# Female Leadership Values in Mexican Graduate Students

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## Cover Page Footnote

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Abstract

The present study addresses the gender gap in leadership roles in Mexico through the lens of three leadership constructs. The objective was to compare female and male individual cultural values to explain differences in leadership style and agentic behavior. The sample consisted of 185 graduate students in Baja California, Mexico. Participants were surveyed using the Short Schwartz Value Scale. The responses were analyzed by running independent samples t-tests. The results suggest that males attribute greater importance to Power and Achievement values, which are associated with transformational and transactional leadership constructs. No differences were found across several values associated with other transformational, transactional, and transformative leadership constructs. The implication is that aspiring female leaders should embrace agentic behaviors in pursuit of ambitious goals along with seeking to create democratic and just workplaces. This study is novel because it uses individual cultural values as leadership variables, an approach that is seldom employed, but worth exploring.

*Keywords*: leadership; gender; values; education; Mexico.

**Introduction**

Mexico suffers from a stubborn gender gap in leadership roles. This is manifested in the disproportional share of males in top management positions and heading opportunity entrepreneurial ventures (Zabludovsky, 2007; 2015), limiting the earning potential of females. For some, self-employment is a better option than trying to climb the corporate ladder, but their ventures are mostly small (Green & Cohen, 1995). According to the National Occupation and Employment Survey, there is a striking gender gap on the number of employers. From the almost 58 million Mexican workers, in the last quarter of 2019, there were 2,123,023 male employers in the country and 550,795 female employers (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), 2020). These data suggest that the individuals leading organizations in the country, the ones with the prerogative to hire employees, are overwhelmingly male.

There is no education or workforce gap when it comes to gender that can justify the underrepresentation of women in positions of authority. In fact, there is evidence from Mexico and Colombia that suggest that increasing the share of women in leadership roles improves organizational performance (Reyes-Bastidas et al., 2020). It makes little sense that such a disproportionate share of males hold positions of authority in Mexico, unless one takes into consideration cultural barriers and stereotypes that hurt the efforts of females who attempt to scale the structures of corporations, public institutions, or engage in entrepreneurial ventures. Blanco-García et al. (2016) wrote about the pervasiveness of gender-based stereotypes that prevent females from getting ahead in the workplace, so the problem is well-documented. This research will continue this line of inquiry with the hope of providing clarity.

One key indicator of the gender gap in organizations is salary. The pay gap in gender affects highly trained females and it is not specific to Mexico (Davies et al., 2018). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020), in 2018, there was a 14% pay gap between females and males in Mexico. In addition, it has been well documented that lucrative and influential organizational roles are disproportionally held by males in the country (Clancy, 2007; Díaz, 2018; Fuentes-García & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2010; Zabludovsky, 2007). This situation is not without its consequences. The gender imbalance in coveted roles in Mexico can discourage talented female managers and reduce the pool of much needed entrepreneurs and leaders in the country. The main takeaway is that the gender gap in leadership is not simply an issue of fairness and equity; it is an economic problem with tangible consequences.

Mexico needs to increase the pool of the next generation of business owners and managers to meet the economic challenges ahead. This will require increased participation by everyone in key organizational roles (Zabludovsky, 2015). To be clear, females in Mexico are already well represented in the labor force and in higher education, so it is not a pipeline problem (Díaz, 2018; Zabludovsky, 2015). The problem most likely has to do with stereotypical evaluations of behavior (Schein, 2001). To succeed in launching new businesses or managing existing ones, females in Mexico may have to embrace agentic behaviors commonly associated with male managers (Badura et al., 2018; Díaz, 2020; Ortiz-Rodríguez et al., 2017; Robertson et al., 2011). This means rejecting long-held cultural roles that support the claim that males should be agentic, and females should be communal (Badura et al., 2018).

The lack of agency of females in the workplace could be linked to lower self-efficacy in leadership that resulted from early development at home (Mayer et al., 2018). Eagly and Chin (2010) have long argued that sex and gender play a significant role in leadership development and efficacy because of long-standing bias that favor men. They noted that the main reason

males advance further within organizational structures is that they have fewer obstacles than their female colleagues, which helps them feel more comfortable taking charge of operations and leading groups. This claim was echoed by Salas-Arbeláez et al. (2020) with their own research in Colombia where they identified social barriers as the main obstacles for the advancement of female executives. These obstacles are based on culture-based expectations and stereotypes that apply to females (e.g., women are expected to stay home to take care of the domestic responsibilities) and not males. This argument had already been documented by Blanco-García et al. (2016).

