

The Role and Challenges of Women's Leadership in Community Development

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Abstract In China, the importance of community development is gradually becoming modified through the advancement of gender equality awareness. As a result, women's roles and their status in community development, such as community governance, decision making, resource integration and service innovation, have been increasingly emphasised. Yet, at the same time, women's leadership roles in promoting community development are still undervalued and face multiple challenges in the form of social constructs, institutional obstacles and conflicts in personal roles. Based on this disparity, the following study conducts in-depth research on the role of women's leadership in community development, elaborating on its importance and positive impact, and identifying the challenges it confronts. The study concludes by presenting strategies and practices to enhance women's leadership in community development.

Keywords: • women's leadership • community leadership • community governance • Chinese Women

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Introduction

With growing global awareness of gender equality and the exploration of diversity in leadership, the subject of females in leadership roles is gaining increasing emphasis within various fields. Community development, in particular, is a field in which female leadership plays an indispensable role with women demonstrating unique abilities in areas of decision making, collaboration, innovative services, social relationship building and cultural maintenance. Yet, in practice, women leaders still face a number of critical challenges, including gender bias, work – family balance concerns, inequitable distribution of resources and power, and constraints on career development. These challenges limit the full realisation of women's leadership and impede the progress of communities. Studying these challenges and finding strategies to improve them is, therefore, crucial to enhancing the efficiency of community governance and promoting gender equality. Further to this, it offers considerable theoretical and practical significance in realising the overall development of the community and society as a whole. This paper is divided into three parts. Firstly, it will describe the development of community development and women's leadership in China; secondly, it will analyse the role and challenges of women's leadership in the setting of local community development, and; finally, it will provide suggestions on how to solve the challenges raised throughout the paper.

Community Management and Women's Leadership

Community management in the Chinese context

A community may be defined as a unit of people who share a common cultural and social identity and who are related to each other in a given area. The community is formed by the group and its activity area (Chipuer and Pretty, 1999). From a sociological point of view, the community transcends the family unit and members share a certain identity, values and collective responsibility within a certain geographical area (Bell and Newby, 2021). The community emphasises its own social structure and the social relations between its members. The concept of community derives from the concept of "society", which was differentiated after the introduction of the West into China. The concept emphasises that residents in a common region share the same culture and resources (Cao and Bao, 2020). The scope of community is widely divided by geographic features, such as urban streets or residential areas, rural villages or towns. In addition to the geographical divisions, communities in China also have certain organisational structures and administrative functions. In cities, communities are usually managed by grass-roots mass autonomous organisations (known as neighbourhood committees), which are responsible for managing community affairs, providing basic services, organising cultural activities, etc. In the countryside, the community is managed by the villagers' committee, which is responsible for managing local affairs and promoting rural development (Xia, 2002). In addition to geographical and administrative considerations, the definition of communities can also be divided according to specific purposes and needs, such as business requirements and

cultural matters. The Chinese community is, therefore, a community of residents with geographical boundaries and a shared organisational structure. Put simply, they live and develop together.

China's community management is a complex and diversified field. To some extent, the management of community affairs is a social public affair and covers the construction, planning, management and service of the communities. Different levels of management affect the development of different community structures and play a vital role in the spread of cultural norms, the formation of social networks and the development of social systems. It also offers a significant contribution to the social structure at different scales. In recent decades, the academic community has debated the success of China's community management model (Wei, 2003; Huang and Wen, 2013). The government-led top-down community management model has revealed various drawbacks including a reduction in community connectivity among residents, a lack of detailed insight into the needs of residents, and difficulties in carrying out in-depth community construction (Wei, 2003). The government has gradually realised the importance of connecting local people in community development through various measures. This includes an increased emphasis on community construction and management, the encouragement of autonomous community organisation, the divestiture of power to grass-roots communities, cultivating community residents' autonomy ability, improving the communities' ability to connect through social resources, and working with residents to promote the sustainable development of their community and well-being (Li, 2013). As such, methods on how to manage the community have become a top priority in community development.

