

The Leadership Gender Gap in HEI Spaces - A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Purpose : The purpose of the paper was to recognize and categorize the key enablers of leadership gender gap in HEI (higher education institutions) spaces and to model these for the education sector. The research paper was an attempt to develop a conceptual framework addressing the leadership gender gap in HEI spaces. We used extant literature review and expert opinions to recognize the enablers and barriers to leadership gender gap in HEI spaces for women.

Research Design : The research process was systematically framed. It comprised of primary and secondary data. We used TISM (total interpretive structural modelling) as a tool to understand linkages between latent variables and to individually deduce and diagnose the transitive relation between the variables. The proposed model is further extended to understand the nature of the variables calibrated using fuzzy MICMAC analysis.

Findings : The hierarchical relationship between the variables shows how leadership style, gender audit, and feminization in HEIs is mediated through gender leadership and women's status leading to gender inclusion based on which the *TISM Model of Leadership Gender Gap in HEI Spaces* has been obtained as the outcome.

Research Limitations : The study was based on expert opinion and can be statistically tested by using any advanced techniques in order to fully utilize the advantage of this methodology. The framework explains the complicated associations among the enablers, which can be further validated with a larger sample size statistically.

Originality/Value : This paper made an attempt to contribute to the field of HEI spaces, which is the need of the time. This is an original and novel study conducted to understand about the leadership gender gap in Indian HEIs by utilizing the TISM approach.

Keywords : Total interpretive structural methodology, higher education institutions, MICMAC, leadership, gender

JEL Classification Codes : M10, M20

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The academic world is changing at the global level. The global knowledge economy is featured by excellence. The Indian higher education has experienced phenomenal expansion since independence. Women's leadership role is changing, and they are being assessed as leaders because the standards are different for men and women. This reality has not been verbalized in HEI (higher education institutions) spaces. To that end, more and more women in leadership positions are pushing the boundaries of gender equality by utilizing their strengths and leadership qualities – in skill, knowledge, experience, and emotion. They are pursuing the things they want from their jobs and their careers, not waiting for it to come to them. The key is confidence in all resources and abilities, not just those represented on paper.

Vashisht and Vashisht (2020) concluded in their study that a significant relationship was observed between work engagement and career obligation. Kurup et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of career development and its outcomes on career fulfillment. They focused on the need for policy makers, government, and higher education institutions on ensuring a strong career track with appropriate chances to confirm the perpetuity and accomplishment of female academicians.

Kumar and Shekhar (2017) discussed how important it is to undertake knowledge sharing for the growth of higher education. For so long, women have determined career success by their ability to adjust to the male-dominated culture and business processes in their fields. Women try to play by the existing rules in the workplace and have the additional hurdle of society's perceptions of how women should act and be seen. Currently, education and practice are reducing some of the invisible problems of being a woman in a leadership role. Joshi and Bisht (2019) mentioned the emotional intelligence level to be a very significant factor. It is on current women leaders to embrace their role-model status and address those challenges head-on with action and execution.

Men dominate the organizational culture and women are expected to adopt the same values and attitudes. Women leaders need to explore the reality. Authentic charisma is needed in leadership to inspire and motivate others. However, women are marginalized (Reciniello, 2011). Ramanathan (2018) emphasized on complete policy, planning, and innovative governing framework for uniform practices as pre-requisites for the knowledge centres in a globalized economy. Our study sheds light on the research problem of the under representation of women in HEI spaces by studying various factors identified with the gender differences in the quality of education. This paper attempts to pinpoint indicators of the leadership gender gap by probing gender disparities in the education sector. The study answers if biases in the promotion process are hindering women's access to leadership positions, and given the right opportunity, women would perform better than men in leadership positions.

University Grants Commission (UGC) has taken nationwide initiatives for highlighting the gendered nature of higher - education institutions. UGC has suggested methods to build a conducive environment for women to take up positions of leadership in diverse sectors and to promote inclusion of women in the development of all sectors, including disadvantaged women, women with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. Indian HEIs have claimed to have rightful places for senior roles for women faculty. Breitenbach and Wasoff (2007) recognized that a lot of features in combination with gender underwrite to diverse involvements and position and discussed the compound disparity or trouble experienced on the grounds of gender faced by women. It comprised of background, incapacity, socioeconomic position, age, urban/rural differences, sexual orientation, and religion.

