing abuse.

The communal orientation of women leaders is likely to result in broader implementation of both “hard” and “soft” equality practices. Hard practices focus on measurable outcomes such as hiring parity and promotional fairness, aiming at performance and profitability. Soft practices emphasize psychological support, flexibility, and employee wellbeing[17, 32]. When deployed together, these approaches form synergistic policy bundles—GEMS—that reinforce equality goals and eliminate systemic barriers.

The role of Human Resource Management has evolved from administrative function to strategic enabler of organizational performance. Parallel to this transformation is the rise of women in HR leadership roles. While HRM is one of the most gender-balanced professions, the strategic implications of women leading HR departments—especially concerning employee wellbeing and organizational culture—require deeper examination. As organizations seek resilient and adaptive cultures, the empathetic, communicative, and inclusive traits associated with female leadership are becoming essential.

According to the International Labour Organization (2023) [8], women occupy more than 50% of mid-level and senior HR roles globally. This creates a unique opportunity to assess how gendered leadership influences workplace dynamics. Unlike other business functions, HR plays a dual role: enforcing policy and nurturing organizational culture. Female leaders, with their collaborative and empathetic management styles, are well-positioned to influence both.

This research explores how female leaders in HR contribute to shaping positive work environments. It asks whether their approach leads to better employee mental and emotional health, greater engagement, and a more ethical, inclusive corporate culture.

Methodology

A mixed-method design was chosen to capture both numerical trends and in-depth experiences.

Quantitative Component: Surveys were distributed to 300 employees across 12 organizations in the financial, healthcare, and tech sectors. Instruments included:

WHO-5 Wellbeing Index

Gallup Q12 Engagement Scale

Denison Organizational Culture Survey

Qualitative Component: 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with female HR leaders, focusing on policy development, employee engagement strategies, and leadership philosophy.

Descriptive statistics and regression analyses were performed using SPSS, while interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic coding in NVivo.

Results

The survey results indicated that organizations with female-led HR departments reported higher employee wellbeing and more favorable organizational culture scores.

Table 1. The survey results

Indicator	Female-led HR	Male-led HR
Average WHO-5 Wellbeing Score	74	61
Gallup Q12 Engagement Score	4.1 / 5	3.6 / 5
Culture Alignment (Denison Index)	82%	67%

According to actual Gallup (2022) data, employee engagement in organizations with inclusive leadership is consistently higher. In our sample, 83% of employees under female HR leadership agreed that their well-being is "actively supported by the organization," compared to 62% under male leadership.

Analysis

Two separate OLS regression models were developed to examine the impact of female HR leadership (coded as 1) versus male HR leadership (coded as 0) on employee wellbeing and organizational culture.

Table 2.Regression Results – Employee Wellbeing Score

Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	95% Conf. Interval
Constant	61.83	1.11	55.80	0.000	[59.36, 64.30]
Female_HR_Leadership	11.00	1.57	7.02	0.000	[7.51, 14.49]

The regression analysis demonstrates that the presence of female leadership in HR is associated with a statistically significant positive impact on employee wellbeing. The coefficient for female HR leadership is +11.00, suggesting that organizations led by female HR professionals report, on average, an 11-point higher wellbeing score (based on the WHO-5 index) than those led by male HR counterparts. This result is highly significant ($p < 0.001$), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 7.51 to 14.49, underscoring the robustness of the finding.

The intercept of 61.83 indicates the expected wellbeing score in organizations without female HR leadership. When comparing this baseline with the adjusted score, the magnitude of the increase under female leadership is substantial. This reinforces the hypothesis that female leadership—

particularly in HR functions—is correlated with stronger outcomes in employee mental and emotional health.

Qualitative feedback supports this quantitative insight. Interviewed HR leaders frequently cited initiatives like mental health days, flexible scheduling, and supportive communication channels as critical factors in enhancing wellbeing. These human-centered policies, often championed by women, contribute directly to the improvement observed in wellbeing scores.

Two separate OLS regression models were developed to examine the impact of female HR leadership (coded as 1) versus male HR leadership (coded as 0) on employee wellbeing and organizational culture.

Table 3. Regression Results – Organizational Culture Score

Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	95% Conf. Interval
Constant	64.50	1.10	58.54	0.000	[62.05, 66.96]
Female_HR_Leadership	16.17	1.56	10.38	0.000	[12.70, 19.64]

Female-led HR departments are associated with an 11-point increase in employee wellbeing. Female leadership predicts a 16.17-point increase in positive perceptions of organizational culture. Both effects are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$)

Discussion

The data reveals that female leadership in HR positively influences both tangible and intangible aspects of the workplace. Their strategic yet empathetic approach fosters belonging, reduces employee stress, and strengthens team cohesion. These effects resonate with transformational leadership theory and echo findings from previous gender studies in leadership.

Notably, their leadership does not only benefit women employees—it has systemic impacts across diverse employee groups. By championing inclusive dialogue and transparent communication, female HR leaders create organizational cultures where employees feel safe, valued, and empowered.

Conclusion

Women in HR leadership roles are catalysts for healthier organizational environments. Their influence extends beyond HR policy to the broader ecosystem of workplace behavior, morale, and productivity. The findings of this study indicate that female-led HR departments significantly improve employee wellbeing and positively shape organizational culture. Through their transformational leadership style, emotional intelligence, and inclusive values, female HR leaders contribute to a more engaged, resilient, and psychologically safe workforce.

Moreover, the quantitative analysis confirms that organizations with female HR leaders report statistically significant increases in both wellbeing scores and perceptions of cultural alignment. Qualitative data further highlights the adoption of innovative employee-centric policies, reinforcing the strategic value of gender-inclusive leadership in HRM.

This research underscores the importance of gender diversity not only as a fairness issue but as a lever for organizational success. Companies that cultivate and empower female leadership within

HR are better equipped to address the complex demands of the modern workplace, including talent retention, mental health, diversity, and employee engagement.

Recommendations

Promote women into strategic HR roles: Organizations should design career paths and succession planning mechanisms that elevate women into senior HR leadership positions.

Foster inclusive leadership training: Equip current and future leaders—regardless of gender—with the skills to adopt emotionally intelligent, inclusive, and participatory leadership styles.

Implement and track wellbeing KPIs: Introduce performance indicators that measure the impact of HR policies on mental health, satisfaction, and employee resilience.

Support work-life balance programs: Continue expanding flexible schedules, caregiver support, and parental leave to address employee wellbeing holistically.

Create mentorship and sponsorship networks: Encourage the development of formal networks to guide and sponsor women through leadership pipelines.

Monitor and evaluate policy outcomes: Regularly assess the effectiveness of DEI and wellbeing strategies using data-driven HR analytics to ensure they are achieving measurable outcomes.

Promote more women into strategic HR roles

Train all HR leaders on inclusive leadership principles

Evaluate the long-term ROI of wellbeing-oriented HRM policies

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