Women in leadership

The definition of leadership is complex. In general, leadership is taken to mean a process in which one member of a group exerts greater influence over the behaviour of other members in the group to achieve common goals (Denmark, 1993). Women's leadership refers to women's active participation in and influence of group decision making (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). It emphasises the importance of women's views, talents and contributions in formulating policies, pursuing innovation and promoting positive social change. Hagbert (2002) believes that, from the perspective of feminism, women's leadership is more about empowerment rather than control, and links women with their ability to influence others. For example, the creative skills and attitudes of female leaders form the basis of successful leadership and they empower creativity in others rather than integrating others into their own creative vision (Mayer and Oosthuizen, 2020). Compared with male leaders, female leaders pay more attention to people, human cultivation and human relationship development (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). In leadership practice, they get along with others on a more equal level, which is conducive to the unity of community members and is crucial for achieving a more equitable and sustainable society.

Active participation by women is key to social development. In recent decades the gender gap has gradually narrowed but there are still serious inequalities, especially in leadership roles (Nazari, 2021). According to The Global Gender Gap Report 2022 produced by the World Economic Forum, the proportion of

women in leadership roles has increased over time. In 146 countries, including China, the number of women employed in leadership positions has been steadily increasing since 2016. Among this group of countries, the proportion of women employed in leadership positions rose from 33% in 2016 to 36.9% by 2022. During the pandemic, progress stagnated. In 2019 and 2020, the proportion of women employed in leadership positions remained at 35%, increasing to 36% in 2021. Industries with the highest proportion of female leaders in 2021 included non-governmental organisations and member organisations (54%), education (49%), government and public sectors (46%), personal services and welfare (46%), health care and nursing services (46%), and media and communications (46%). However, these are global statistics averaged across the cohort of countries analysed. China ranked 102 in the global gender gap scores in 2022, meaning that China's awareness of gender equality still requires improvement. For example, the invisible ceiling for gender in the workplace still exists. Compared to men, it is more difficult for women to rise in their careers and they will encounter more challenges and obstacles when competing for management positions (Sung, 2022). Denmark (1993) also believes that when women hold positions typically assigned to males, and their performance evaluators are mainly men, the women are more likely to be demoted. Therefore, once female managers break into fields that are traditionally held by males, or adopt a male leadership style, they will continue to face the initial negative evaluation, which impacts their enthusiasm for participating in community affairs. As such, women still need to be valued in terms of economic participation and opportunities, educational achievements, health and survival, and political empowerment.

The Importance of Women's Leadership in the Community

With the increasing awareness of gender equality, people are gradually coming to realise that women leaders play a key role in establishing and maintaining important relationships and networks in the community. Under the influence of certain cultural and social environments, women are considered to exhibit the characteristics of empathy, respect and care. In terms of community management, female leaders emphasise communication and interaction among people of different orientations, observing their equal, free and democratic rights, and respecting the rights and freedoms of community residents (Lang and Xing, 2023). They face cultural, economic and social barriers when leading communities, and in many cases, overcoming these barriers has become the key motivation for their activities (Hassan and Silong, 2008). In community management, female leaders contribute to the empowerment of the community's development and complement the concept of community autonomy advocated by the Chinese government. The following section presents a discussion on the positive role of female leadership in community development around five factors: community decision making and influence, communication and coordination skills, innovation and service, social capital accumulation, and cultural inheritance and identification. The potential advantages of women's leadership in community management do not lie in emphasising differences in gender characteristics. Instead, the

importance is in recognising gender differences under the established culture of society, and understanding the relationship between culture and women's leadership roles as formed under a certain social structure.

