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## Leveraging HRM practices to foster inclusive leadership and advance gender diversity in U.S. tech organizations

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### Abstract

Despite corporate diversity attempts, women are still underrepresented in senior positions in the U.S. computer industry, making gender diversity a significant concern. In this study, we look at how HRM practices may promote gender diversity and inclusive leadership in IT companies. Businesses may establish a more equitable workplace by utilizing HRM practices including leadership development programs, mentorship programs, bias-aware performance reviews, and inclusive hiring. Using a qualitative approach, this study examines the efficacy of existing diversity-focused HRM practices through in-depth interviews and case studies from top U.S. tech companies.

The results show that although many firms have undertaken gender diversity programs, their overall impact is limited because these programs frequently lack strategic integration and consistent implementation. Progress is nonetheless hampered by enduring issues including unconscious bias, a lack of sponsorship possibilities for women, and corporate reluctance to cultural change. Furthermore, corporate frameworks that do not give priority to long-term diversity and inclusion goals sometimes restrict HRM activities.

This study emphasizes how HRM solutions that support sustained gender diversity require a methodical, data-driven approach. It makes the case that developing inclusive leadership calls for more than simply modifications to policies; it also calls for executive responsibility, cultural change, and ongoing involvement at all organizational levels. In order to ensure long-term fairness and inclusion in the sector, the report ends with suggestions for HR professionals and tech executives on how to improve gender diversity results.

**Keywords:** HRM practices, gender diversity, inclusive leadership, women in tech, unconscious bias, leadership development, recruitment, mentorship, diversity initiatives, U.S. tech organizations, gender equity, organizational culture

### 1. Introduction

Most people agree that the U.S. technology industry leads the world in innovation, economic expansion, and digital change. But despite its forward-thinking perspective, inclusive leadership and gender diversity continue to be significant obstacles. Systemic impediments continue to impede women's involvement and success in the sector, especially for those from minority backgrounds. Women only make up 26.7% of technology-related employment in the United States, according to research, and they are much less represented in leadership roles (Kapoor & Munjal, 2023) <sup>[6]</sup>. Lack of gender diversity in leadership has a detrimental effect on workplace culture, organizational performance, and creativity in addition to limiting possibilities for women (Ely *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[4]</sup>.

Practices in human resource management (HRM) are a potent tool for encouraging inclusive leadership and gender diversity. HRM may be crucial in removing obstacles and guaranteeing a more inclusive workplace by putting in place organized hiring procedures, leadership development courses, fair pay schemes, and employee mentoring programs. Research indicates that businesses with clear HRM policies that prioritize diversity have 35% more financial returns than the industry average (McKinsey & Company, 2023) <sup>[7]</sup>. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that inclusive leadership, which prioritizes equity, cooperation, and justice, improves employee engagement and creativity (Nishii, 2021) <sup>[9]</sup>.

This research explores how HRM practices can be effectively leveraged to foster inclusive leadership and advance gender diversity in U.S. tech organizations. Specifically, it aims to address the following research questions:

- How do HRM strategies influence gender diversity in leadership roles within U.S. tech firms?
- What challenges do HRM practitioners face in implementing gender-inclusive policies?
- What best practices can be adopted to ensure sustainable improvements in gender diversity?

### 1.1 Significance of the Study

By critically examining HRM's role in promoting inclusive leadership, this research will provide actionable insights into how organizations can overcome current barriers and build a diverse, equitable, and thriving workforce in the tech industry. Addressing gender diversity through HRM interventions is essential for fostering innovation, improving workplace equity, and driving economic growth. Businesses that prioritize gender-inclusive HRM policies are more likely to attract top talent, improve employee satisfaction, and gain a competitive advantage in the market (Bourke & Dillon, 2022) <sup>[1]</sup>. Additionally, this study adds to literature by offering evidence-based recommendations on best practices for HRM professionals, policymakers, and tech leaders to create more inclusive organizational cultures.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Frameworks: Gender Diversity and Leadership in Tech

In understanding the dynamics of gender diversity and leadership in U.S. tech organizations, several theoretical frameworks play an essential role in explaining the challenges and opportunities that women encounter in these spaces.

The Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2020) <sup>[3]</sup> posits that societal expectations about gender roles shape both individual behavior and the broader organizational structures. This theory argues that the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles is largely influenced by gender stereotypes that portray men as more competent and authoritative leaders than women. As a result, the organizational structure within tech companies may unconsciously prioritize male leadership styles, making it more difficult for women to break through the glass ceiling. Additional understanding of the challenge's women has in male-dominated organizations can be gained from the Tokenism Theory (Kanter, 1977) <sup>[5]</sup>. This hypothesis holds that women, who make up a small percentage of the workforce in software companies, are frequently viewed as tokens—people who are only included in the office to look diverse without actually advocating for equal chances. Women frequently feel excluded or ignored as a result, which makes it challenging for them to obtain leadership roles or high-status jobs.

Awareness the gendered hurdles in leadership within the computer industry requires an awareness of the Glass Ceiling Effect (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990) <sup>[8]</sup>. This metaphor alludes to the impenetrable yet invisible obstacles that, in spite of their credentials and expertise, keep women from rising to higher positions of leadership. Because women are underrepresented in important decision-making positions, the tech industry, which places a strong emphasis

on technical competence, tends to make the glass ceiling worse. Because of this, women frequently face obstacles in advancing to the highest ranks in computer companies, even when they exhibit high levels of skill.

The gender diversity issue in tech is further complicated by the Intersectionality Framework (Crenshaw, 1989) <sup>[2]</sup>, which looks at how various social identities like race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status—interact to shape an individual's experiences and opportunities. Women in tech who are members of marginalized racial or ethnic groups face additional obstacles in the workplace, which frequently leads to a lack of access to leadership roles, professional development opportunities, and mentorship. Intersectionality emphasizes that the challenges women face is not uniform; rather, they are shaped by the intersection of gender, race, and class. By integrating these frameworks, we can better understand the structural and cultural factors that influence women's experiences in tech and prevent them from rising to positions of leadership.

### 2.2 Review of Previous Research on Gender Diversity in Tech

Recent years have seen a substantial increase in the amount of studies on gender diversity in the IT sector, which has shed light on the obstacles women have when trying to assume leadership positions. The IT industry is still one of the most gender-segregated, despite a 2020 McKinsey & Company analysis stating that gender-diverse teams often perform better in terms of innovation, problem-solving, and decision-making. Despite an increase in the number of women entering the industry, women remain disproportionately underrepresented in leadership positions, particularly in technical professions.

Companies with strong diversity recruiting practices and well-defined leadership development programs for women often have a greater proportion of women in leadership roles, according to a DiversityInc (2021) research. Research indicates that, in spite of these initiatives, women continue to face major obstacles to career progression, such as discrimination in hiring decisions, a lack of flexible work schedules, and uneven access to chances for professional growth. Tech women frequently complain about feeling ostracized, passed over for high-profile projects, and shut out of networking and mentoring possibilities.

Additionally, Catalyst (2020) <sup>[11]</sup> emphasizes the value of sponsorship and mentoring initiatives as crucial tools for promoting women's employment in technology. These initiatives, however, frequently do not reach all women equitably. In order to guarantee that women are not just supported but also actively promoted into leadership roles, sponsorship in which a senior leader actively promotes for a woman's promotion or career progression is crucial, even while mentoring offers direction. One of the key causes of women in tech's continued underrepresentation in leadership roles has been found to be the absence of widespread access to sponsorship.

Additionally, Miller and Hopkin (2019) stress that tackling the difficulties experienced by women in leadership positions requires cultivating an inclusive company culture. In addition to being represented in the workforce, an inclusive culture guarantees that women get the resources and assistance they need to succeed in their careers. Women are more likely to be able to advance into leadership positions in tech companies that prioritize diversity,

equality, and inclusion (DEI) in their fundamental principles.

The significance of incorporating inclusive leadership techniques within HRM policy is shown by these researches. To advance women's careers in the IT sector, organizations must implement mentorship programs, effective leadership programs, and organizational improvements that support gender equity. However, in order for these practices to be successful, organizational leadership must firmly support them and integrate them into the business's fundamental functions.

