



From Hegemony to Inclusion : Women's Leadership as a Pillar of Human Rights and Sustainable Development

Ni Putu Rai Yuliantini ¹, Gede Sariasa ², Ni Nyoman Ayu Hari Savitri ³

Ganesha University of Education, Indonesia

raiyluliantini@undiksha.ac.id¹, sariasa@undiksha.ac.id² ayu.hari@student.undiksha.ac.id³

Abstract

This article examines the crucial shift from gender hegemony to an inclusive culture in the corporate workplace, highlighting the central role of women's leadership as a key pillar of human rights and a crucial foundation for sustainable development. It argues that entrenched male-based gender power within organizational structures not only hinders the advancement of individual women but also limits the potential for innovation and overall organizational development, creating a stark contradiction amidst global demands for equality and sustainability. This article employs an interdisciplinary approach, examining a variety of primary and secondary legal materials, connecting and analyzing them using perspectives, methods, and theories from other disciplines related to gender equality in the corporate world. The study demonstrates that inclusive policies, an organizational culture, and legal advocacy combine to create an environment that encourages women's leadership, which in turn can accelerate the achievement of sustainable development goals. The study in this article also offers new insights into the causal relationship between women's leadership, human rights, and sustainable organizational performance. This can provide concrete recommendations for policymakers, corporate practitioners, and academics to build a more just, transparent, resilient corporate future, and one oriented toward universal human values.

Keywords: *Women's leadership, gender hegemony, inclusion, human rights, sustainable development, law*

1. Introduction

The gender gap in corporate leadership remains a deeply rooted structural issue in modern organizations, including in Indonesia. While the discourse on gender equality continues to be strengthened through public campaigns, corporate policies, and global initiatives promoting inclusion, the reality on the ground shows that women continue to face significant obstacles in achieving strategic positions within corporate governance structures. This imbalance in representation is not simply a result of women's limited participation, but rather a reflection of social and historical constructs that place women at a disadvantage within the power hierarchy. Masculine organizational structures, leadership standards still dominated by patriarchal characteristics, and work culture norms that are not fully responsive to women's needs contribute to the persistence of this inequality. The gender hegemony inherent in corporate structures manifests itself through various formal and informal mechanisms that influence leadership opportunities. Formally, women often face barriers in accessing promotions, leadership training, and strategic professional networks. Informally, various cognitive biases and stereotypes about women's leadership abilities also limit recognition of their competence. The dual barriers of non-inclusive organizational structures and biased work cultures create a reality where women must work harder to gain equal opportunities with their male counterparts, while simultaneously navigating social expectations regarding domestic and professional roles. (Pernamasari, 2025) This phenomenon not only has implications for unequal access and opportunities, but also hinders women's contribution to strategic decision-making that determines the direction of the company (Setiani & Novitasari, 2024).

From a Human Rights (HAM) perspective, the marginalization of women in leadership structures is a form of violation of the principle of non-discrimination as stated in *the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. (CEDAW)* and various national human rights instruments. This inequality is not only understood as a failure of organizations to provide equal opportunities, but also as a



denial of the state's and institutions' obligations to guarantee the fulfillment of women's fundamental rights in both public and private spaces. Within the framework of human rights theory, the exclusion of women from strategic positions is seen as a form of structural discrimination, namely discrimination that is not always explicitly visible, but operates through value systems, internal policies, and institutional practices that place women in subordinate positions. The absence of women's representation in leadership also indicates that the equality mandate as guaranteed in various state policies has not been achieved. This mandate is not merely related to the provision of formal opportunities, but also includes the obligation to ensure the existence of substantive mechanisms that enable women to truly participate meaningfully. When organizations fail to provide equal participation, it is an indicator that human rights norms have not been effectively internalized in the design of corporate governance or in its work culture. In other words, the gender gap in leadership reflects not only a problem of power imbalance, but also institutional weaknesses in translating the principle of equality into concrete actions (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Thus, this issue is not merely a matter of representation, but rather an integral part of fulfilling fundamental human rights.

In the context of sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda explicitly establishes gender equality as a primary goal (SDG 5) and a prerequisite for achieving other goals such as inclusive economic growth (SDG 8) and strengthening equitable institutions (SDG 16). Empirical research shows that the presence of women in corporate leadership is positively associated with the successful implementation of *Environmental, Social, and Governance principles (ESG)*, which is an indicator of corporate sustainability (Kristianti, 2023). Companies with female leadership tend to have better governance, higher levels of transparency, and a stronger social orientation (Tang, 2025).

However, research on gender equality and women's leadership in Indonesia largely focuses on the managerial and psychological aspects, rather than on the causal relationship between women's leadership, human rights, and sustainable development (Nindya, 2025). Legal studies that explicitly link the normative framework of human rights to corporate sustainability performance are still very limited. Furthermore, most national studies have not fully integrated the concepts of ESG and SDGs into their structural analysis of leadership, further glaring the theoretical and empirical gap (Rahman et al., 2024).

Structurally, gender hegemony in business organizations manifests itself through the phenomena of *the glass ceiling*, *sticky floor*, and *glass cliff*. *The glass ceiling* describes the invisible barrier that prevents women from rising to strategic positions. *The sticky floor* shows how women are held back in lower positions due to a biased evaluation system. *The glass cliff* indicates a condition where women are given leadership positions only in high-stakes crisis situations. Research in Indonesia shows that unconscious bias in the leadership evaluation process is one of the causes of this pattern's persistence (Setiani & Novitasari, 2024). This condition creates a discriminatory cycle that is detrimental to women and the business itself.