Females in Mexico have managed to breakthrough some of the barriers that prevented them from reaching top leadership positions, but mostly in what are known as female-dominated industries (Zabludovsky, 2015). By comparison, male-dominated industries tend to be more lucrative. Moreover, females attempting to succeed in male-dominated industries experience greater stress and pressure to adapt their leadership style, suggesting that people react differently to female and male leader behavior (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999). The general belief is that females are communal and play less attention to production and performance than male leaders.

Researchers like Ayman and Korabik (2010) examined the theoretical explanations for why females are catalogued as communal while males are perceived to be more agentic but noted that existing information provided culturally biased explanations that reinforce outdated and inaccurate stereotypes. They argued that most research on leadership was conducted in North America without sufficient appreciation for diverse groups, which makes it hard for researchers from different parts of the world to develop sufficient understanding of the issue. Despite this fact, a handful of studies have been conducted outside the developed world.

In one example, female graduate students from Mexico scored lower (p<.05) in initiating structure than their Indian counterparts (Díaz, 2020). Initiating structure refers to leader behaviors that focus on assigning tasks and establishing performance expectations (agentic behavior). By contrast, consideration structure refers to communal behaviors that focus on maintaining relationships (Bass, 1981). In the Díaz (2020) study, it was suggested that a group of Mexican females considered themselves to be less results-oriented when compared to their Indian counterparts. This implies that the problem of lack of agency in Mexican females is a cultural phenomenon, not a universal female characteristic. Rather than assuming that females from different cultures are the same when it comes to agency, it is important to recognize people from different cultures hold different values that influence several aspects of their life, including perceptions towards leadership (Mayer et al., 2018).

On the other hand, if it is true that females and males lead differently, it is important to understand these differences and find ways to capitalize from the diversity of approaches (Sweida & Woods, 2015). To dive into the issue using a novel approach, following recommendations set forth by Samul (2020), who claimed that most research on educational leadership tends to overly focus on traditional models. This study compares female and male leadership from an individual cultural values perspective. This approach builds on Schwartz' value model using Sarid's (2016) transformational, transactional, and transformative leadership constructs. Therefore, this research was conducted through the Short Schwartz Value Scale (SSVS). The goal is to explain gender differences in leadership from a values perspective and contribute to the discussion on female leader behavior influences. The general questions this research helps address can be stated as follows: What are the differences between females and males regarding cultural values related to leadership efficacy?

### Review of the Literature

**Female (communal) and male (agentic) leader behavior**. There seems to be no logical explanation for female underrepresentation in leadership roles, so it is reasonable to attribute it to *glass ceiling* effects, which create barriers for advancement among females who are in a position to command equal pay and level of influence to their male colleagues (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Rodriguez-Pérez, 2018; Zabludovsky, 2015). For example, there is information available that suggests that female underrepresentation is partly due to the relative unwillingness of women to embrace agentic behaviors in their organizations (Badura et al., 2018; Díaz & Lituchy, 2020; Ortiz-Rodríguez et al., 2017; Robertson et al., 2011). Even when females try to take advantage of stereotypical feminine behaviors to make them seem more likeable (e.g., ingratiation), workplace discrimination works against them and limits their possibilities for advancement (Langford et al., 2017). By failing to act in a manner consistent with masculine leader behavior, talented female workers may be overlooked for promotions, which would put them in positions to earn higher wages and oversee others. However, acting more like their male colleagues by exercising freedom to make choices and follow-through, makes females more independent and subject to criticisms and potential rejection in some organizational cultures (Schein et al., 1996).

Schein (2001) reviewed several international contributions to the literature that were based on her *think manager, think male* model to explain the gender gap in leadership roles. She noted that males across cultures were perceived to be more ambitions, competitive, and willing to take-on responsibility than females. These perceptions were often shared by females and males alike, supporting the claim that people believe that management is a role better suited for men. These conclusions reinforced previous claims (Schein et al., 1996). Similarly, research that stemmed from the Ohio State leadership studies over 60 years ago introduced the notion that males tend to be more task-oriented while women were more relationship-oriented, suggesting males were more agentic (Bass, 1981). These studies were based on important, but outdated models, which makes it important for researchers to continue to provide fresh approaches examining the gender gap in leadership (Díaz & Lituchy, 2020; Groves, 2005).