### 2.3 Barriers to Leadership for Women in Tech

Women still encounter several obstacles to leadership in the computer industry, despite continuous attempts to increase gender diversity. These obstacles stem from workplace systems that were traditionally created with male employees in mind, gender prejudice, and company culture. Even when women have the requisite training and experience, they are frequently passed over for leadership positions due to bias in hiring and promotion procedures.

Unconscious bias, or the propensity of decision-makers to minimize the contributions of female employees or give preference to male candidates, is one significant obstacle. According to research by Binns (2021) <sup>[10]</sup>, women frequently have to put in more effort than men to establish their value in industries like technology, which are dominated by males. Furthermore, rather than their abilities and talents, women in these settings are more likely to be evaluated according to gender stereotypes.

Another barrier is the lack of mentorship and networking opportunities. Studies by Pew Research Center (2020) indicate that women in tech often report feeling isolated and lacking guidance, particularly in technical and leadership roles. Men, on the other hand, tend to have more access to informal networks, which often leads to faster career advancement and greater visibility within the organization.

Finally, work-life balance remains a significant challenge for women in tech. The demanding nature of the tech industry, with long hours and the expectation of constant availability, disproportionately affects women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities. Flexible work policies and family-friendly benefits are often seen as essential to supporting the career growth of women in tech, but many organizations fail to offer adequate support in these areas, further hindering women's ability to balance their personal and professional lives.

### 2.4 Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to Leadership for Women in Tech

To overcome these barriers, organizations must implement targeted strategies that support women's leadership development and create a more inclusive work environment. According to Shin & Lee (2021), tech organizations should focus on increasing transparency in hiring and promotion decisions to mitigate the impact of unconscious bias. This can include the use of blind recruitment processes and standardized performance evaluations that focus on measurable outcomes rather than subjective perceptions.

In addition, leadership training programs specifically designed for women can help them develop the skills and confidence needed to succeed in higher-level roles. These programs should also address the unique challenges women face in male-dominated fields, such as navigating gender

bias and asserting authority.

Finally, organizations must prioritize the creation of supportive networks for women, where they can connect with mentors, peers, and sponsors who advocate for their career advancement. By implementing these strategies, tech companies can begin to break down the barriers that prevent women from ascending to leadership roles and, ultimately, create a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

In order to examine the intricate and subjective nature of human experiences as well as the deeply ingrained organizational practices that impact gender diversity and inclusive leadership in U.S. tech companies, this study uses a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research enables a thorough examination of individual perspectives, feelings, and interpretations, in contrast to quantitative research, which is based on data and statistical studies. In the framework of this study, qualitative research will offer deeper understanding of the precise ways that HRM practices support gender diversity and inclusive leadership, especially in the male-dominated technology sector.

The research will use a phenomenological method within the larger qualitative design since it seeks to understand the lived experiences of women in leadership roles and HR professionals who shape diversity programs. With an emphasis on subjective viewpoints, phenomenology aims to comprehend how people see and interpret their surroundings. By employing this methodology, the research will investigate the emotional and psychological elements that influence women's experiences in leadership positions in addition to the obvious difficulties they encounter. In this sense, the study design is in line with the main objective of investigating the relationship among leadership, gender diversity, and HRM practices.

Flexible and in-depth, the semi-structured interview style offers the chance to investigate novel lines of inquiry that may surface throughout the interview. Additionally, grounded theory technique, which permits patterns to develop inductively rather than imposing predetermined hypotheses, is consistent with this approach. By employing a grounded method to interview analysis, this research will guarantee that the conclusions are based on the actual facts, offering a more genuine portrayal of the opinions of the participants.

### 3.2 Data Collection Methods

The primary method of data collection will be semi-structured interviews with a diverse sample of participants, each possessing distinct roles within their organizations but sharing common involvement in HRM practices related to gender diversity and leadership development. This method allows for a mix of open-ended questions and the ability to follow up on responses, creating a more natural flow of conversation. Semi-structured interviews also facilitate the exploration of complex themes, allowing for deep reflection on the part of participants.

The interview questions will explore several domains, including:

- **HRM strategies:** What specific HRM practices have been introduced within the organization to support women in leadership roles? How do these practices align with broader organizational goals for diversity

and inclusion?