Besides cultural bias, regulatory ineffectiveness also exacerbates this situation. Although Indonesia has regulations regarding non-discrimination and equal employment opportunities, their implementation remains weak due to a lack of oversight mechanisms, a resistant organizational culture, and minimal commitment from top management (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Many companies adopt formal gender diversity policies but fail to implement them in their recruitment, promotion, or day-to-day governance practices (Pernamasari, 2025).

National research indicates that companies with greater gender diversity demonstrate higher-quality sustainability reporting (Kristianti, 2023). This suggests a substantive link between female leadership and more ethical corporate governance. Similar findings are supported by research demonstrating that women are more likely to be committed to transparency, accountability, and regulatory compliance. (Tang, 2025) This is what makes women play a significant role in driving companies' ESG achievements.

Furthermore, several studies have found that the presence of women on boards of directors contributes to improved ESG scores, particularly in social and governance aspects (Pramesti et al., 2025). Other research



has shown that gender diversity on boards can moderate the relationship between ESG disclosure and a company's financial performance (Nindya, 2025). Thus, women are not only symbols of equality but also driving forces behind corporate sustainability.

However, a significant research gap remains. Many national studies have yet to examine how women's leadership can serve as a pillar for advancing human rights within organizations. Most studies separate human rights and sustainability issues, despite the strong causal link between the two. Human rights are the normative foundation for sustainable development, while sustainability serves as an indicator of the implementation of human rights values in business. This lack of integration between these two domains has resulted in fragmented academic analysis (Rahman et al., 2024).

Based on these conditions, this study uses an interdisciplinary approach to examine the relationship between women's leadership, human rights advancement, and sustainable development. This approach incorporates legal perspectives, gender studies, organizational theory, and an ESG framework as an analytical basis. The use of an interdisciplinary approach is crucial because the issue of gender hegemony cannot be understood solely from a single discipline; rather, it is the result of the interaction between legal norms, sociocultural constructs, organizational dynamics, and the global demands of sustainable development (Pernamasari, 2025).

This research is also motivated by the practical need to provide evidence-based policy recommendations for businesses and governments. In a situation where companies are being required to meet global ESG standards, literacy on the role of women in leadership is crucial. Women have been shown to bring ethical and inclusive perspectives that strengthen the implementation of sustainability values (Kristianti, 2024). Furthermore, gender-inclusive companies tend to be more resilient in the face of socioeconomic crises. (Pratiwi et al., 2025).

Thus, this research has interrelated academic and practical motivations in an effort to fill the theoretical gap regarding the relationship between gender, human rights, and sustainable development. Practically, this research is also expected to contribute to the design of policies, business strategies, and gender-responsive corporate governance programs. The transformation towards strong female leadership is not only a matter of morality or international standards, but is the foundation for organizational sustainability and resilience (Pramesti et al., 2025). Therefore, this background emphasizes that female leadership must be positioned as a key pillar that not only strengthens human rights in organizations but also encourages the achievement of sustainable development through inclusive, transparent, and accountable corporate governance.

2. Literature review and hypothesis/es development

A review of recent literature shows that the relationship between female leadership, gender hegemony, the advancement of human rights, and sustainable development has become a significant theme in global academic discourse. Several studies confirm that the involvement of women in leadership structures, particularly in the corporate sector, has a significant contribution to improving a company's sustainability performance. Maula & Rachmah, through a systematic review of various empirical studies focusing on the involvement of women in corporate governance structures, found that female leadership significantly contributes to strengthening the quality of ESG reporting. In their study, they showed that the presence of women in strategic positions, whether as board members, senior managers, or decision-makers at the operational level, encourages companies to develop more transparent and accountable governance practices. This transparency is reflected not only in the increased comprehensiveness and accuracy of ESG reporting but also in the company's commitment to integrating sustainability principles into its long-term business strategy. According to their findings, female leaders tend to have a higher sensitivity to social and environmental issues, while also demonstrating a tendency to foster a participatory, ethical, and

humanitarian-oriented organizational culture. This combination of characteristics has been shown to improve the quality of internal oversight processes, strengthen non-financial risk control mechanisms, and raise management awareness of the importance of information transparency to stakeholders (Maula & Rachmah, 2025). Similar findings were presented by Tael Batak et al., who showed that gender diversity on boards of directors can strengthen the relationship between *good corporate governance practices* and sustainability performance (Tael Batak et al., 2025). Another study from Airlangga University (2024) outlined specific characteristics of female leadership such as empathy, collaboration, and long-term orientation that directly drive a company's ESG performance (Angelia & Yanti, 2025). Mansour et al. (2025) even confirmed that female representation in the global energy structure is positively correlated with environmental innovation, particularly in industrial sectors that are highly dependent on technology (Mansour et al., 2025).