Community decision making and influence

Women play an irreplaceable and pivotal role in community governance at the grass-roots level. Women are not only the more intensive users and service recipients of community outputs but also the main managers and service providers for the community. According to the survey organised by Shenyang Women's Federation in 2021, the proportion of female community workers is actually much higher than 50%, and the proportion of female family volunteers and community volunteers is higher than that of males in different age groups ranging from the elderly, to the middle-aged and young. Women are not only the main participants in community volunteer services but also the main service targets of the community. The community is an important place for women's employment and social interaction, and a great deal of women's needs have to be realised in the community structure; they are also the main target of community cultural services. This means that the more women participate in community governance, the stronger their sense of collective responsibility for the community becomes. As the service recipients of the community they also have a better understanding of the interests and needs of the community. Not only are these inevitable requirements for women's leadership in community governance but they also form the advantages for women's leadership in community governance.

Women leaders often play a key role in the decision-making process due to their unique perspectives and leadership styles (Bouteska, 2021). According to DDI's Global Leadership Forecast (GLF) 2023, on average, there are at least 35% female leaders in companies that implement DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) plans more effectively than males, while only 25% of companies that do not implement DEI plans, or implement low-quality DEI plans, have female leaders. Compared with male leaders, female leaders pay more attention to the spirit of humanistic care and teamwork (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). It is specifically because they often face structural inequality that female leaders tend to adopt a more inclusive and equal participatory decision-making model. Not only does this ensure that more diverse voices are taken into consideration, by encouraging more community members to participate in the decision-making process also helps community leaders to formulate more comprehensive and humane policies and programs. At the same time, female community leaders better understand the interests and needs of women in the community by paying attention to gender equality and encouraging more women to participate in its governance. The efficacy of more equal and democratic decision making is more conducive to building a harmonious and friendly community environment, which strengthens neighbourhood connectivity in turn.

Communication and coordination skills

Women leaders usually have excellent communication skills and coordination abilities, which are crucial to maintaining community harmony, mediating neighbourhood conflicts and promoting multi-party cooperation (Shabani et al., 2021). In a practical capacity, female leaders are good at listening to, and

understanding, members' needs and expectations, while paying attention and respect to the members for expressing their needs. This helps to build consensus among community members and enables the leader to effectively influence and support others. Secondly, female leaders can show stronger empathy when communicating, which helps to build trust and cooperation. All kinds of problems and emergencies regularly develop within communities, for which communication and empathy are particularly important in negotiating. For example, during the epidemic, community workers needed to coordinate problems experienced by community residents that were required for epidemic prevention and emergency control. In the face of less complicated or trivial affairs and conflicts, staff need to adjust their own state of mind, and coordinate the needs of residents. In such cases, it is necessary to sympathise with other residents and relate to their needs (Lang and Xing, 2023). On the one hand, this can help to ease the emotional fluctuations of residents, on the other hand, it enables a better understanding of the residents' needs. Female leadership promotes understanding and interaction among various groups within the community and can also represent the interests of the community in external exchanges. Ultimately this works to establish a cooperative win-win relationship, laying a solid foundation for improved community work (Stajkovic, 2024).

The community itself is, in fact, a relationship network established by local residents, and one in which community work is important to connect social resources and empower residents. This is especially important in the communities in China with large floating populations. In the face of considerable differences between groups and complex interpersonal relationships, community workers need to have highly developed communication and coordination skills to assist residents in connecting with others (Lang and Xing, 2023). In addition, the unique style of female leadership can effectively link family and society in community governance, giving play to women's needs, and building an emotional network for the community. Influenced by the traditional Chinese family view, women play multiple roles in the family, such as daughter, wife and mother. This requires women to assume more responsibilities in the family structure, which means that women become more closely connected with the family. When women leaders engage in community governance, they also have a better understanding of the dilemmas faced by other female colleagues when balancing family and work. This helps in appreciating the difficulties that community members may have in expressing family and work pressures to their families. In rural communities, women, as the main participants in community activities, are also important in communication channels between neighbours. When carrying out community work as female leaders, women can better consider the needs of vulnerable groups such as the rural poor or female children left behind. In turn, this helps to unite more community workers and strengthen the local connection between family members and the community, deepening the sense of shared identity.