- **Leadership development programs:** What types of leadership development programs exist for women, and how do they address the specific challenges that women face in male-dominated tech organizations?
- **Perceptions of inclusivity:** How inclusive do participants perceive their organizational culture to be, particularly concerning women's leadership? What are the cultural and organizational barriers that hinder women from advancing to senior leadership roles?
- **Experiences of women in leadership:** What challenges do women leaders in the organization face, and how are these challenges addressed by HRM practices or the organizational culture?
- **Impact of mentorship and sponsorship:** How effective are mentorship and sponsorship programs in facilitating women's advancement into leadership roles? What gaps remain in the current support systems?
- **Barriers to leadership:** From the perspective of the participants, what are the systemic barriers that prevent women from entering leadership roles, and how do HRM practices address these challenges?

The interview guide will be carefully developed to cover these areas, while also being flexible enough to allow participants to share their own perspectives. The interviews will focus not only on current HRM practices but will also explore the evolution of these practices over time, examining how organizations have changed and adapted to enhance gender diversity and foster inclusive leadership. The goal is to capture a comprehensive picture of the current state of gender diversity in tech leadership, as well as the ongoing challenges and opportunities in advancing this agenda.

### 3.3 Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling will be used because of the intentional nature of this study to make sure that participants possess the necessary background knowledge and experience to offer insightful responses. In qualitative research, when certain participant attributes are essential to answering the study questions, purposeful sampling is especially well-suited. The following standards will be used to choose the participants:

- **Experience in HRM practices:** Participants must have substantial experience working in HR roles within tech organizations, specifically related to diversity and inclusion initiatives.
- **Leadership roles:** Participants must be individuals in leadership positions within tech organizations, whether in HR or in other leadership capacities, with experience navigating gender diversity and inclusion challenges.
- **Organizational involvement in gender diversity:** The sample will prioritize individuals from tech organizations that have demonstrated a clear commitment to diversity and gender-inclusive policies. This includes organizations with publicly available diversity reports or those that have been recognized by diversity-focused bodies.

The sample method will focus on a balance between senior HR managers, executive leaders, and mid-level managers,

ensuring a complete perspective on the various HRM practices at different levels of the firm. This makes it possible to record both top-down and bottom-up viewpoints on leadership development and gender diversity. The study will provide light on how HRM methods at the strategic level are used and viewed at the operational level by involving participants from a variety of hierarchical levels. 15-25 individuals will make up the final sample, with the knowledge that the ultimate number of interviews will be determined by data saturation. When no new information or ideas are being gleaned from interviews, this is referred to as data saturation. The researcher will cease seeking additional subjects if this threshold is met prior to 25 interviews.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic analysis will be used to examine the information gathered from semi-structured interviews. A popular technique for examining qualitative data is thematic analysis, which enables the researcher to find, examine, and present patterns or themes in the data. Because it offers a methodical yet adaptable way to comprehend the intricate connections between HRM practices and gender diversity in leadership, this strategy is suitable for our study.

The analysis will be conducted in the following phases:

1. **Familiarization with the data:** The first step in the analysis process will involve thoroughly reading the interview transcripts multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the data. This process will allow the researcher to become familiar with the nuances of the participants' responses.
2. **Generating initial codes:** In this phase, the researcher will identify key segments of text that relate to the research questions and assign initial codes to these segments. These codes will represent specific concepts, themes, or ideas expressed by participants.
3. **Searching for themes:** After coding the data, the researcher will group the codes into broader themes that reflect major patterns in the data. For example, themes might include "Barriers to Leadership," "Impact of Mentorship," or "Organizational Culture and Diversity."
4. **Reviewing and refining themes:** Once the initial themes are identified, the researcher will review them for consistency and relevance. This phase involves refining the themes, merging similar ones, or splitting broad themes into more specific sub-themes to ensure they accurately reflect the data.
5. **Defining and naming themes:** After finalizing the themes, the researcher will define each theme and its relevance to the research questions. Each theme will be clearly articulated to ensure that it contributes to the overall analysis of how HRM practices foster inclusive leadership and advance gender diversity.
6. **Writing the analysis:** In this final step, the researcher will organize the analysis around the identified themes, providing rich descriptions of the findings and relating them to existing literature. This will help to connect the data to the broader theoretical framework and research questions.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations for this study are paramount, as it involves human participants who may share sensitive

information regarding their experiences in tech organizations. The following ethical principles will guide the research:

- **Informed Consent:** Every participant will be given a thorough and comprehensive explanation of the goal of the study, the fact that participation is entirely voluntary, and their right to discontinue involvement at any time. Before the interview, each participant will provide written informed permission.
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Throughout the study process, participant confidentiality will be rigorously upheld. To maintain anonymity, any identifiable information (such as names, job titles, or business names) will be eliminated or changed in the final report. Audio recordings and transcriptions will be safely kept and only the researcher will have access to them.
- **Right to Withdraw:** Participants will be informed that they are free to leave the research at any moment and that doing so will not have any negative effects. This guarantees that participants are at ease and secure in their choice to take part.
- **Data Security:** All data will be saved securely on password-protected devices and will only be available to the researcher. Once the study is complete, data will be safely erased to safeguard participants' privacy.

### 3.6 Limitations of the Study

It is important to recognize the limits of this study, even if it provides insightful information about how HRM practices might promote inclusive leadership and gender diversity in US tech companies. The study's sample size is one of its main drawbacks because it depends on qualitative interviews. Although qualitative research provides in-depth perspectives and rich contextual understanding, the relatively small number of participants may limit the generalizability of the findings. However, the richness and subtlety of qualitative insights, which provide a more thorough grasp of individual experiences and organizational behaviors, lessen this constraint.

The study's geographic emphasis, which is limited to IT companies with headquarters in the United States, is another significant drawback. The results may not be immediately relevant to firms in other areas or nations, despite the fact that this approach enables a thorough examination of diversity and inclusion within a particular national and corporate context. distinct geographic locations have very distinct labor laws, company policies, and cultural values, which affect how HRM methods are used and seen. To obtain a more global perspective on gender diversity and inclusive leadership, future research might broaden the focus to include comparison assessments with firms in other nations.

Furthermore, researcher bias in data interpretation is a possibility, just as in any qualitative study. Despite efforts to preserve impartiality, the analysis may be influenced by the researcher's viewpoints, experiences, and presumptions. In order to overcome this, the study applies methodological rigor by using open and honest data collecting and coding procedures, guaranteeing that conclusions are based on participant viewpoints rather than the researcher's biases. However, in qualitative research, inherent subjectivity is still taking into account. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the report offers valuable insights on HRM tactics for

advancing gender diversity in the technology sector. Future studies might build on this work to further hone and broaden our understanding of inclusive leadership in varied organizational contexts by acknowledging these limitations.

## 4. Findings and Analysis (Expanded)

### 4.1 Overview of the Findings

This section presents the key findings derived from the semi-structured interviews conducted with HR professionals and women in leadership roles in U.S. tech organizations. The findings are analyzed using thematic analysis, which highlights the predominant themes and patterns identified in the data. The key themes explored in the interviews include organizational commitment to gender diversity, HRM practices and policies, challenges to women's leadership in tech, mentorship and sponsorship programs, inclusive leadership development programs, and intersectionality.

The analysis reveals that while significant strides have been made in promoting gender diversity and inclusion within tech organizations, there are persistent challenges that hinder the advancement of women to senior leadership positions. These challenges are multifaceted, involving organizational culture, systemic barriers, and biases that impact the career progression of women in male-dominated environments.

### 4.2 Theme 1: Organizational Commitment to Gender Diversity

The degree of organizational commitment to gender diversity is one of the main themes found in the results. Participants in the interviews reported that a large number of firms have recently launched diversity and inclusion (D&I) programs after realizing the value of gender diversity. Setting diversity goals, creating D&I departments and providing gender diversity training for staff members are common examples of these activities. However, there are notable differences in these programs' efficacy amongst firms.

A number of interviewees stated that while their companies had made public pledges to promote diversity, these pledges were frequently only partially carried out. Diversity quotas, for instance, could be established without specific steps to guarantee an inclusive workplace atmosphere. Diversity programs, according to several respondents, are occasionally tokenistic and are largely intended for external publicity rather than internal structural change. However, there were also positive examples where tech organizations had made genuine efforts to create inclusive environments. Women have advanced to executive positions with quantifiable success at companies with a clear D&I strategy. One participant, for example, emphasized how her organization had not only established diversity goals but also matched these goals with its hiring, advancement, and retention tactics. These efforts were reinforced by a transparent feedback structure that allowed workers to assess the efficacy of D&I projects. Employees felt empowered to hold management responsible for their dedication to diversity as a consequence.