Several studies designed under modern leadership approaches have found no significant differences attributed to gender (Díaz, 2018; Eagly & Chin, 2010). The implication is that males and females behave similarly in leadership roles, so there must be other variables that influence their performance or expectations that could explain the gender gap in leadership. This suggests a need to go beyond examining perceptions of efficacy in terms of leader behavior. The present study suggests adopting a values approach. This could help identify influences on female and male behavior that could explain the gender gap. Sarid's (2016) values approach to measuring leadership style seems interesting for this reason. Instead of asking female respondents to assess their own ability to perform certain tasks (e.g., create consensus among group members), it is worth investigating how important they believe those tasks are, regardless of their ability to perform them.

**Individual cultural values and leadership**. There is an argument to be made that culture can influence an individual's disposition to behave according to traditional leadership prototypes. Schein et al. (1996) argued that perceptions of effective leadership consistently parallel culturally endorsed male behaviors. As opposed to stereotypical female behaviors (e.g. favoring relationships through engaging in communal behavior), individuals in most cultures expect their leaders to be agentic, and not be afraid to "take charge." Recent research on gender and agency suggests that corporate cultures (not just national cultures) in western societies also expect their

leaders to be more agentic than communal, which tends to hurt the prospects of aspiring female leaders (Badura et al., 2018).

Data from seven countries taken from the World Values Survey suggest that individuals respond to Power, Self-direction, and Stimulation, and those who behave in a manner consistent with these values are more likely to open a new business; while individuals who scored higher on Tradition and Security were less likely to engage in entrepreneurial ventures (Alsaad, 2018). Given that entrepreneurial and leader behaviors tend to be closely associated (Díaz et al., 2019; Ives, 2011), and that some of the values noted before seeming to coincide with leadership prototypes (e.g., Power), it is pertinent to assess gender differences from a values approach. Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz (2009) examined the role of gender on the importance placed on individual cultural values as measured by Schwartz's scale. The authors concluded that females place greater importance on Benevolence and Universalism while males focused more on Power, Achievement, and Stimulation. Moreover, gender equality correlated positively with Benevolence, Universalism, and Stimulation, while Power and Achievement were associated with lower equality.

Sarid (2016) examined Schwartz's scale to identify consistency between the values in this instrument and transformational, transactional, and transformative behaviors measured through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), a well-known transformational and transactional measure. The author noted the correspondence of the transformational leadership dimension with Power, Achievement, Self-direction, and Stimulation. He also noted alignment between the transactional leadership dimensions and the group of values conformed by Power, Achievement, Tradition, Conformity, and Security. Note that the two values favored by women in Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz's (2009) study, Benevolence and Universalism, were not associated with the transformational or transactional dimensions. Instead, those values align with the transformative dimension, which refers to behaviors associated with promotion of democratic values and addressing social injustice, in other words, communal values (Sarid, 2016). It should be noted that Self-direction and Stimulation were also aligned with Benevolence and Universalism. Sarid (2016) did not consider Hedonism because this value did not adequately fit the leadership constructs used in the study. Table 1 serves to illustrate these alignments. Based on this classification, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Males in the sample will score higher than females in the Power value.
H2: Males in the sample will score higher than females in the Achievement value.
H3: Males in the sample will score higher than females in the Tradition value.
H4: Males in the sample will score higher than females in the Conformity value.
H5: Males in the sample will score higher than females in the Security value.
H6: Females in the sample will score higher than males in the Universalism value.
H7: Females in the sample will score higher than males in the Benevolence value.

No differences were reported on gender differences attributed to the remaining values (Self-direction and Stimulation) so no statistically significant differences are expected.

**Method**

**Research Design**. This research was conducted under the quantitative paradigm through the survey research method. This was the appropriate choice to address the hypotheses in a timely and efficient manner (Fowler, 2014). The hypotheses were articulated based on the most current insights found in the literature. The findings from the study were meant to apply only to the sample in question, making no claim to generalizability. However, the information derived from the survey reflects the opinion of 22% of the graduate students in business-related

disciplines in Baja California. The independent variable was gender, and the dependent variables were nine values in the SSVS. The survey was carried out electronically during the summer of 2019.