A study by Boța Avram (2021) confirms that the presence of women on corporate boards plays a significant role in improving the quality of sustainability disclosure. Through a comprehensive analysis of various company reports across several industry sectors, this study shows that companies with higher female representation on the board tend to produce more complete, comprehensive, and public accountability-oriented sustainability reports. Boța Avram explains that female leaders have a stronger tendency towards openness, social sensitivity, and concern for the long-term impacts of business decisions. These characteristics encourage companies not only to comply with minimum reporting standards but also to adopt more progressive reporting practices, including transparency in environmental, social, and governance aspects that are often overlooked in male-dominated leadership structures. This finding confirms that gender diversity is not simply an issue of representation but rather a substantive factor that can strengthen the quality and credibility of corporate sustainability disclosures (Boța Avram & Tiron-Tudor, 2025). Meanwhile, Dewi et al. (2023) found that business and organizational competencies are mediating variables that strengthen the influence of female leadership on sustainability performance in the context of intellectual capital (Dewi et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, according to Sofiati et al. (2022), gender diversity in organizational structures, particularly at the leadership and strategic decision-making levels, contributes significantly to enriching a company's strategic perspective. In this study, gender diversity is seen as social and cognitive capital that provides a variety of perspectives, experiences, and approaches in responding to modern business dynamics. This variety of perspectives enables organizations to identify risks more comprehensively, formulate more inclusive policies, and develop more adaptive sustainability strategies. The findings of this study indicate that organizations with a more diverse gender composition consistently record improved ESG scores (Isnindiah Sofiati & Aria Farah Mita, 2024). Research by Babiker et al. (2024) in industries with high levels of pollution shows that female representation encourages companies to be more transparent in ESG reporting, especially on environmental aspects (Babiker et al., 2025). Afzal et al. (2024) also highlight the social dimension, showing that female leaders more consistently support policies oriented towards social justice and community welfare (Afzal & Lyu, 2025). Pierli et al. (2022) state that female leaders have a stronger drive to promote environmentally friendly business practices and ensure the integration of sustainability principles in company operations (Pierli et al., 2022).

In the Indonesian context, Amatullah et al. (2023) emphasized that gender diversity on boards of directors is a significant factor in improving the quality of sustainability reporting. These findings indicate that the presence of women is not merely a symbolic representation but also makes a substantive contribution to the process of structuring corporate governance and transparency. Women in leadership positions generally bring a stronger ethical perspective and long-term orientation, thus encouraging companies to more consistently integrate sustainability principles into their business strategies and reporting mechanisms. In a situation where sustainability reporting is the primary instrument for demonstrating a company's commitment to social and environmental responsibility, gender diversity at the leadership level plays a crucial role in ensuring that reporting is not merely normative but truly reflects measurable and accountable



sustainability practices. Furthermore, the influence of gender diversity on the quality of sustainability reporting also indicates that women on boards of directors have a higher sensitivity to issues related to environmental, social, and corporate governance. This makes them more likely to promote stricter internal oversight processes, ensure data-driven reporting, and avoid greenwashing practices that can damage the company's credibility. Thus, the presence of women not only serves as a counterbalance to masculine dominance in decision-making, but also as a catalyst for increasing integrity and accountability in sustainability reporting. (Amatullah et al., 2025). In addition, Azizuddin et al. (2022) also showed that women's leadership contributes to improved public services and inclusive governance, especially in South Asia (Azizuddin & Shamsuzzoha, 2024).

Rahmania et al. (2025) added that the integration of gender equality and environmental protection demonstrates a strategic synergy that is increasingly recognized as an important foundation for the formulation of sustainable development policies. They emphasized that gender equality cannot be separated from the ecological sustainability agenda because women, especially in developing countries, have a direct role in natural resource management and are often the group most affected by environmental degradation. Therefore, when women are given space in decision-making, the resulting environmental policies tend to be more inclusive, responsive, and long-term oriented. This integration also strengthens the effectiveness of the implementation of development programs, because women's perspectives bring sensitivity to social ecological risks that are often overlooked in policies based on masculine approaches. Thus, the study emphasized that the success of sustainable development is determined not only by technocratic strategies, but also by the ability of states and institutions to mainstream gender equality in all aspects of environmental governance (Rahmania et al., 2025). Meanwhile, Kristianti et al. (2024) highlighted that the research space on the ESG impact of women's presence on Indonesian corporate boards remains largely unfilled, opening up opportunities for further exploration (Kristianti, 2024). Overall, the aforementioned research/studies indicate that a research gap remains, particularly on the issue of gender hegemony within corporate structures and its implications for human rights advancement. However, the similarity of findings across studies suggests that female leadership is not merely a symbolic representation, but rather a substantive actor capable of driving transparency, accountability, and socio-environmental sustainability as the foundation of sustainable development.

3. Methodology

This research employs an interdisciplinary approach that combines normative legal research methods with theoretical analysis from various disciplines related to gender equality in the corporate context. The normative legal approach was chosen because the issues of gender hegemony and women's leadership are inseparable from the regulatory framework governing the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and the promotion of human rights. However, given that power structures and organizational culture are not solely determined by legal norms, this research also utilizes perspectives from organizational sociology, management, gender studies, and sustainable development theory. This interdisciplinary approach allows the research to examine phenomena not only from a normative perspective, but also from broader social, structural, and scientific paradigms, thus providing a holistic understanding of the relationship between women's leadership, human rights, and corporate sustainability.

This research relies on two types of legal materials: primary legal materials and secondary legal materials. Primary legal materials include national laws and regulations related to human rights, gender equality, and employment, as well as international instruments such as *the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*, and various global policy documents related to sustainable development (SDGs). Secondary legal materials include textbooks, scientific journal articles, international organization reports, corporate policy documents, research findings related to women's leadership, and academic publications examining gender dynamics in



organizations. These sources were selected purposively based on their relevance, credibility, and level of contribution to the theoretical analysis of gender hegemony and strategies for creating inclusive organizational environments. The use of this diverse legal material allows this research to build a strong theoretical foundation and assess the consistency between normative frameworks, corporate practices, and global standards.