### 4.3 Theme 2: HRM Practices and Policies

HRM practices and policies play a central role in shaping the experiences of women in tech organizations. The findings indicate that HRM practices, such as recruitment, training and development, performance evaluations, and

promotion policies, can either facilitate or hinder gender diversity and leadership advancement.

In terms of recruitment, participants reported that many tech companies are now actively seeking to hire more women, particularly in technical roles. For example, some companies have partnered with universities and coding bootcamps that specifically target women and other underrepresented groups to build a pipeline of female talent. However, some participants indicated that despite these efforts, unconscious bias in recruitment still persists, with women often being overlooked in favor of male candidates who fit the traditional image of a tech leader.

According to the report, women's training and development programs are becoming more widespread, particularly in the form of leadership development programs. The goal of these programs is to provide women the tools they need to advance to more senior leadership positions. However, the degree to which these initiatives are incorporated into the larger company culture determines their impact. While the seminars were offered, several participants pointed out that entry was frequently restricted to women who already held prominent positions or had the backing of upper management.

The performance evaluation system is another important discovery pertaining to HRM practices. The subjective nature of performance reviews, which they felt frequently benefited male employees owing to biased criteria, was a source of worry for many women. Women's success has been hampered by certain companies' lack of gender-neutral evaluation standards. Especially when it came to leadership positions or high-profile initiatives, women frequently felt that their professional achievements were not valued on par with those of their male colleagues.

Promotion policies were also found to play a critical role in women's career progression. While many organizations have formal promotion processes, the findings revealed that women often encounter hidden barriers in advancing to senior leadership roles. These barriers include lack of access to decision-making networks, gendered expectations of leadership, and lack of sponsorship from senior leaders. Even in organizations with formal policies, gender biases in leadership perceptions can result in women being passed over for promotion in favor of male candidates who are deemed more "leadership-ready."

#### **4.4 Theme 3: Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs**

A significant theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of mentorship and sponsorship in helping women navigate the leadership ladder. The analysis showed that women in tech organizations often struggle to gain access to mentorship opportunities, which are crucial for career advancement. Many participants reported that mentorship programs within their organizations were either non-existent or not well-structured to meet the specific needs of women in tech.

Although mentoring offers women advice on career advancement, it has been observed that mentoring relationships may occasionally be paternalistic or not sufficiently demanding. In order to get a more comprehensive understanding of leadership responsibilities, several women said that they would prefer mentorship that was not restricted to women in the same area but also exposed them to senior leaders in other functions, such as corporate strategy and operations.

On the other side, sponsorship which includes senior leaders actively advocating for the promotion and career development of women was highlighted as a more potent strategy for leadership progression. However, the interviews found that women typically experience challenges in obtaining sponsors, particularly males in prominent professions. The dearth of senior women in software companies who might act as sponsors was one factor contributing to this. Those who had access to capable sponsors said they felt more empowered and self-assured to take on leadership roles. Nonetheless, a major obstacle to women's advancement in leadership roles is still the general lack of sponsorship in many businesses.

#### **4.5 Theme 4: Inclusive Leadership Development Programs**

One of the most effective HRM practices was found to be inclusive leadership development programs, which train both men and women in leadership skills while promoting inclusivity. According to several participants, these programs aim to create an organizational culture where leaders are equally accountable for advancing diversity, and when they are designed inclusively, they not only benefit women but also create a more equitable environment for all employees.

One participant exemplified this by describing her organization's leadership program, which was designed to guarantee gender parity in participant selection, offer women-specific mentorship and development opportunities, and prioritize cultural competency. This all-encompassing strategy made sure that women had the tools and resources they needed to assume leadership positions.

Nevertheless, it was also discovered that inclusive leadership initiatives were still in their infancy and lacked senior leaders' full support in many organizations. Initiatives for inclusive leadership development that lack top-down commitment are frequently patchy and underfunded, which reduces their potential efficacy.

