



Feminist Theory and Leadership: A Guide for Men

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Foreword

This document is produced as part of the output from the 2024 Pilot of the new Youth Champions Programme, organized by the International Gender Champions (IGC) Secretariat with the support of the United States Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva. The Youth Champions Programme is an initiative to connect Geneva-based Gender Champions and young gender equality activists from around the world in a dynamic and reciprocal mentoring exchange. By transitioning away from a conventional mentoring format towards a more collaborative and inclusive exchange, the program seeks to

- foster intergenerational dialogue;
- amplify the voices of next-generation leaders by providing them with a platform to advance their work and tap into the expertise of international decision-makers; and
- Cultivate learning opportunities for established decision-makers, who stand to gain invaluable insights, expertise, and skills from young activists.

This document delves into the fundamental principles of feminist theory and explores how men can effectively apply them in leadership roles. It aims to provide a framework for understanding and implementing feminist leadership, fostering a more equitable and inclusive environment. We will cover key concepts, practical strategies, and resources to empower men to champion gender equality and create positive change.^[L]_[SEP]

Introduction

What is Feminism and who is a Feminist?

Feminism is a school of thought that believes that we need to have an equitable society for all individuals regardless of their gender. This requires that we not only promote equality and address discrimination but also address the underlying systems and structures that contribute to inequality. (Sadeeq, 2024)

A feminist is an individual who believes in that school of thought, that we need to have an equitable society for all regardless of gender, and who is committed to addressing power, prejudice, privilege, and patriarchy. (Sadeeq, 2024)

Feminist leadership is an approach being used by a feminist to ensure that we have an equitable society for all regardless of gender or other social identities. (Sadeeq, 2024).

Feminist leadership also involves committing to, practicing, promoting, and being held accountable to principles of non-discrimination, diversity, equality, inclusion, and justice. (Phil, 2024).

Eight Key Elements of Feminist Leadership (Phil, 2024)

Feminist leadership involves at least 8 key elements:

<i>Sharing leadership</i>	Feminist leadership recognizes that different leaders bring different experiences, approaches, and expertise and that the best leadership is provided and the best decisions are made through collective wisdom and collaborative decision-making.
<i>Valuing diversity</i>	Feminist leadership recognizes, respects, and harnesses the value of diverse identities and lived experiences. It also recognizes that representation matters, particularly in positions of leadership.
<i>Promoting</i>	Feminist leadership practices and promotes wellbeing, both for self

<i>wellbeing</i>	and others. It involves a holistic approach to wellbeing – encompassing physical, mental, psychosocial, and financial security and wellbeing – and an empathetic approach to colleagues. For activism to be sustainable, it must involve practices of nurturing, regeneration, celebration, and joy.
<i>Ensuring transparency</i>	Feminist leadership is accountable leadership. It involves a high level of transparency, with transparency contributing to fairness and equity, as well as accountability.
<i>Providing trust and respect</i>	Feminist leadership involves trusting and respecting our colleagues. It recognizes that most people thrive when they work in an environment that provides freedom, autonomy, responsibility, and support, not in environments of hierarchy, command, and control.
<i>Combating discrimination and addressing bias and privilege</i>	Feminist leadership adopts a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of prohibited discrimination and harassment. It also recognizes and seeks to address issues of bias and encourages a reflection on, and dismantling of, inherited privilege and entrenched power.
<i>Being vulnerable</i>	Feminist leadership involves having the courage to be vulnerable, to be humble, to take responsibility for mistakes, to share, and to continuously learn. It also involves exercising humility.
<i>Promoting safety and inclusion</i>	Feminist leadership involves creating and nurturing an environment in which people feel safe, respected, and included, able to fully and authentically express themselves and their identities.

Myth and Misconception of Feminist Leadership (Sadeeq, 2024)

Some common myths or misperceptions that might make men hesitant to embrace feminist leadership include:

Feminism is only for women.	Feminism advocates for gender equality, benefiting both men and women.
Feminist leaders are "man-haters".	Feminism seeks to dismantle patriarchy, not vilify men.
Feminist leadership is "soft" or "weak".	Feminist leadership values empathy, collaboration, and vulnerability, which are strengths, not weaknesses.
Feminism means men lose power.	Feminism redistributes power equitably, creating a more inclusive and just environment in which all people can prosper.
Feminist leaders can't be men.	Men can be allies, advocates, and feminist leaders, working alongside women to achieve gender equality.
Feminism ignores men's	Feminism addresses intersecting forms of oppression, including those affecting men.

issues.	
Feminist leadership is a "women's issue".	Gender equality benefits everyone and is a human rights issue.
Men will be "feminized" or lose their masculinity.	Feminism doesn't aim to erase masculinity but rather redefine it to be more inclusive.