**Participants**. The 185 participants were graduate students in Business-related disciplines (e.g. Management, Economics, Marketing) located in the state of Baja California, Mexico. The majority ($n = 126$) were in the 18 – 34 age group. The rest were divided between the 35 – 50 ($n = 53$), 51 – 61 ($n = 5$), and above 61 ($n = 1$) age groups. Their academic backgrounds (degrees from their undergraduate studies) were in Business ($n = 79$), Engineering ($n = 62$), Humanities and Social Sciences ($n = 26$), and the remaining 18 participants were distributed across a variety of fields. In terms of employment status, 154 were employed and 31 were not employed at the time of the survey. Males were a slight majority with 97 versus 88 female respondents. The participants were selected based on their status as graduate students within the Baja California region, and the willingness of their educational institutions to agree to be part of the study.

**Instrument**. The Schwartz Value model serves those interested in examining the influence of values on risk-taking, decision-making, and management behavior (Schwartz, 1999) from a cultural-orientation perspective (Liñán, et al., 2013; Liñán & Fernandez-Serrano, 2014). The instrument originally consisted of 57 items with 10 value scales. Eventually the instrument was reduced to 45 items that measured 1. Power (4 items), 2. Achievement (4 items), 3. Hedonism (3 items), 4. Stimulation (3 items), 5. Self-Direction (4 items), 6. Universalism (8 items), 7. Benevolence (5 items), 8. Tradition (5 items), 9. Conformity (4 items), and 10. Security (5 items). The questionnaire was further reduced to 10 items measuring the same 10 scales, but with their corresponding items converted to descriptors (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005, p. 52). Respondents evaluated each value with a 10-point Likert scale (0 = opposed to my principles, 9 = of supreme importance). This became known as the SSVS. Ros et al. (1999) briefly described each of the values in the SSVS, and later Sarid (2016) integrated said values with leadership constructs (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*The SSVS and Transformational, Transactional, and Transformative Leadership Construct*

| Values | Description | Leadership construct |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Power | Social power, authority, and wealth | Transformational/transactional |
| Achievement | Success, capability, ambition, and influence | Transformational/transactional |
| Stimulation | Daring, variety and excitement | Transformational |
| Self-direction | Creativity, freedom, independence, curiosity, and choice | Transformational |
| Tradition | Humbleness, acceptance, devoutness, respect for tradition, and moderation | Transactional |
| Conformity | Politeness, obedience, self-discipline, and honoring parents and the elders | Transactional |
| Security | Family and national security, social order, cleanliness, and reciprocity | Transactional |
| Universalism | Broadmindedness, wisdom, social justice, peace, beauty, nature appreciation, and environmental protection | Transformative |

| Benevolence | Helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, and responsibility. | Transformative |
|---|---|---|

Note: Table 1 shows Sarid's (2016) alignment between Schwartz's vale scale and transformational, transactional, and transformative leadership constructs. Created by the author based on Ros et al. (1999) and Sarid (2016).

Lindeman and Verkasalo (2005) measured the validity and reliability of the SSVS through a correlational design with the original Schwartz scale. The authors further claimed that the new version of the instrument was especially useful when applied in combination with other measures.

**Procedure**. The research was carried out in in the following stages:
1. Two educational institutions offering Master's Degrees programs in Business-related disciplines in Baja California were approached with a request to allow the researchers to survey their students using the SSVS. Authorization was granted in both cases.
2. The graduate students were approached via email by their program coordinators with the invitation to complete the SSVS. Students who agreed to participate received a link to the electronic questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire included the instructions and informed consent.
3. The graduate students read the informed consent form electronically and clicked on the "Agree" button to confirm that they understood the nature and aims of the study, that participation was voluntary, and that they would not receive any sort of payment or reward for their effort.
4. The graduate students completed the SSVS using the 10-point Likert scale, and their responses were recorded in the database set up by the researchers. They were asked to indicate the importance of each individual value in the SSVS in terms of leader effectiveness.
5. The responses were secured in a password-protected computer to protect the identity of the respondents.

**Data Analysis**. To test the hypotheses stated for this study, independent samples t-test were calculated. The dependent variables for the nine values examined, and the independent variable was the gender of the participants. To ensure equality of variances, Levine's test was included in the examination. Statistical significance was established at 95% ($p \leq .05$). Descriptive statistics, t-statistic and $p$ values are reported on Table 2. Computation was assisted by SPSS version 25. To make the findings clearer and consistent with leadership theory, the values were grouped in terms of Sarid's (2016) leadership constructs (Transformational, Transactional, and Transformative).

**Results**
The average scores of females and males in the SSVS show statistically significant differences in the Power and Achievement values ($p<.05$). Therefore, H1 and H2 were retained. No statistically significant differences were found in the Tradition, Conformity, Security, Universalism, and Benevolence values. Therefore, H3 – H7 were rejected. As expected, there were no statistically significant differences in the Self-direction and Stimulation values. See Table 2.