The analytical technique used in this study is a normative-interpretive qualitative analysis. Normative analysis is conducted by interpreting legal norms governing gender equality and human rights, and assessing the alignment between normative provisions and implementation practices in the corporate environment. Meanwhile, interpretive analysis is used to connect cross-disciplinary theoretical concepts such as power theory, transformational leadership, inclusive organization theory, and sustainable development frameworks with objective conditions that indicate the persistence of gender hegemony in the workplace. This technique also involves a comparative analysis of legal standards, corporate policies, and implementation practices, so that the research can identify structural and cultural gaps that hinder the emergence of female leadership. This integrative analytical approach is structured according to the scientific writing standards of reputable journals (Sinta-Scopus), namely by emphasizing coherence, theoretical validity, and consistent scientific argumentation.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Gender Hegemony in Corporate Structures and Its Consequences for the Advancement of Human Rights .

Gender hegemony in corporate structures is a systemic and persistent reality, forming the foundation of power relations that influence not only leadership composition but also policy direction and organizational responses to human rights values. The dominance of men in strategic positions such as boards of directors and commissioners creates decision-making patterns that are often isolated from a gender perspective, thus maintaining exclusivity and the reproduction of patriarchal power at the top management level. Organizational paradigms that view leadership as a masculine domain have historically normalized gender stereotypes, where women are positioned as accessory rather than as true authority holders. These formal structures allow men to maintain symbolic and institutional influence, while women, despite their professional capabilities, are often kept on the fringes of strategic decisions.

The implications of this gender hegemony are stark from a human rights perspective. Homogeneous and gender-diverse leadership structures tend to result in internal policies that are gender-insensitive, such as employment policies that fail to consider women's reproductive needs, flexible working hours, or the dual burden of work and domestic responsibilities. When strategic decisions are made without significant input from women, the risk of "gender-blind" policies increases, directly impacting equal rights and social justice in the workplace. This confirms that gender hegemony is not simply a matter of numerical representation, but a structural obstacle to the fulfillment of the principle of substantive equality guaranteed under the human rights framework.

Based on the principles of CEDAW, the fulfillment of women's rights must be placed as a non-negotiable state mandate, because discrimination against women is considered a form of human rights violation that hinders equal participation in all areas of life. CEDAW emphasizes the state's obligation not only to eliminate formal discrimination but also to take substantive affirmative steps to ensure women have equal access, opportunities, and benefits. In this context, women must be seen not merely as a vulnerable group, but as development actors with strategic capacity. This perspective aligns with the mandate of Law No. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, which affirms that the protection of women is an integral part of the advancement of human rights nationally. Therefore, strengthening the role of women must be understood as a key pillar in realizing inclusive and equitable sustainable development, so that the state is required to introduce legal policies that are truly gender-responsive.



In the context of sustainability governance (ESG), gender hegemony is a strategic barrier. Research shows that gender diversity on corporate boards has a positive impact on overall ESG scores, particularly on the governance dimension, although its effects on environmental and social aspects tend to be weaker (Pernamasari, 2025). This finding underscores the importance of women's participation on boards as a mechanism for strengthening governance and transparency. Without meaningful and influential female representation, companies risk formulating sustainability policies that are less inclusive and less responsive to social dynamics, such as the well-being of female workers or gender inequality in the supply chain. Thus, gender hegemony not only hinders internal equity but also reduces an organization's capacity to respond to global demands for sustainability and human rights.

Furthermore, gender hegemony also influences organizational culture by prioritizing competitive, hierarchical, and aggressive masculine leadership styles over more inclusive leadership qualities such as empathy, collaboration, and participatory communication. Research shows that when board gender diversity is combined with *enterprise risk management*, corporate sustainability performance improves significantly, indicating that inclusive leadership styles can strengthen risk governance and long-term value. (Mais et al., 2024) If companies continue to ignore these “feminine” leadership qualities, they may miss out on the potential for innovation, creativity, and employee well-being that can truly strengthen organizational competitiveness and resilience.

Furthermore, gender *stereotypes* remain a powerful mechanism that blocks women from strategic positions. Many organizations still hold the view that women are less “rational” or “too emotional” than men, despite empirical evidence showing that women can combine strategic thinking with a healthy social orientation. These *stereotypes* not only influence the judgments of superiors or boards, but also permeate performance appraisal systems, task allocation, and development opportunities such as training or mentoring. As a cumulative effect, women are often relegated to administrative or support roles and rarely appointed to strategic decision-making positions. This creates a *leaky pipeline*, where women appear fewer and fewer as they move up the career ladder, a clear reflection of systemic symbolic and structural hegemony.

The impact of gender hegemony in leadership structures is not limited to internal decision-making spaces but also extends throughout a company's supply chain. When leadership is dominated by one gender, men are generally less sensitive to the dynamics of vulnerability of female workers in the supply chain. This situation is particularly evident in labor-intensive sectors, such as manufacturing, garments, and the informal sector, where women often occupy the most vulnerable and least protected positions. The absence of women's voices at the strategic level means that issues such as job insecurity, gender-based harassment, exploitative working hours, or inadequate wages often go unidentified as material risks. As a result, companies may fail to establish comprehensive risk monitoring systems and are unable to design policies responsive to the needs of female workers. This situation demonstrates that leadership homogeneity is not simply a matter of representation but has direct implications for the effectiveness of corporate governance.