Other Strategies for applying Feminist Leadership (Sadeeq, 2024)

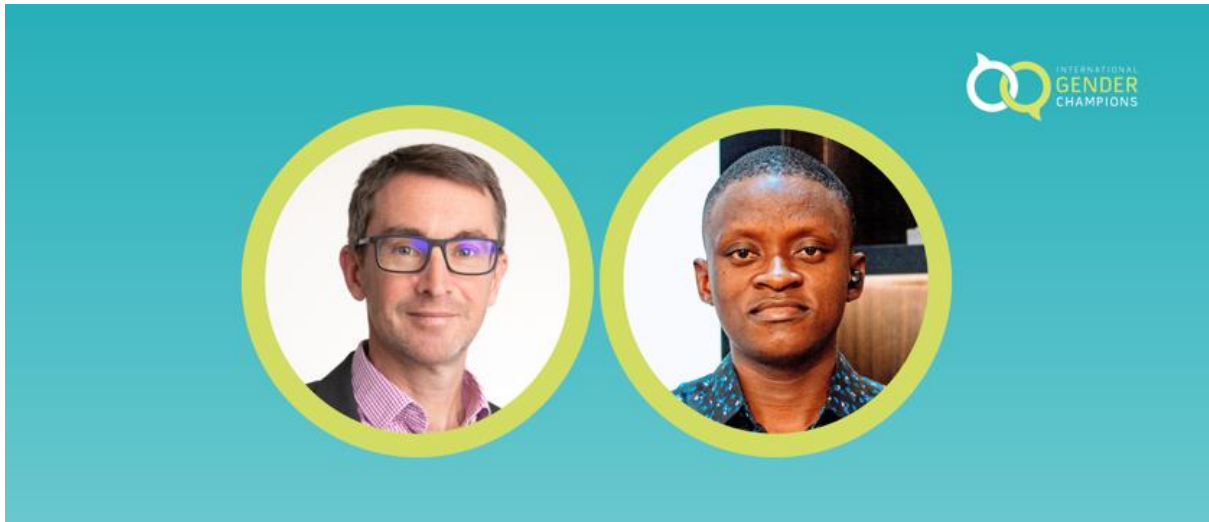
<i>Dismantling Patriarchal Structures</i>	<p>Patriarchal structures, which have historically given men greater power and privilege, perpetuate inequality. To dismantle these structures, men can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Become aware of their own privilege and how it impacts others (Lorde, 1984) · Challenge gender bias and discrimination in daily interactions (Hooks, 2015) · Support policies and initiatives that promote gender equality (Chin, 2014) · Advocate for the representation and empowerment of women and groups subject to intersecting forms of oppression and
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	<p>discrimination (Eagly & Carli, 2007)</p> <p>By actively challenging patriarchal structures, men can create a more equitable and just world.</p>
<p><i>Promoting Gender Equality in the Workplace</i></p>	<p>Promoting gender equality in the workplace is essential for creating a fair, safe, inclusive, and productive environment. Men can contribute to this effort by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Supporting women's advancement and leadership opportunities (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Chin, 2014) · Challenging gender-based pay gaps and discrimination (Lorde, 1984; Hooks, 2015) · Creating a culture of respect and inclusivity (Chin, 2014; Eagly & Carli, 2007) · Mentoring and sponsoring women in their careers (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Chin, 2014) <p>By taking these steps, men can foster a workplace where women can thrive and contribute their talents and perspectives.</p>
<p><i>Inclusive Decision-Making and Collaboration</i></p>	<p>Feminist leadership emphasizes inclusive decision-making processes that value the perspectives of all stakeholders. Men can foster this approach by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Actively seeking out and valuing diverse opinions and perspectives (Chin, 2014; Eagly & Carli, 2007) · Creating safe spaces for open dialogue and collaboration (Hooks, 2015; Lorde, 1984) · Encouraging shared leadership and decision-making (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Chin, 2014) · Empowering and creating and ceding space to others to take

	<p>ownership and lead (Chin, 2014; Eagly & Carli, 2007)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · By embracing collaboration and inclusivity, men can create a more effective and equitable decision-making environment.
<p><i>Supporting Women and members of Groups subject to intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression</i></p>	<p>Supporting women and groups subject to intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination is a core principle of feminist leadership. Men can contribute to this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Supporting initiatives that address systemic inequalities · Challenging gender norms and stereotypes · Amplifying the voices of women and groups subject to intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination · Creating opportunities for women and groups subject to intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination to lead and thrive <p>By actively working to empower others, men can create a more equitable and just society.</p>
<p><i>Applying Feminist Principles to Mentorship</i></p>	<p>Mentorship is a powerful tool for fostering growth and development. Men can apply feminist principles to mentorship by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Challenging gender bias and stereotypes in their mentorship approach · Creating safe and supportive spaces for mentees · Recognizing that learning can and should be intergenerational, and that ‘mentors’ can learn just as much from ‘mentees’ as vice versa · Promoting equal opportunities for women and men in mentorship · Supporting mentees in their pursuit of leadership roles <p>By embracing these principles, men can create a more equitable and supportive mentorship experience for all.</p>

Conclusion

<i>Conclusion and Further Resources</i>	Embracing feminist principles in leadership is crucial for creating a more equitable and just society. By challenging gender stereotypes, promoting equality, and creating and ceding space to others, men can contribute to a positive and transformative change.
<i>References</i>	<p>Chin, J. L. (2014). Diversity in mind and action (Vol. 3). ABC-CLIO.</p> <p>Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders. Harvard Business Press.</p> <p>Hooks, B. (2015). Feminist theory: From margin to center. Routledge.</p> <p>Lorde, A. (1984). Sister Outsider: Essays and speeches. Crossing Press</p>



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