Different standards based on gender preferences of leaders exist at workplaces. Past research and number of studies have acknowledged for building and testing theories in the education field. The leadership gender gap in the education environment and the strategic decisions in HEIs is the focus of our research. The research paper is an attempt to develop a conceptual framework addressing the leadership gender gap in HEI spaces.

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our research. The research paper is an attempt to develop a conceptual framework addressing the leadership gender gap in HEI spaces based on the gap identified through the review of literature.

Theoretical Framework

Table 1 shows the list of identified variables from the review of literature. These constructs were verified with experts to get more clarity and precision while choosing the latent constructs of the study.

The latent constructs identified are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 1. Identified Variables

V1	Feminization
V2	Gender audit
V3	Gender inclusion
V4	Gender leadership
V5	Women's leadership style
V6	Women's status in a knowledge economy

Feminization in the Teaching Profession

Feminization in the teaching profession is a global fact. Drudy (2008) discussed feminization in the education sector as a global phenomenon rooted in economic growth and development and for defining muscularity. Level of feminization has always been a concern in the education sector (Addi - Raccah, 2006). Feminization of school principleship involved educational prestige of educators and social standing in society. Depaepe et al. (2006) emphasized upon the various dimensions of feminization being a dominating factor in the teaching profession. Peterson (2016) discussed how higher education management breaks the glass ceiling and he illustrated that women are not in a position to attain the same because of low status in economy. Women make up 50% of the workforce in the developed countries, but they do not hold the leadership positions to influence the female perspective.

Gender Audit in Higher Education

This paper looks at how gender has been opportunely uninvolved as a class of inspection in writing on the changing radical economy of higher education and its growth. Hamilton and Jenkins (2000) identified the goals and progress of the gender audit and said that we need a gender audit, where ethical auditing is to be used as a new device for firms and governments for strategic decision making. Cohen Miller and Lewis (2019) examined gender audit as one of the methods of research for bringing change in higher education institutions. They examined the gender-related practices as a vital aspect of the academics and in policies for attaining gender equality. Kreitz - Sandberg (2013) illustrated how gender is created and recreated in teacher's education. Morley (2005) highlighted that the gendered change or difficulties to gender impartiality in higher education have not been systematically verified.

Gender Inclusion in Higher Education

The current global problem to be addressed is gender inequality existing in all walks of life. Chanana (2020)

discussed the nationwide orientation and training programme for women faculty of the University Grants Commission (UGC) with reference to the programme's goals, procedures, and accomplishments supportive to HEIs in India to make it gender complete and to connect the gap. Case et al. (2012) conducted action research on policy change hard work to encounter gender - compliant honour and increase defences for people in higher education to add "sexual orientation" to the non-discrimination policy. García - Holgado et al. (2018) concluded that education agendas should address concrete differences between gender and assure equality by restricting the stereotypes in order to generate and achieve equal representation in HEI spaces.

Gender to the Concept of Leadership in Higher Education

Reflection research has been conducted to understand how women, who aspire to be academic leaders, navigate the male-centric realm of higher education administration (Dunn et al., 2014). Involvements of women in higher education are to bring a change in male dominant behaviour and to have women's guidance in academic leadership positions. Morley (2013) examined how the social and organizational technology is bringing change in academia and offered an explanation for how gender and power interact with leadership in higher education. Peterson (2016) illustrated in his findings that the decline in status, value, and standing along with harder conditions for women are the biggest hindrances for female leadership in academia. Qureshi et al. (2011) emphasized on democratic leadership impacting gender. They concluded that culture has a major influence on male and female leadership ; wherein, female leaders are more likely to adopt a democratic leadership style.

Women's Leadership Style

The strategy of emphasizing women leaders' "unique" leadership style also has its risks as it tends to reinforce gender stereotypes. Culture also has a significant impact upon women's leadership style. Odhiambo (2011) studied the leadership participation problems of women in Kenya in context to leadership.

Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006) proposed that new leadership development and leadership styles have been replacing the regularly held arrangements of leadership and proposal, leading to new and diverse criteria for leadership in HEI spaces. According to Rosener (2011), women make a significant contribution as leaders within organizations. Eagly et al. (2003) found that female leaders were bringing in more change than male leaders and were also involved in more of the dependent reward behaviours that are factored of leadership styles. Psychogios (2007) studied the connection between gender and observance to philosophies of gender role stereotypes. Literature regarding leadership styles in higher education provides no different gender style views. It emphasizes on the stereotype thinking.

Women's Status in a Knowledge Economy

Leadership within an institution of higher education is experiencing modification and changed leadership behaviours (Young, 2004). Walby et al. (2006) compared perspectives for gendering the knowledge economy. Organizational issues such as providing flexible work schedules, availability of leadership development programs, mentors, and resolving women specific issues and reduce the differences in paid leadership positions are required in order to retain female talent. Vijayakumar (2013) examined philosophies of ambition, presence, and women's authorization related with India's globalizing information economy. Elias (2011) highlighted government policies to provide productive rules that can constantly bring some changes within the surrounded social structures.

Research Methodology

We adopted total interpretive structural modelling to build a theoretical framework. Primary and secondary information were also used for the study. Thirty experts were identified (holding the following positions : Dean, Vice Chancellor, Head of the Department, Principal/Director, Director, Deputy Director, and Professor) from State, Deemed, and Private universities affiliated educational institutes in HEI spaces in Maharashtra. Secondary sources such as Google Scholar, EBSCO, Scopus, ProQuest, Emerald, books, academic journals, and magazines were used. The time period of the study was 4 months to answer the research questions through in-depth interviews with 30 experts in the field during August – November 2020. The time period taken is very current because leadership positions are witnessing a drastic shift in the education sector. Global dynamism and new leadership perspectives are critically required. United Nations has also included leadership gender gap as one of the important agendas as well.

Total Interpretative Structural Modelling (TISM)

Total interpretive structural modelling is used in this research to individually infer and recognize the transitive relation between the variables, which is an advantage of TISM over ISM.

ISM involves the following steps :

- ↪ Variables to be identified for the study.
- ↪ Determining the contextual relationship in line with the purpose of the study.
- ↪ Structural self-interaction matrix (SSIM) for variables.
- ↪ Conversion of the SSIM into a reachability matrix to reach the final reachability matrix.
- ↪ Iterative partitioning of the final reachability matrix for finding levels.

Analysis and Results

Structural Self - Interaction Matrix (SSIM)

Structural self-interaction matrix (SSIM) is shown in Table 2. This table was used to collect the experts' opinions. The questionnaire was shared with 40 experts, of which 30 responses were received. Table 2 represents the SSIM derived based on experts' opinions.

Table 2 depicts the contextual relation between different variables identified (*V, A, X, O*) ;

Table 2. Structural Self - Interaction Matrix of Enablers

$\downarrow i \rightarrow j \rightarrow$	V6	V5	V4	V3	V2	V1
V1	X	V	A	X	X	
V2	V	V	X	X		
V3	X	X	X			
V4	X	X				
V5	X					
V6						

i and j are connoting symbols (i is vertical and j is horizontal) to establish the relationship. $V1, V2, V3, V4, V5$, and $V6$ are the identified variables shown in Table 1. The following are the rules from which the SSIM table is derived.

- ↪ V indicates one way direction correlation from i to j variable.
- ↪ A indicates if j will be achieved with variable i .
- ↪ X indicates both directional correlation between i and j .
- ↪ O indicates no relation between i and j .

Reachability Matrix

The SSIM, once derived, is converted into an initial reachability matrix using binary digits 1 and 0. The rules given by ISM are followed for conversion. The initial reachability matrix is depicted in Table 3.

Transitivity Principle

To ensure that consistency is maintained in the model, the principle of transitivity is used. In order to apply this principle, the following steps are followed :

- ↪ Identify O in the initial reachability matrix.
- ↪ Apply the principle as if A leads to B is 1 and B leads to C is 1, then A leads to C is 1.
- ↪ The corresponding 0 is replaced with 1*, which indicates that there is an indirect influence or relation.

After applying the principle, as shown in Table 4, since there are no transitive links identified, the final reachability matrix is the same as the initial reachability matrix.