Innovation and service orientation

Most female leaders are considered to have an inclusive, caring and collaborative leadership style, leaving a positive impact on the atmosphere of community innovation (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). Women leaders can demonstrate the people-

oriented and diversified service concept, which undoubtedly helps to promote innovative design and the implementation of community service projects (Mayer and Oosthuizen, 2020). For example, female leaders may pay more attention to meeting the needs of special groups such as the elderly, children, and the disabled in the community. They can often initiate and implement creative and targeted community projects in their work, thus improving the quality of community services and improving the quality of life of residents (VOT et al., 2023). In terms of community work, it is important to understand the real needs of residents. Women leaders focus on people's needs and their collective development. When the focus of community governance looks to the development of "people" rather than other indicators of the previous government-led style, community governance will naturally have innovation and change at its heart. Such a leadership direction makes the community more rooted in its people and its development is, therefore, more stable. For example, from the original top-down activity planning method to activity planning around the needs of residents and their families sees an important shift in community foundations. In addition, with increasing attention on gendered issues, it is particularly important to improve equality awareness within community governance and female leaders are more attuned to employment discrimination, rights inequality and other issues around them. This innovation is also reflected in the fact that female leaders pay attention to equality and respect for workers' rights, and may have a new approach to the management model.

Social networking and resources

Women leaders can continuously accumulate rich social capital through extensive networking and interpersonal interactions within the community to further strengthen its anti-risk ability and resilience by gradually establishing a close community network (Hernández-Linares et al., 2023). The social capital is reflected not only in mutual assistance and reciprocity in everyday activities but also in the collective actions and coping strategies that develop in the face of crises, which is of great practical significance to all work within the community. The community is an important field for gathering social capital. Women's participation enables them to expand the scope of intra-group activities and cross the constraints of community boundaries. At the same time, the positive experience of participating in community organisations also becomes an incentive to invest in more public affairs. This kind of social capital and interpersonal relationship is particularly important in rural community governance. Compared with urban community work, the rural community does not have a distinct grade differentiation, and the solution to many local problems depends on the coordination and communication between neighbours. Solving local problems often requires an understanding of the deep emotional links within the community context, and the villagers will respond with trust to this understanding and allow for outside intervention. In such cases, female leaders are more quickly integrated into local contexts of negotiation with the people. Good communication and empathy skills can help improve the villagers' sense of trust. Through visits to neighbours and taking surveys, local information can be obtained to accumulate social capital and effectively solve the problems and contradictions faced at the village level. In addition, women's leadership encourages more women to invest in

community building. This is conducive to local women operating in contexts beyond the family unit, taking the initiative to produce data, improving the female voice in their society, and to some extent, empowering women. For example, women's collectives actively guide members to participate in community governance, which can greatly enhance the women's sense of group consciousness, make public information more readily accessible, and achieve more social capital through close community interaction.

Community identity shaping

The sense of community belonging forms the embodiment of the residents' identification with the community and interacting with the community can promote a person's sense of belonging (Zhang and Zhang, 2023). Residents who participate in more public affairs or activities will have a greater sense of community identity. If, on the other hand, residents have a relatively close support network in the community, they can also show a stronger sense of belonging. The people-oriented, respectful and inclusive leadership style of female leaders described above enables women to better connect with local residents and encourage interaction in building friendlier communities. In addition, female leaders play an important role in the construction of community spirit. Most female leaders are often important communicators of traditional cultural customs, ethics and social values. They can strengthen the sense of pride and belonging among community members towards the local culture through organising various activities, effectively uniting people and further enhancing the overall cohesion of the community (Worley, 2024).