In the context of sustainability and ESG principles, the absence of women's perspectives at the strategic decision-making level also hinders the fulfillment of corporate social responsibility. Without gender diversity, human rights *due diligence processes* are susceptible to structural bias and incapable of detecting gender-specific violations. This places companies vulnerable to public criticism, diminished stakeholder trust, and reputational risks that can result in weakened legitimacy among investors and consumers. In the long term, entrenched gender hegemony in corporate leadership undermines a company's capacity to integrate principles of justice, equality, and inclusivity into its sustainability policies. Failure to accommodate women's perspectives not only has the potential to create internal inequality but also reduces a company's ability to comply with international human rights standards and optimize sustainability performance, which are increasingly becoming global demands. Therefore, women's representation at the



top is not merely a moral necessity but a structural prerequisite for responsible and adaptive corporate governance.

Furthermore, gender hegemony can also undermine organizational value and long-term economic potential. A 2023 study by Fransisca Meliana & Abdurrahman found that *corporate governance mechanisms* and *gender diversity* significantly impact company value, although ESG's role as a moderator sometimes weakens certain effects. These findings suggest that strong corporate governance and gender diversity at the leadership level serve as fundamental elements that directly influence market perception, organizational performance, and long-term competitiveness. Gender diversity not only embodies the principle of equality but also enhances the quality of deliberative decision-making processes, broadens perspectives, and encourages more comprehensive risk assessments. However, the dynamics become more complex when ESG variables are used as moderators. The finding that ESG can weaken the influence of both governance mechanisms and gender diversity in some contexts indicates that robust sustainability practices or ESG reporting do not always enhance the positive impact of governance and diversity on company value. In some cases, companies' focus on administratively meeting ESG indicators may distract from the effectiveness of substantive governance or the quality of gender representation. This phenomenon reflects that “*compliance-oriented*” ESG practices can create analytical noise, making it difficult for the market to distinguish between genuine and merely symbolic sustainability achievements.

On the other hand, the weakening effect can also be interpreted as an indication that once a company has demonstrated high ESG performance, the market may perceive that the additional contribution of gender diversity or governance mechanisms no longer provides significant differentiation value. In other words, a high ESG score can absorb most of the positive signals typically derived from *governance* and *gender diversity factors*, thereby statistically weakening the contribution of both variables. This finding confirms that the relationship between governance, gender diversity, ESG, and company value is non-linear and influenced by the institutional context, implementation quality, and market perception.

Therefore, the existence of gender diversity and strong governance mechanisms remains a strategic foundation for companies, but both must be combined with authentic, integrated, and not merely ceremonial ESG practices. Only through a substantive sustainability approach and not being trapped in “*greenwashing*” or “*genderwashing*”, can companies maximize value and maintain long-term legitimacy in the eyes of investors and other stakeholders (Meliana & (Meliana & Abdurrahman, 2025). This means that male dominance in board structures not only contributes to social injustice, but also hinders the creation of sustainable corporate value. In an era where investors increasingly emphasize ESG, companies that maintain *the status quo* of gender leadership may lose strategic competitiveness and the preferences of value-oriented investors.

To effectively deconstruct gender hegemony, structural and cultural transformation of organizations is necessary. Structurally, companies must create authentic space for women in strategic positions, not simply to fulfill symbolic quotas, but to give them the authority and power to contribute to decision-making. Furthermore, the establishment of a gender-inclusive ESG committee or sustainability council can serve as a formal mechanism to ensure that social and human rights issues are incorporated into the company's strategic policies. Culturally, deconstructing patriarchal norms is crucial. Organizations need to encourage and value inclusive, empathetic, collaborative, and communicative leadership styles not as weak “*feminine*” traits, but as strategic assets that can strengthen long-term governance. Leadership training programs, gender-specific mentoring, and competency-based promotion policies can help open career paths for women and strengthen their legitimacy within power structures.

Regulators and public policymakers also have a key role to play. Affirmative action policies, board composition requirements, and ESG incentives that promote gender diversity can compel companies to transform more rapidly. Furthermore, ESG reporting systems should include metrics on gender inclusion



and human rights, allowing stakeholders to evaluate the extent to which companies are living up to their commitments to gender equity and human rights. Finally, gender hegemony in corporate structures must be understood as a structural problem, not just about who sits on the board, but also about how the norms and meanings of leadership are reshaped to reflect values of equality and justice. The transformation toward gender inclusion at the top of corporate leadership is not only an ethical strategy but also a strategic necessity to enhance the organization's capacity to face future challenges, maintain legitimacy, and create sustainable value.

From the overall analysis of gender hegemony within corporate structures, it can be emphasized that male dominance in strategic positions not only results in bias in decision-making but also undermines the advancement of human rights and the effectiveness of the sustainability agenda. This structural inequality limits corporations' ability to comprehensively respond to gender issues, both in internal policies and in supply chains, thereby increasing the risk of gender-specific injustice and human rights violations. When linked to the principles of CEDAW, which affirm the obligation of states and social entities to eliminate discrimination against women, and Law No. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, which recognizes women's right to equality and protection without discrimination, the condition of gender hegemony within corporate leadership clearly contradicts these legal mandates. Therefore, addressing gender hegemony is not simply a matter of representation, but a legal and ethical imperative to ensure that corporations truly respect human rights and are able to carry out their sustainability functions in an inclusive and responsible manner.

4.2. Women's Leadership as a Driver of Inclusion and a Foundation for Sustainable Development

Women's leadership in the corporate context has a strategic legal dimension. In addition to championing representation and justice, the presence of women in decision-making positions serves as an internal mechanism to ensure corporations fulfill their obligations to respect human rights. From a human rights law perspective, corporations are viewed not only as economic actors but also as subjects responsible for preventing, identifying, and remediating human rights violations that occur in their operations and supply chains. When a homogeneous, male-dominated leadership structure ignores issues of gender vulnerability, the corporation's capacity to implement comprehensive *human rights due diligence* is weakened. Therefore, strengthening women's representation at the strategic level can enrich the corporate due diligence process by incorporating a gender perspective into risk identification, consultation processes, and remediation mechanisms.