Table 3. Initial Reachability Matrix

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
V1	1	1	1	0	1	1
V2	1	1	1	1	1	1
V3	1	1	1	1	1	1
V4	1	1	1	1	1	1
V5	0	0	1	1	1	1
V6	1	0	1	1	1	1

Table 4. Final Reachability Matrix

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
V1	1	1	1	0	1	1
V2	1	1	1	1	1	1
V3	1	1	1	1	1	1
V4	1	1	1	1	1	1
V5	0	0	1	1	1	1
V6	1	0	1	1	1	1

The driving and dependence power for each variable is calculated which would aid further calculation in the MICMAC analysis. TISM methodology is more robust as it attempts to overcome the limitations of the ISM methodology. An illustration of this is Table 5, which answers the question of how the enablers are related to each other.

Table 5. Transitive Links from Expert Opinions and Literature Review

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
V1		Goals and progress of feminization can be identified with gender audit.	Feminization in the education sector clearly indicates towards gender inclusion in a knowledge economy.	Women's leadership style and feminization are positively correlated for addressing the problem of leadership gender gap in HEI spaces.	Feminization influences women's leadership style, but women's leadership style is not the reason for feminization in HEI spaces.	Feminization and women's status in a knowledge economy are related to each other. In spite of women's dominance in HEIs and strong women's status in a knowledge economy, the leadership positions are enjoyed by men.
V2	Gender audit balances feminization in the education sector.		Gender audit and gender inclusion influence each other positively, ensuring equal access to every class.	Gender audit reflects gendered changes and gender leadership.	Women make significant contribution as leaders within organizations.	Gender audit reflects the reality of women's status in a knowledge economy.
V3	Gender inclusion in the education sector includes feminization as an important trait.	Gender inclusion and gender audit in HEIs ensure gender complete picture to fill the gap.		Gender inclusion is directly correlated with gender leadership.	Gender inclusion is the charisma of women's leadership style.	Gender inclusion and women's status are positively correlated.
V4	Gender leadership and feminization are correlated in HEI spaces.	Gender leadership can be examined through gender audit.	Gender leadership is an indicator of gender inclusion.		Gender leadership and women's leadership styles are pervasive and primary in nature in the current scenario of HEI spaces.	Gender leadership is the parameter to understand women's status in a knowledge economy.
V5	Feminization influences the women's leadership style, but women's leadership style is not the reason for	Women make significant contribution as leaders within organizations.	Women's leadership style and gender inclusion need to be addressed together as a major issue in	Women's leadership style plays a vital role in determining gender leadership status in HEIs. It is closely related		Women's leadership style very much influences the status of women in a knowledge economy.

	feminization in HEI spaces.		HEI spaces.	to the share of women's leadership positions in HEIs.	
V6	Feminization in the education sector gives recognition to women in society.	Gender audit reflects the reality of women's status in a knowledge economy.	Women's status in a knowledge economy is the reason for demanding a leadership position, not just gender inclusion.	Women's status is visible through gender leadership in HEI spaces.	Women's status is reflected in the philosophies of women leaders.

Table 6. Level Partitioning : Level 1

	Antecedent Set	Reachability Set	AS \cap RS	Level
V1	(2,3,5,6)	(2,3,4,6)	(2,3,6)	
V2	(1,3,4,5,6)	(1,3,4)	(1,3,4)	
V3	(1,2,4,5,6)	(1,2,4,5,6)	(1,2,4,5,6)	Level 1
V4	(1,2,3,5,6)	(2,3,5,6)	(2,3,5,6)	
V5	(3,4,6)	(1,2,3,4,6)	(3,4,6)	
V6	(1,3,4,5)	(1,2,3,4,5)	(1,3,4,5)	

Table 7. Level Partitioning : Level 2

	Antecedent Set	Reachability Set	AS \cap RS	Level
V1	(2,5,6)	(2,4,6)	(2,6)	Level 3
V2	(1,4,5,6)	(1,4)	(1,4)	Level 3
V4	(1,2,5,6)	(2,5,6)	(2,5,6)	Level 2
V5	(4,6)	(1,2,4,6)	(4,6)	Level 3
V6	(1,4,5)	(1,2,4,5)	(1,4,5)	Level 2

Level Partitioning

Level partitioning is the common connection of both the sets of enabled reiterations, which result into levels for models. Tables 6 and 7 represent the different levels of the model.