The Challenges of Women's Leadership in the Community

In recent years, women have become more actively participatory in community activities. Due to institutional, socio-economic and cultural constraints, a gender imbalance in community leadership and office head roles has seen women relatively less involved in local political and public processes (Hassan and Silong, 2008). Although the number of female workers in community work is dominant, female workers still face various challenges. The main reason comes from the stereotyping and prejudice formed by the normative shaping of women's roles in society. Such assumptions may be reflected in questioning women's leadership, including their leadership skills, decision-making abilities, logical thinking, courage and perseverance (Paoloni et al., 2023). In terms of social cognition, women are considered to lack the common characteristics of men. When there is an assumed "mismatch" between female characteristics and those required for success in a traditionally held male role or occupation, including senior management and administrative positions, descriptive stereotypes present problems for women as these are not consistent with the male stereotype typically associated with the role (Heilman, 2012). Some people believe that women are too gentle, lack determination, or are not suitable for dealing with complex community issues. This gender bias has severely hindered female career development. At the same time, our society often expects female leaders to show leadership while maintaining "feminised" characteristics such as caring for others.

This makes them not only pursue efficient action but also meet specific societal expectations in terms of the female personality and behaviour. Therefore, women leaders often face severe challenges with the deeply rooted presuppositions and prejudices connected to gender roles, which is reflected in the difficulties of traditional women's work and family care, uneven resource distribution and difficulties in employment promotion.

The work – family balance trap

Although modern society has gradually attached greater importance to gender equality, many female leaders still face the very real dilemma of how to balance heavy workloads and family responsibilities (Dunlop and Scheepers, 2023). But this dilemma seems to be more pronounced for women. When considering employment in many work units, the gender of the interviewee will have a significant impact on any variable that contains both work and family life (Sisodia and Rocque, 2023). Women are often expected to undertake most of the family work and attend to the family needs, including household management and caring for children and the elderly. Men are often expected to take on more work responsibilities as the leaders of material production. Especially when competing for management positions, men occupy more gender dividends. By contrast, when dealing with female employees, employers also need to consider their employment costs and the stereotyping around female management abilities. Therefore, female leaders must not only demonstrate more outstanding achievements in the workplace to achieve parity but must also be expected to undertake more family work. The pressure of such dual roles often produces tension in the allocation of time and energy, and women are often forced to make difficult choices between career and family. Not only does this potentially weaken their concentration and commitment to community involvement but it may also impact their health and work efficiency negatively. Furthermore, this pressure may hinder the career progress of female leaders and affect their sustainability and satisfaction in community leadership positions.

Unequal distribution of resources

With limited opportunities, female leaders may find themselves at a disadvantage in accessing and allocating community resources. This disadvantage may result from the deeply embedded social structure that includes gender discrimination, power imbalances and differences in social networks. Existing networks of power and their relationship chains tend to be dominated by men. Women leaders may find themselves in a marginal position when expanding contacts, building influence and winning support, which can complicate attempts to access the core resource networks. The obstinacy of performance expectations and the impact this can have on methods of information processing generates prejudices that have a negative impact on women's treatment at work (Heilman, 2012). For example, Sisodia and Rocque (2023) found that among a cohort of marketers who are paid according to performance and commission, women are unfairly allocated to poor customers compared to their male counterparts, despite proof of the same performance outcomes when given the same marketing opportunities. The reason remains that men and women are endowed with different value expectations in the workplace and the belief that women are not competent for positions that involve

higher performance requirements. This distrust also affects women's judgement of their own work abilities. Due to this unequal distribution of gender rights, women leaders may encounter unfair treatment when seeking funds, human resources or other necessary resources, limiting their ability to lead community development.