A review of Indonesian legal journals addressing business and human rights reveals a growing normative push to incorporate UN principles (UNGPs) into domestic corporate practices. National legal discourse is now beginning to highlight the importance of regulations and enforcement instruments that enforce corporate transparency and accountability for human rights impacts, including mandatory gender-based risk assessments in supply chains. Within this framework, women's roles as internal policymakers and corporate governance monitors serve as pillars for translating international norms into concrete corporate practices, such as anti-harassment policies, fair wage standards, and gender-sensitive workplace safety procedures. These legal efforts are increasingly relevant as potential legal liability for corporations increases, including the risk of litigation and administrative sanctions related to human rights violations (Putra & Hidayah, 2023).

Normatively, strengthening women's leadership is also closely linked to the state's obligation to protect human rights. Several national legal studies emphasize that the state has a dual role: protecting citizens' rights from violations by non-state actors (including corporations) and simultaneously establishing a regulatory framework that encourages business practices that respect human rights. In practice, when corporations have gender-inclusive leadership structures, their internal policies are more likely to prioritize



the fulfillment of workers' rights and ethical standards that align with state mandates. Therefore, legal advocacy for gender mainstreaming at the corporate level is part of a broader strategy to realize the state's corporate obligations to advance human rights.

From a corporate regulatory perspective, legal articles highlight the importance of legal instruments that enforce transparency, such as mandatory human rights reporting, disclosure of social risks in annual reports, or independent audit mechanisms. The presence of women on boards and supervisory committees can strengthen the implementation of these legal instruments, as they tend to encourage more critical internal audits of social and human rights issues. Therefore, legal reforms requiring disclosure of human rights performance (or similar standards) require institutional support, with gender-diverse boards at the forefront of ensuring compliance with reporting obligations and implementing remedial action when violations are identified. This positions women's leadership as a practical legal instrument to bridge the compliance gap between legal norms and business practices.

The Indonesian legal review also shows that ignoring gender perspectives at the managerial level increases the risk of human rights violations in the supply chain—a phenomenon frequently discussed in business law studies. In many labor-intensive sectors, women workers dominate vulnerable employment, often faced with short-term contracts, low wages, and exposure to safety risks. Without female representation in strategic positions, corporate risk identification mechanisms often fail to address gender-specific dimensions, resulting in inadequate prevention and remediation policies. In conclusion, transforming leadership structures toward gender inclusiveness is not only an ethical imperative but also a preventative legal measure to reduce corporate exposure to human rights violations and future legal claims.

Furthermore, national legal discourse emphasizes the need for harmonization between corporate policies (*internal governance*) and public legal norms. Numerous legal studies have shown that despite the existence of general regulations regarding non-discrimination and occupational safety, inadequate enforcement mechanisms make corporate commitments to human rights voluntaristic. Therefore, women's participation in decision-making positions can serve as an internal driver for implementing stronger policies, such as decent work standards, strong anti-discrimination policies, and independent complaint procedures. These, when integrated with external oversight (regulators, unions, and civil society), will enhance the effectiveness of human rights protection. In other words, female leadership strengthens the synergistic relationship between the public legal framework and corporate governance practices.

From a comparative legal perspective, several articles examine the role of human rights due diligence regulations in other jurisdictions and their relevance to Indonesia. The general conclusion is that legal frameworks requiring companies to systematically conduct human rights due diligence tend to be effective when supported by boards committed to human rights standards. This is where the role of women becomes relevant, as they often promote a culture of substantive compliance rather than simply fulfilling administrative obligations. Therefore, advocacy for strengthening due diligence regulations in Indonesia (e.g., through draft laws or implementing guidelines) must go hand in hand with efforts to strengthen gender representation in corporate decision-making structures (Zainullah, 2023).

From the perspective of judicial practice and accountability, several national legal studies have addressed the challenges of prosecuting corporations for human rights violations, including evidentiary constraints, supply chain complexity, and limited sanctions. The presence of human rights-sensitive female leadership can help reduce the likelihood of violations that are difficult to remedy through litigation, as they tend to encourage proactive remedial policies and effective internal complaint mechanisms. Thus, female leadership serves as a legal mitigation measure that aligns with normative compliance and prevents litigation risks (Irawan et al., 2025).

Finally, from a public policy perspective, emerging recommendations in the legal literature suggest a combination of approaches: (1) strengthening the rule of law (e.g., human rights due diligence obligations, social reporting), (2) incentives and sanctions to trigger corporate change, and (3) internal governance



interventions, including targeted gender representation on boards and key committees. These efforts should be designed to complement each other, resulting in public regulations that create a framework for accountability, while women's leadership within the corporate environment drives the translation of norms into practice. In this context, legal advocates, regulators, and the scientific community have a shared role to play in building an ecosystem that makes respect for human rights an integral part of business strategy.