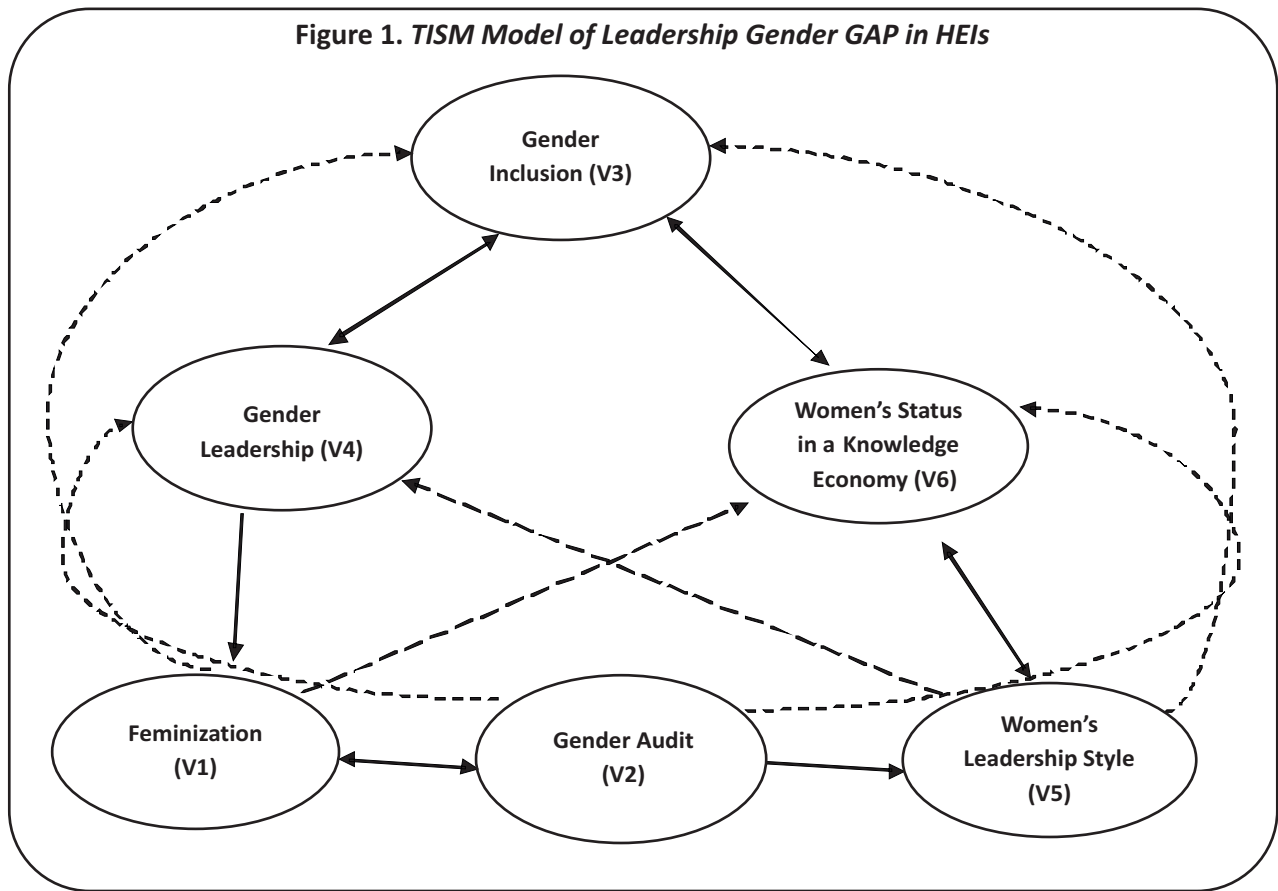
After the first set of iteration, gender inclusion (V3) has been identified as Level 1. Gender leadership (V4) and Women's status in a knowledge economy (V6) have been identified as Level 2 and Gender audit (V2) and Women's leadership style (V5) have been identified as Level 3.