The challenges of promotion opportunities

Gender bias seriously hinders promotion opportunities for women throughout their entire career. The career development of female leaders is often plagued by bottlenecks and institutional restrictions. Promotion opportunities may be reduced within the organisation due to gender discrimination, lack of effective incentive systems or informal gender segregation (Lammers and Gath, 2017). Paradoxically, some believe that emphasising the value of women as a group may also strengthen the female stereotype in society and weaken the motivation for more women to take leadership positions (Lammers and Gast, 2017). This places female leaders in a dilemma in the workplace setting. On the one hand, in the face of social interaction in the workplace, women pay more attention to the qualities that conform to male characteristics, and on the other hand, they avoid falling into the trap of reconstructing women's collective gender expectations. This dual constraint makes women victims of "rational attribution". It seems that only when women rid themselves of the female-gendered characteristics endowed by society can they obtain more social resources and promotion opportunities. Therefore, the boundaries of women's achievements and responsibilities are blurred in the workplace (Heilman, 2012), which prevents women from obtaining the deserved rewards and promotion space allocated to men. In addition, due to the unequal distribution of resources, there are few training and development plans for women's needs at present and insufficient investment in the training of women's leadership. This serves to hinder women's growth and promotion in community leadership roles, thus limiting the positive impact of female leadership on the long-term development of the community.

Strategies and Practices for Promoting Women's Leadership in the Community

From the discussions above on the benefits and challenges of women's leadership in community development, we have learned that despite an increased awareness of gender equality in society, women still face bias in the workplace, which hinders their career development. In community practices, in which women are the main participants, we encourage the distribution of more social resources to help women overcome difficulties in the workplace and to stimulate more opportunities for women's leadership in community development. This approach will help to empower women and promote gender equality and diversification in community development, with knock-on effects on policy support, educational support, social network support and women's group support.

The policy support for female empowerment

Policy support and institutional guarantees are undoubtedly important foundations for promoting women's leadership in community development. Government and community management departments should attach great importance to the role of

women's leadership, actively formulate and implement a series of policies to promote gender equality, and ensure that any potential obstacles to women's participation in community leadership positions are eliminated at the legal and institutional levels (Brown, 2022). Specifically, it is necessary to strictly implement the principle of gender equality in the process of selection, appointment and assessment of community leadership positions. This will ensure that female candidates are treated fairly and given the opportunity to stand out in an open and transparent competitive process. Government and community management departments need to formulate and revise relevant laws and regulations, stipulate clearly the requirements for the proportion of women in community leadership positions, or set up affirmative action protocols to ensure the representation of women in community leadership (Madden and Levenshus, 2021). In addition, government and community management departments should also set up special funding projects to support female participation in various management and leadership training courses that are designed to improve their comprehensive abilities in community governance, financial management, and project planning and implementation. At the same time, it is also necessary to promote the establishment of a women's leadership development fund that supports the development of training, seminars, work experience exchanges and other activities for women community leaders, and promotes the growth and exchange of ideas involving women leaders (Rakestraw et al., 2022). It should be noted that in order to effectively ensure the full activation of female leadership in community work, it is also necessary to strengthen education on gender equality, improve community understanding of female leadership, break gender stereotypes, and create a social and cultural environment conducive to the development of female leaders. In this way, policies can effectively provide women with more opportunities to participate in community governance, enhancing the role of women's leadership in community development, and ultimately promoting the modernisation and diversification of community governance systems.

The importance of career training for women

Capacity building, education and training play a vital role in enhancing women's leadership in community development and providing women with equal capacity in resource development. Special training designed to meet the characteristics and needs of female leaders can effectively remedy knowledge deficiencies, improve skills, and tap their potential capabilities (McGowan, 2021). The specific strategies are as follows: ① Leadership development courses: comprehensive leadership training is critical to teaching cutting-edge leadership concepts, strategies and skills, so that women leaders can master strategic thinking, innovative decision making and efficient management, to play mobilising roles in community affairs. ② Improvement of decision-making wisdom: providing education in decision-making science, risk management, stakeholder analysis and other fields will enhance the ability of female leaders to make complex decisions when dealing with major issues in the community. ③ Improve team management skills: teaching effective methods of team building, collaborative communication and conflict resolution, so that female leaders can build and manage efficient community work teams, stimulate enthusiasm among participants, and jointly

promote community progress. ④ Special training for community development: combined with the actual community it is necessary to teach urban planning, community management, public services and other related knowledge areas, to help women leaders accurately understand the direction of community development, and formulate and implement community development plans. ⑤ Creation of exchange platform: the regular organisation of special seminars, forums and exchange activities is important for successful female leaders to share their experiences and establish a platform to learn from each other, share resources, grow together, and constantly improve the quality and practical ability of colleagues through ideological collusion and experience exchange. By applying the abovementioned educational training and capacity-building measures, we will constantly enrich and strengthen the efficacy of female leadership teams, so that women can play a greater role in leading and promoting community development.