The discussion on women's leadership demonstrates that the presence of women in strategic positions is a key element in strengthening inclusive governance, the implementation of human rights, and the achievement of sustainable development goals. Women's leadership has been shown to bring a more sensitive perspective to issues of vulnerability, enrich the human rights due diligence process, and encourage policies that are more responsive to social needs. This perspective aligns with the CEDAW norm, which emphasizes the importance of women's participation in all areas of public life, including the economy, and the Human Rights Law, which regulates women's rights to play an equal role and participate in national development. Based on this, women not only play a role as beneficiaries of corporate policies, but also as key actors capable of ensuring the fulfillment of human rights, transparency, and fairness in business practices. Therefore, strengthening women's leadership is both a strategic step and a normative mandate for creating corporate governance that is fair, sustainable, and aligned with universal human values.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Conclusion

The discussion shows that entrenched gender hegemony in corporate structures not only results in unequal representation but also creates structural barriers to the advancement of human rights and sustainability performance. The dominance of men in strategic positions creates bias in decision-making, creates gender-blind internal policies, and weakens the organization's ability to identify social and human rights risks, particularly those impacting women in the supply chain. This situation confirms that the practice of excluding women contradicts the principles of CEDAW, which requires the elimination of discrimination against women, and contradicts the mandate of Law No. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, which guarantees equality and non-discrimination. Therefore, the transformation towards a more diverse and gender-sensitive leadership structure is not only a corporate ethical requirement, but also a legal prerequisite and strategic imperative for the creation of inclusive, fair corporate governance that aligns with global standards of transparency, accountability, and sustainability.

At the same time, the discussion emphasized that women's leadership plays a strategic role as a driver of inclusion, upholding human rights, and underpinning sustainable development within corporations. The presence of women in decision-making positions enriches the human rights due diligence process with a gender perspective, strengthens corporate compliance with international standards such as the UNGPs, and aligns with the principles of CEDAW, which positions women as key actors in public and economic life. This perspective is also consistent with the mandate of the Human Rights Law, which guarantees women's right to equal participation in development. The findings indicate that women's leadership tends to promote substantive governance, including critical social audits, anti-discrimination policies, and remediation mechanisms sensitive to workers' vulnerabilities. Therefore, the synergy between state regulations, corporate commitments, and women's representation at the strategic level is the foundation for building responsible, competitive corporations oriented toward universal humanitarian values. This transformation is not only an ethical necessity, but an essential legal and business strategy for realizing an inclusive and sustainable corporate future.

5.2 Limitations

This research has several limitations that require attention. First, the study focuses more on a normative and theoretical approach, thus not empirically explaining how the implementation of gender inclusion policies

differs across industrial sectors. Second, the study does not deeply examine internal company factors such as locally based organizational culture, workplace political dynamics, and forms of structural resistance that may influence the effectiveness of female leadership. Third, this study does not fully account for external variables such as global dynamics, changes in employment regulations, and government interventions to promote gender equality. These limitations open up opportunities for further studies using empirical or mixed-methods approaches to expand on the research findings.

5.3 Suggestions

Based on the research findings and limitations, several recommendations can be put forward. First, policymakers need to formulate and enforce stronger regulations regarding gender equality in corporate leadership, including clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Second, companies should build ecosystems that support women's leadership through mentoring programs, inclusion-based leadership training, and comprehensive anti-discrimination policies. Third, academics are advised to conduct further research using an empirical approach to identify structural barriers and success factors in strengthening women's leadership. Fourth, synergy between the government, the corporate sector, and civil society organizations needs to be developed to ensure that the values of equality, human rights, and sustainability are consistently integrated into business practices.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their appreciation to all parties who have provided academic, administrative, and moral support during the process of compiling this research.

References

- Afzal, F., & Lyu, K. (2025). *Do Women Leaders Promote Social Sustainability? Exploring the Effect of Board Diversity on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Practices of Project-Based Organizations*. *Project Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/87569728251357495>.
- Amatullah, A. N., Suharman, H., & Fatmawati, F. U. (2025). *Sustainability reporting quality: The effect of good corporate governance, gender diversity, and company age*. *Journal of Accounting Auditing and Business*, 8(1), 76–89. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jaab.v8i1.59537>.
- Angelia, L., & Yanti, Y. (2025). *Characteristics Of Female Leaders In Promoting Esg Performance: A Systematic Literature Review*. *Berkala Akuntansi Dan Keuangan Indonesia*, 10(2), 282–302. <https://doi.org/10.20473/baki.v10i2.75305>.
- Azizuddin, M., & Shamsuzzoha, A. (2024). *Women leadership development in local governance in South and Southeast Asia: a critical analysis*. *Southeast Asia: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 24(1), 40–52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SEAMJ-06-2023-0052>.
- Babiker, I., Bakhit, M., Bilal, A. O. A., Abubakr, A. A. M., & Abdelraheem, A. A. E. (2025). *The Effect of Female Representation on Boards on Environmental, Social, and Governance Disclosure: Empirical Evidence from Saudi Highly Polluting Industries*. *Sustainability*, 17(6), 2751. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17062751>.
- Boța-Avram, C., & Tiron-Tudor, A. (2025). *Women on Corporate Boards and Sustainability Reporting: A Proposed Integrated Framework of Determinants and Impacts*. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 32(5), 7180–7212. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.70084>.
- Dewi, N. K., Suroso, A. I., Fahmi, I., & Syarief, R. (2023). *The influence of women's leadership on corporate sustainability in Indonesia*. *Cogent Business & Management*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2262706>.
- Irawan, D. O., Tantimin, T., & Situmeang, A. (2025). *Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia dan Pertanggungjawaban Pidana Korporasi dalam Kasus Gagal Ginjal Akut pada Anak di Indonesia*. *Jurnal Usm Law Review*, 8(1), 215–234. <https://doi.org/10.26623/julr.v8i1.11297>.