TISM Model

TISM attempts to answer the question why the relation between the different variables exists. The model, as shown in Figure 1, is an outcome of the levels identified.

The arrows indicate the nature of relations, which have been derived from the SSIM. In Figure 1, we can see

Figure 1. TISM Model of Leadership Gender GAP in HEIs



how the key enablers of the leadership gender gap are existing in higher education. From this level, we can see that out of all the key factors : Leadership gender gap, feminization, gender audit, and women's leadership style are found to be at Level 3. Gender leadership and women's status in a knowledge economy are at Level 2, and gender inclusion is at Level 1. The hierarchical relationship between the variables shows how leadership style, gender audit, and feminization in HEIs are mediated through gender leadership and women's status, leading to gender inclusion. We observe that though the HEIs and feminization are highly linked, but feminization does not lead to leadership.

MICMAC Analysis

MICMAC analysis helps us to understand the nature of variables based on their driving and dependence power. The final reachability matrix is the base for calculating driving and dependence power. The categories for classification are autonomous variables, linkage variables, dependent variables, and driving variables. Tables 8 and 9 depict the driving and dependence power. Figure 2 shows the MICMAC analysis.

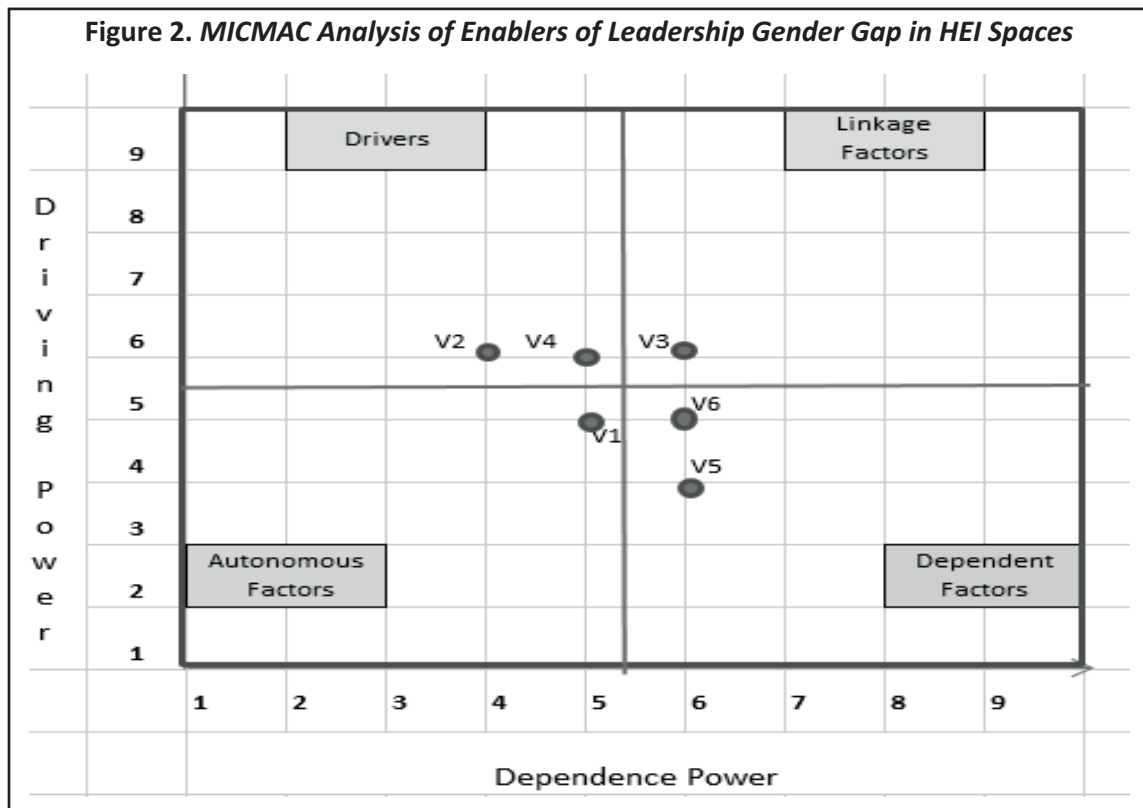
Matrices impacts croises-multiplication appliqué an classment (Cross-impact matrix multiplication applied to classification) is abbreviated as MICMAC. It classifies autonomous, linkage, driving, and dependent factors. It gives an idea about the role played by each element. The autonomous factor identified is feminization ; the linkage factor identified is gender inclusion. The dependence variables identified are : Women's leadership and women's leadership style. The driving variables identified are : Gender audit and gender leadership.