Improving gender awareness in society

To eliminate the traditional prejudice against female leaders, the first task is to advocate the concept of gender equality and establish a social environment that supports women's leadership (Wolfe, 2021). First of all, the media should play an active role by displaying the positive image of women leaders more frequently and reporting their achievements in community construction to enhance the public's understanding of women's successes in decision making, collaboration, innovation, cultural inheritance and other fields. Secondly, the education system should incorporate gender equality into teaching, cultivate an awareness of gender equality in early childhood (including the elimination of gender stereotypes), and encourage girls to pursue leadership roles. At the same time, through vocational education and continuing education, a focus on female social participation and leadership can be improved. Moreover, the community should hold various activities, such as lectures, seminars and workshops, inviting female leaders to share their experiences and promote community members' understanding and acceptance of female leadership. Finally, government, enterprises, non-profit organisations and other parties should work together to create a just environment that eliminates gender discrimination and fully respects and uses the potential of women's leadership through lawmaking, policy support, project funding and other ways. This will effectively enhance the recognition of women's leadership in society and allow more women to participate in decision making in community affairs.

Encouraging the sharing of women's experiences

Encouraging a process of sharing experiences is a key way to improve women's leadership. The community should actively explore and commend women leaders who have performed well in community development, and inspire other women to explore the possibility and application fields of leadership by sharing their achievements and practical experience (Kim and Kang, 2022). This process can reveal how women leaders use innovative thinking to meet community challenges, how they can improve community solidarity through effective communication, and how they show perseverance in the face of difficulties. In order to achieve this goal, we can take such activities as writing feature articles, making documentaries, organising speeches and interviews, and comprehensively recording and

disseminating the experiences and mental journeys undertaken by women leaders. Successful examples have a strong incentive effect, and can strongly inspire women's self-confidence to accept the role of community leaders and to actively participate in community management and progress. For the transfer of practical skills, the problem-solving and management strategies accumulated by female leaders in their work are of great significance to women who intend to participate in community work and quickly improve their leadership. Widely promoting these cases will help to form a culture of respecting and encouraging the role of female leaders in the community and in society more broadly, thus attracting more outstanding women to participate in community construction and the continuous upgrading of community development. By constantly exploring and promoting the successful cases of female leaders, we can further explore and improve the role of female leadership in community development, and help improve community governance and social progress.

Conclusion

Women's leadership in community development is crucial. The unique perspectives, excellent communication skills, people-oriented service attitude, rich social knowledge and resource acumen, and remarkable achievements in cultural inheritance and community identity construction, greatly promote the harmony and prosperity of the community. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the gender discrimination faced by female leaders, such as the balance between work and family, unfair resource allocation and limitations of career promotion. In order to give full play to women's leadership, we need to take action on various fronts, including policy support, education and training, and updating social concepts and women's incentives, to create a fair and conducive environment for the development of women's leadership. Specific measures include emphasising gender equality in policy and providing solid legal support, shaping education and training towards the special needs of female leaders, and cultivating high-quality female leaders. Our society should gradually eliminate gender bias and improve the acceptance of female leadership and we need to encourage more women to take part in community leadership roles and jointly promote the sustainable development of the community and society as a whole. In short, making full use of and improving women's leadership is not only a necessary condition for pursuing gender equality and promoting social development but also an effective means to ensure community stability and improve people's well-being.

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