- Isnindiah Sofiati, & Aria Farah Mita. (2024). *The Role Of Gender Diversity In Increasing ESG Performance Through Intellectual Capital*. *Jurnal Akuntansi*, 28(1), 184–205. <https://doi.org/10.24912/ja.v28i1.1861>.
- Kristianti, I. P. (2023). *The Effect of Gender Diversity Boards on Sustainable Financial Reporting Practices*. *JAK (Jurnal Akuntansi) Kajian Ilmiah Akuntansi*, 10(2), 256–272. <https://doi.org/10.30656/jak.v10i2.5623>.
- Kristianti, I. P. (2024). *Women on Board: The Blank Space of ESG Impact in Indonesia*. *Jurnal Akuntansi dan Perpajakan* (Vol. 10, Issue 2). <http://jurnal.unmer.ac.id/index.php/ap>.
- Mais, R. G., Hendra, L., Almurni, S., & Maliki, F. (2024). Corporate Sustainability Performance: The Role of the Gender Diversity of the Board and Enterprise Risk Management. *Jurnal Wahana Akuntansi*, 19(1), 51–66. <https://doi.org/10.21009/Wahana.19.014>.
- Mansour, M., Al Zobi, M., E'leimat, D. A., Abu alim, S., & Tabash, M. I. (2025). *Female leadership, gender boards and environmental innovation: Comprehensive evidence from the global energy sector*. *Innovation and Green Development*, 4(4), 100275. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.igd.2025.100275>.
- Maula, F., & Rachmah, S. (2025). Bridging Governance and Sustainability: A Systematic Review of Female Leadership in ESG Reporting. *The Accounting Journal of Binaniaga*, 10(01), 85–96. <https://doi.org/10.33062/ajb.v10i01.92>.
- Meliana, F., & Abdurrahman, ; (2025). *Corporate Governance Mechanisms, Gender Diversity, and Firm Value: Environmental Social Governance as Moderating Variable*. *Binus Business Review*, 16(3). <https://doi.org/10.21512/bbr.v16i3.13573>.
- Nindya. (2025). Pengaruh ESG disclosure dan board gender diversity terhadap kinerja keuangan dengan board independence sebagai variabel moderasi. *Jurnal Riset Akuntansi Dan Keuangan*, 7(3) <https://doi.org/10.36407/akurasi.v7i3.1701>.
- Pernamasari, R. (2025). *Does board gender diversity enhance ESG performance? Empirical evidence from Indonesia*. *Journal of Contemporary Accounting*, 30–38. <https://doi.org/10.20885/jca.vol7.iss1.art3>.
- Pierli, G., Murmura, F., & Palazzi, F. (2022). Women and Leadership: How Do Women Leaders Contribute to Companies' Sustainable Choices? *Frontiers in Sustainability*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frsus.2022.930116>.
- Pramesti, A. A., Dewi, N. F., Salsabela, D., Novita, F., & R.Pandin, M. Y. (2025). Peran Kesetaraan Gender, Peluang Pengembangan SDM, dan Transparansi dalam Peningkatan ESG-Sosial pada PT Bank BRI Tbk. *Journal of Advances in Accounting, Economics, and Management*, 3(1), 12. <https://doi.org/10.47134/aaem.v3i1.809>.
- Pratiwi, R. D., Isyanto, P., & Puspitasari, M. (2025). Pengaruh Gender Diversity, Dewan Komisaris Independen, Dan Komite Audit Terhadap Pengungkapan Sustainability Report. *Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen Dan Bisnis (JEMB)*, 4(2), 431–439. <https://doi.org/10.47233/jemb.v4i2.3167>.
- Putra, A. M. A., & Hidayah, N. P. (2023). *Implementation of Business and Human Rights Principles (UNGPs) in the Protection given to Indonesian Laborers: Gender Perspective*. *Jurnal Cita Hukum*, 11(1), 163–176. <https://doi.org/10.15408/jch.v11i1.29022>.
- Rahman, Z. D., Samiono, B. E., & Gemilang, R. P. (2024). *CEO Characteristics, Board Gender Diversity, and ESG Performance: Evidence from Indonesia*. *Jurnal Akuntansi, Ekonomi Dan Manajemen Bisnis*, 12(2), 132–139. <https://doi.org/10.30871/jaemb.v12i2.8912>.
- Rahmania, T., Kertamuda, F., Wulandari, S. S., & Marfu, A. (2025). *Empowering women for a sustainable future: Integrating gender equality and environmental stewardship*. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 11, 101503. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101503>.
- Setiani, E. P., & Novitasari, B. T. (2024). *Exploring the Impact of Board Attributes on ESG Scores of Indonesian Companies*. *Nominal Barometer Riset Akuntansi Dan Manajemen*, 13(1), 131–143. <https://doi.org/10.21831/nominal.v13i1.72362>.



- Tael Batak, F. A., Mardiaty, E., & Andayani, W. (2025). *Does Gender Diversity Moderate Good Corporate Governance on Sustainability Performance? The International Journal of Accounting and Business Society*, 33(1). <https://doi.org/10.21776/ijabs.2025.33.1.818>.
- Tang, S. (2025). Keterlibatan Wanita Dan Firm Performance Dalam Esg Disclosure. *Jurnal Manajemen Terapan Dan Keuangan (Mankeu)*, 14(03) <https://doi.org/10.22437/jmk.v14i03.47240>.
- Zainullah, M. (2023). *The Compatibility Of Indonesia's Job Creation Law Number 11 Of 2020 With United Nations Guiding Principles On Business And Human Rights. Jurisdictie*, 14(1), 1–36. <https://doi.org/10.18860/j.v14i1.21301>.