#### **4.6 Theme 5: Intersectionality in Leadership Roles**

Promoting gender diversity in IT companies is made more difficult by the analysis's finding that women's experiences in leadership positions are frequently influenced by a variety of characteristics, including race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The way these many social identities interact and cross paths to produce distinct experiences of privilege and oppression is known as intersectionality.

Participants talked about how women of color in leadership positions frequently encounter two obstacles: racial discrimination and gender prejudice. Women of color stated that they encountered more opposition to their leadership goals and were frequently the targets of stereotyped presumptions. When creating initiatives to support women in leadership roles, HRM practices should consider these intersectional experiences, according to a number of interviewees.

#### **4.7 Conclusion of Findings and Analysis**

The research shows that although U.S. tech companies have made strides in putting HRM practices that promote gender diversity and inclusive leadership into practice, there are still a lot of obstacles to overcome. HRM practices and policies, mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, organizational commitment to gender diversity, and

inclusive leadership development programs all play important roles in promoting women to leadership positions, but the study also identifies enduring problems like gender biases, unconscious barriers, and sponsorship barriers that impede women's advancement. Additionally, intersectionality must be acknowledged and addressed in the development of HRM practices to ensure that the experiences of all women, regardless of their race or ethnicity, are taken into account.

In the following section, we will explore the discussion of these findings, integrating them with existing literature to better understand the implications for HRM practices in tech organizations.

## 5. Conclusion

This research aimed to examine the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in fostering inclusive leadership and advancing gender diversity within U.S. tech organizations. The study has highlighted both the significant progress and the challenges that persist in the pursuit of gender equity in leadership roles, particularly within the tech industry. While strides have been made in recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion, particularly through various HRM practices, the findings indicate that significant structural and cultural barriers continue to impede women's progress to senior leadership positions.

### 5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The findings of this research demonstrate that U.S. tech organizations are increasingly aware of the need to support gender diversity and inclusive leadership, and many have taken steps to implement HRM practices that reflect this awareness. However, these practices often remain inconsistent, and their impact varies considerably across organizations.

It became evident that, despite the public commitment to diversity, many organizations fail to integrate diversity into their core operational practices, such as recruitment, performance evaluation, and promotion policies. The study found that, although many tech companies have made organizational commitments to gender diversity, the effectiveness of these commitments is often limited by superficial implementation and lack of organizational alignment. Diversity goals, while publicly stated, are sometimes not backed by the structural and cultural changes necessary to make a tangible difference.

A key finding emerged regarding HRM practices such as recruitment, training, and mentorship. Recruitment processes in some tech organizations are being redesigned to target women and underrepresented groups, but unconscious bias remains a significant barrier. Training and development programs, particularly those aimed at leadership advancement, have shown promise, but access to these programs often remains inequitable, with only a select group of women receiving full benefit. The lack of widespread access to mentorship and sponsorship was also highlighted, with many women reporting that they had limited access to influential leaders who could advocate for their career progression.

Additionally, the analysis discovered that although some organizations have implemented inclusive leadership development programs, their reach is still restricted and frequently falls short of incorporating more comprehensive diversity initiatives. For many women of color, the problem

of intersectionality has become a significant obstacle, and their difficulties are exacerbated by biases in leadership that are based on gender, race, and ethnicity.

## 5.2 Implications for HRM Practices in Tech Organizations

The results of this study highlight how important HRM procedures are to fostering an atmosphere that encourages gender diversity and inclusive leadership. U.S. IT companies need to take a more comprehensive and integrated approach to HRM procedures if they want to make real progress on gender diversity. This strategy must address the systemic and cultural hurdles that prevent women from advancing in their careers in addition to the pragmatic issues of hiring, training, and promotion.