**Table 2**
*Mean Differences Between Females and Male Participants in the SSVS*

| | Female ($n = 88$) | Male ($n = 97$) | Equality of variances | $t$-statistic |
|---|---|---|---|---|

|                | $\mu$ | SD   | $\mu$ | SD   |         |          |
|----------------|-------|------|-------|------|---------|----------|
| Power          | 4.81  | 1.68 | 5.34  | 1.80 | Assumed | 2.076*   |
| Achievement    | 5.92  | 1.51 | 6.53  | 1.35 | Assumed | 2.874**  |
| Stimulation    | 5.55  | 1.77 | 6.02  | 1.62 | Assumed | 1.904    |
| Self-direction | 6.53  | 1.53 | 6.52  | 1.44 | Assumed | -0.085   |
| Tradition      | 5.36  | 1.94 | 5.29  | 1.75 | Assumed | -0.276   |
| Conformity     | 5.19  | 1.99 | 5.44  | 1.97 | Assumed | 0.856    |
| Security       | 6.19  | 1.76 | 6.29  | 1.60 | Assumed | 0.386    |
| Universalism   | 6.18  | 1.63 | 5.85  | 1.74 | Assumed | -1.348   |
| Benevolence    | 6.64  | 1.67 | 6.68  | 1.32 | Assumed | 0.199    |

*$p<.05$, **$p<.01$

Note: Table 2 shows the average scores of female and male respondents for the values measured through the SSVS. The results show statistically significant differences in the Power and Achievement values, with males reporting higher scores in both cases.

## Discussion

The results suggest that females and males attribute different levels of importance to the two transformational/transactional leadership values, Power and Achievement, as measured by the SSVS. Additionally, there were no statistically significant differences for the transformational values (Stimulation and Self-direction), the transactional values (Tradition, Conformity and Security), and the transformative values (Universalism and Benevolence). These results are enough to suggest that females tend to be less agentic than males, which might explain part of the reason why the gender gap in leadership remains. The following paragraphs will explain this conclusion.

**Transformational/transactional leadership**. Burns (2010) included both constructs in his description of transformational leaders. He claimed that leaders could develop fruitful relationships with followers by finding shared values, establishing clear expectations of one another, and aiming for higher order goals. This description implies the presence of transformational and transactional factors. The claim that individual values play a role in the leader-follower relationship was supported by Shamir et al. (1993) when they argued that leaders trigger a response within their followers based on self-perceptions and value-orientations. The authors referred to this as *charismatic* leadership and argued that this deep connection with follower cognition explained why charismatic leaders produced a strong sense of loyalty and commitment in the leader-follower relationship.

The transactional dimension of leadership was articulated by Hollander (1980) when he explained the leader-follower relationship. He claimed that leadership was a process where the leader influenced his or her followers through actions and outcomes. In response to leader behavior and effectiveness, followers responded by maintaining the relationship or by leaving it. This creates a feedback loop where leaders and followers interact and make decisions based on expectations and performance. For the relationship to prosper, Burns (2010) argued, expectations and standards needed to be established and set clear. Therefore, transactional leaders acknowledge that leadership is a relationship that needs to be maintained for it to work.

So how does this relate back to gendered leadership? Sarid (2016) noted that transformational leaders exhibit a combination of *openness to change* and *self-enhancement* values. Openness to change relates to the transformational nature of leadership. Leaders are the ones who create shifts in organizations, politics, and other social contexts. They do this by

amassing support from others who are willing to accept the vision set forth by those they consider worthy of creating new conditions within their contexts (Burns, 2010). Self-enhancement leads to behaviors associated with setting ambitious goals and having a strong drive toward success. Once a goal has been set, leaders need their followers to work within existing structures as they drive toward completion of one or multiple goals. The results from the Power and Achievement values suggest that males place greater importance on openness to change and self-enhancement than their female counterparts, making them more transformational and transactional. This is consistent with previous research that found that females attribute less importance than males to setting performance expectations (Diaz & Lituchy, 2020).

These results were not definitive across the board. The Stimulation and Self-direction (transformational), and Tradition, Conformity, and Security (transactional) values were not moderated by gender. These behaviors were expected to be given greater importance by the males than the females in the sample, but this was not the case. So, it is incorrect to suggest that males are more transformational or transactional than their female counterparts. However, certain values, the ones linked to exercising greater influence over others, and seeking lofty goals seem to align better with the male personality. In other words, males were a better fit than females in Sarid's (2016) transformational and transactional model. Although the difference applied in two values only.