Table 8. Driving and Dependence Power

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	Driving Power
V1	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
V2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
V3	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
V4	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
V5	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
V6	1	0	1	1	1	1	5
Dependence Power	5	4	6	5	6	6	

Table 9. Variables & Driving and Dependence Power

Variable	Name	Driving Power	Dependence Power
V1	Feminization	5	5
V2	Gender Audit	6	4
V3	Gender Inclusion	6	6
V4	Gender Leadership	6	5
V5	Women's Leadership Style	4	6
V6	Women's Status in a Knowledge Economy	5	6



Implications

Managerial Implications

The model of TISM is used to diagnose the mutual relationship between the variables. We have recognized the key factors of leadership gender gap in HEI spaces. TISM also highlights the levels for the variables identified. The developed model would be useful for policy makers and management of HEIs to consider the leadership gender gap and gender inclusion as important criteria for accreditation of HEI spaces. The findings of the research can be considered as fundamental guidance to various academic institutions and decision makers, academic practitioners, and policy makers in HEI spaces (NBA and NAAC Accreditation bodies) as well as for the Ministry of Human Resource Development for developing strategies. TISM offers the options for the decision makers to utilize the results of each variable on the level of linkage and to understand the association and criticality of one factor with the other, which will help the decision makers to bridge the leadership gap existing in HEIs.

Theoretical Implications

In recent years, women and leadership gender positions in HEIs have received growing consideration from the academic world and experts. A lot of research work is happening in this area since the last one decade. This work is a contribution to the existing theory as it proposes the "TISM Model of Leadership Gender Gap" in HEI spaces for the first time.

In the context of HEI spaces, the theory is based on logic and experts' opinion followed by a scientific process, and the anticipated outcome should be taken into consideration by the education industry for formulating its policies. The research observations should be used as a foundation for extracting a set of guidelines to regulate the activities related to leadership gender gap in HEI spaces. The phenomenon discussed confirms a new theory for HEI spaces.

Conclusion and Scope for Future Research

Our study has achieved the strength of explanatory reason to get meaningful perceptions existing about the leadership gender gap in HEIs. The TISM approach is used to develop a theory surrounding HEIs spaces. The problems of the current economy point to a one-sidedness in our ethos that troubles both men and women. The consequence is that men dominate HEIs and women fight for ways to contribute, and when they focus on fitting in, women misplace their ability to speak and have unique standpoints.

The hierarchical relationship between the variables shows how leadership style, gender audit, and feminization in HEIs are mediated through gender leadership and women's status leading to gender inclusion. Feminization strongly influences the gender inclusion. Gender audit and gender leadership are the main driving variables. Women's leadership and women's leadership style are the dependence variables indicating strong dependence. We observe that though the education world and feminization are highly linked, but feminization does not lead to leadership.

The study concludes with numerous policies for modification, including better contribution of women in varying graded and male-controlled structures and standards ; training of women to reposition to find wider tasks ; and abolition of the behaviours and activities that create a negative work environment for women. The framework explains the complicated associations among enablers, which can be further validated statistically with a larger sample size.

Limitations of the Study

The research procedure used in this study offers a basis to conduct an investigative study by identifying the factors and analyzing their connections through the expansion of a ranked framework because the study is not based on a large sample size. The factors can be tested empirically using a large sample size. The study is based on opinion of experts and can be statistically tested by using any advanced techniques in order to fully utilize the advantage of this methodology.

Authors' Contribution

Prof B. Parandhaman identified and defined the research problem to lay down the foundation of the study, supervised the research work, and edited the manuscript. Dr. Dimple Saini performed the literature review and identified gaps in existing research. Dr. Archana Singh collected information from experts and performed TISM to propose the conceptual framework. The study is a result of group meetings and in-depth discussions among the authors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest, or non-financial interest in the subject matter, or materials discussed in the manuscript.

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