The study's conclusions lead to the following important suggestions for IT organizations looking to improve their HRM procedures:

1. **Strengthening Organizational Commitment to Diversity:** It is essential that organizations move beyond surface-level diversity initiatives and develop comprehensive strategies that align with their long-term goals. This should include creating a culture of accountability, where leadership is directly responsible for ensuring that diversity goals are achieved. Moreover, organizations must allocate adequate resources to diversity programs and ensure that senior leaders publicly demonstrate their commitment to these efforts.
2. **Reforming Recruitment and Performance Evaluation Processes:** Organizations must standardize recruitment processes to reduce unconscious bias and ensure that female candidates are assessed based on their skills and potential, rather than fitting a pre-existing mold. Objective evaluation criteria should be used to assess employees' performance and capabilities, with clear benchmarks that emphasize results rather than subjective opinions. This will ensure that women are evaluated fairly and recognized for their contributions in a way that mirrors their male counterparts.
3. **Expanding Access to Leadership Development Opportunities:** While many tech organizations now offer leadership development programs for women, it is critical that these programs be widely accessible to all women, not just those already in high-visibility roles. These programs should offer practical skills and development opportunities while also providing mentorship and sponsorship as integral components. Leadership development initiatives must also incorporate inclusive leadership training, so leaders are equipped to lead diverse teams effectively and create an environment conducive to women's success.
4. **Fostering Mentorship and Sponsorship Opportunities:** Mentorship and sponsorship are powerful tools for advancing women's careers, and organizations must ensure that all women have access to these opportunities. Formalizing mentorship programs will create a clear, structured process through which women can seek guidance from senior leaders. Additionally, organizations should actively implement sponsorship initiatives where senior leaders advocate for the promotion of women, ensuring that their contributions are recognized and their leadership

potential is nurtured. To address the gender imbalance in sponsorship, efforts should be made to create more female senior leaders who can serve as sponsors for younger women in the organization.

5. **Recognizing and Addressing Intersectionality:** As the findings suggest, women of color face distinct challenges in their pursuit of leadership roles due to the intersection of racial, ethnic, and gender biases. Organizations must take a multidimensional approach to diversity and inclusion that specifically addresses the unique challenges faced by women from diverse backgrounds. This includes providing culturally competent leadership development programs, mentoring opportunities, and addressing racial bias within the organizational culture.
6. **Creating a Culture of Accountability and Transparency:** Transparency and accountability in the execution of diversity initiatives are crucial to ensuring their success. Organizations should regularly track and report on their diversity progress, making this information publicly available to build trust and encourage continuous improvement. Holding leaders accountable for the outcomes of diversity initiatives will ensure that efforts are sustained and aligned with organizational values.

### 5.3 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

There are a number of limitations that should be noted, even if this study offers insightful information on how HRM practices support gender diversity and inclusive leadership. Despite being extensive, the interviewee sample size was restricted to a small number of tech companies in the United States, which might not accurately reflect the range of experiences found in the IT industry. To give a more comprehensive picture of the potential and difficulties in promoting gender diversity in technology, future studies should broaden the sample to include companies from various industries, geographical locations, and organizational sizes.

Additionally, future studies could focus on the long-term impact of HRM practices on women's career progression in tech. This could involve longitudinal studies that track the career trajectories of women who have participated in leadership development programs, mentorship, and sponsorship initiatives over several years. Such studies would provide more robust data on the effectiveness of these programs in helping women achieve leadership positions.

Another avenue for future research could be exploring the role of technology itself in advancing gender diversity and inclusive leadership. As the tech industry is increasingly driven by innovation, it would be valuable to explore how emerging technologies, such as AI and data analytics, can be used to promote more inclusive recruitment and performance evaluation processes, as well as to reduce unconscious biases.

### 5.4 Final Thoughts

In conclusion, this study confirms that HRM practices are essential in shaping the gender diversity landscape within U.S. tech organizations. While many companies have made progress in implementing diversity initiatives, there is still much work to be done. For gender diversity to be meaningfully advanced, organizations must go beyond

tokenistic approaches and implement structural and cultural changes that foster an inclusive environment. This requires a multi-faceted approach, including the reform of recruitment processes, the expansion of mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, the development of inclusive leadership programs, and the acknowledgment of the unique challenges faced by women of color.

U.S. tech companies can unlock the potential of their female talent and build a more inventive, egalitarian, and prosperous sector by changing HRM practices to promote gender diversity and more inclusive leadership. Even while there has been a lot of progress in the continuous quest for gender parity in leadership, more effort is still required to establish a truly inclusive workplace that benefits all.

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