**Transformative leadership**. Sarid (2016) argued that the Transformative dimension was aligned with *self-transcendence* as a way of promoting change. This ties back to the Universalism and Benevolence values, which suggest an inclination to seek change for the good of society. This means being less authoritative and more democratic, seeking fairness and justice, and acting responsibly towards the future. It was expected that females would attribute greater importance to these values, which are increasingly important in modern day organizations. However, this was not the case. It seems that females do not have exclusive claims to transformative ideals. This means that males may be just as willing as their female counterparts to spend time and energy in shaping their actions to address social issues. Of course, this is good news because the world needs socially minded leaders, regardless of gender. It does mean, however, that males place overall greater importance of values that relate to effective leadership.

**Key insights**. The main takeaways from this research are that males attribute more importance to transformational and transactional values than females, and that these groups attribute similar levels of importance to transformative values. The application of these results rest in different types of organizations (business, political, educational) because females have been educated to focus on their communal (transformative) values (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Badura et al., 2018). It is up to different organizational actors to help aspiring female leaders embrace other ways of behavior. The fact is that communal values are not enough. The freedom to claim control of the change process and setting ambitious goals that will motivate others to follow are important. Teachers, supervisors, parents, and other potential role models can help young women understand that having agency when leading others in the pursuit of lofty goals is part of the leadership process. In other words, being transformative does not negate embracing transactional and transformational behaviors.

**Application**. The insights generated in this study have applications in several contexts. Academics can increase their understanding of individual cultural values, leadership, and gender. For example, Sarid's (2016) integration of leadership and values model represented a theoretical alternative to measuring leadership. This study built on this model giving it more visibility and opportunity for discussion. Furthermore, it added to Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz's (2009)

discussion on individual values and gender by showing how their theory performed in the context of leadership and Mexican education. Perhaps most notably, this research extends the line of inquiry on female leadership in Mexico (Zabludovsky, 2007; Zabludovsky, 2015; Díaz, 2018), which is of great importance given the current situation on this issue.

There are several practical applications as well. Educators can extend their discussion on individual cultural values in their curricular and co-curricular programs. This study demonstrated that individual cultural values could influence gender equity and leadership. This has profound implications for society, so it makes sense that teachers and students engage throughout the curriculum, perhaps developing gender-centered leadership development programs (Brue & Brue, 2018). Organizational leaders can benefit as well. They can tap into a larger pool of management talent if they create corporate cultures that embrace females who are not afraid to show agentic behaviors in their work with others. This could lead to the emergence of new change-oriented and goal-driven leaders.

**Limitations**. This study has three important limitations to be considered and perhaps addressed through future research. First, the focus of the study was on graduate students. These highly trained individuals were expected to align their values with effective leadership. Most of them have work experience, which may have influenced their perceptions. Research with undergraduate students or even younger may bring to light important insights. The fact that they would be younger, with less training and experience, could better reflect the influence of early education and parenting (from a culture perspective). Second, the cross-sectional nature of the study did not allow for inferences on educational experiences. For example, new research could assess individual cultural values before and after students participate in a leadership or entrepreneurship classes to determine whether this type of program has any impact on attributions of importance to specific values. Finally, the study is limited to northwestern Mexico, which is a major geographic bias because it is a large and diverse country, so it is to be expected that participants from different regions will attribute different levels of importance to the same values, which could have female leadership implications.

**Conclusion**

This study compared individual cultural values to address the gender gap in leadership in Mexico. The results suggest that male graduate students attribute greater importance to Power and Achievement values than their female counterparts. This suggest that males are more transformational and transactional. No differences were found across other transformational and transactional values. This was also the case with two transformative values, Universalism and Benevolence. The evidence is enough to suggest that female participants were less agentic and ambitious than their male colleagues. This could partly explain the gender gap in leadership. The main value of this information is that this discrepancy can be addressed in several ways by supervisors, parents, teachers, and the academic community.

This study was original because of the use of the SSVS to measure leadership constructs. This type of novelty is welcomed for a field of study that tends to rely on long-standing models that were developed many years ago (Samul, 2020). Hopefully, the information presented here will help decision-makers find creative ways to address the gender gap in leadership in Mexico, and will serve researchers who are interested in finding novel models to conduct their scholarly work.

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