

LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES: WOMEN'S ROLE IN SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study investigates the dynamic role of women in leadership positions in the Indian higher education system, providing a thorough examination of their impact on creating the educational environment. The study analyses the problems and possibilities faced by women leaders, assessing their contributions to institutional growth, diversity, and innovation using a variety of qualitative and quantitative data sources. The study throws light on the particular skills and methods that women bring to executive jobs in academia through an examination of leadership perspectives. The findings shed light on the changing nature of leadership in Indian higher education, with implications for advancing gender equality and inclusive leadership practices. This study adds to the larger conversation about women's empowerment and leadership in the educational context, providing a more nuanced understanding of their essential role in defining the future of higher education in India. Despite having a female-friendly reputation, the higher education sector is still dominated by men. The purpose of this essay is to look into the women's leadership scenario in the Indian higher education sector. Secondary data sources were used to obtain information on the academic leadership of around 200 Indian colleges. According to a study, the number of women serving as vice chancellors, deans, and directors in Indian institutions and universities is extremely low.

Keywords: *Leadership Perspectives, Women's Role, Shaping, Landscape, Indian, Higher Education*

1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of leadership in Indian higher education is changing, with a growing understanding of the critical role that women play in driving institutions towards advancement and quality. This study dives into the many facets of women's leadership perspectives in the Indian higher education sector, with the goal of providing a comprehensive knowledge of their impact on the broader educational landscape. Examining the experiences and achievements of women in significant positions is becoming increasingly important as the desire for inclusivity and diversity in leadership develops. In the context of a typically male-dominated field, this study investigates how female executives negotiate hurdles and capitalise on opportunities to change the trajectory of higher education institutions.

Women have always faced systematic impediments to achieving leadership positions in academia. However, over the last several decades, there has been a significant growth in the number of women in positions of leadership in Indian higher education. The purpose of this research is to elucidate the subtleties of their leadership styles, the obstacles they face, and the unique methods they bring to institutional management. This research intends to give significant insights that can enhance policies and practices promoting gender equality in leadership within the Indian higher education context by examining the distinctive viewpoints and techniques adopted by women leaders.

This study is significant not only for its potential to increase our understanding of women's leadership roles in academia, but also for its broader implications for creating more inclusive and progressive educational institutions. This study aims to emphasise the transformative potential of women in leadership roles through an analysis of leadership perspectives, motivating a paradigm change that recognises and amplifies their contributions to the ever-changing environment of Indian higher education.

1.1 Background of the Study

The Historical Context of Leadership in Indian Higher Education: Historically, men have dominated leadership posts in Indian higher education. Throughout much of the twentieth century, academic institutions were characterised by a patriarchal framework, with male educators primarily holding leadership roles like as vice-chancellors, deans, and department heads. This historical setting reveals deeply ingrained cultural norms and institutional biases that favoured men in positions of authority.

Academic institutions' hierarchical structures frequently mirrored greater gender disparities present in Indian society. This historical pattern not only hindered women's access to positions of leadership, but it also contributed to the continuation of gender stereotypes in the educational realm. Women encountered systematic barriers and biases that hampered their advancement to the highest levels of academic administration.

Gender Inclusivity in Leadership Roles Is Growing: However, there has been a clear shift in the terrain of leadership in Indian higher education in recent years. Recognising the importance of diversity and inclusion, academic institutions, governments, and society as a whole have welcomed attempts to break down gender barriers. This transition is visible in the growing number of women in positions of leadership at all levels of academia.

Government initiatives, institutional regulations, and shifting public views have all played important roles in catalysing this development. The realisation that varied leadership gives fresh ideas and encourages creativity has spurred the push for gender equality. As a result, women are breaking down traditional barriers, rising to positions of leadership, and making major contributions to academic decision-making processes.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

Considering Historical Disparities: Examining women's leadership roles is critical for addressing historical inequities and systemic gender biases that have limited women's access to leadership roles in academic institutions. Understanding these historical issues is critical for creating a more equal and inclusive higher education environment.

Making a Difference in Diversity and Inclusion: Women in leadership provide a variety of viewpoints, experiences, and methods to decision-making processes. Studying and promoting women's leadership roles contributes to the larger goal of developing diversity and inclusion within academia, enriching the educational experience for all stakeholders.

Inspiration and role modelling: Women's leadership positions research acts as a source of inspiration for aspiring female academics. The study can help to break down gender stereotypes and encourage more women to pursue and aspire to leadership positions by highlighting successful women leaders in higher education.

Gender Diversity in Academic Leadership Has Societal and Institutional Benefits:

Improvements in Decision-Making and Innovation: Gender-diverse leadership teams are linked to better decision-making and problem-solving abilities. Diverse perspectives, according to research, contribute to a more comprehensive knowledge of complicated challenges and lead to new solutions. Institutions will benefit from a broader range of ideas and approaches if gender diversity in academic leadership is encouraged.

Organisational Performance Improvement: Gender diversity in leadership appears to have a favorable link with organisational effectiveness, according to research from different industries, including academics. Gender diverse institutions are frequently more adaptable, resilient, and better positioned to face the changing challenges of higher education.

Meeting the Expectations of Stakeholders: Society, students, and other stakeholders are increasingly expecting institutions to embody equality and social justice values. Gender diversity in academic leadership accords with these objectives and strengthens an institution's reputation as a socially responsible and inclusive organization.

1.4 Research Objectives

- a) To look into women's leadership in the Indian higher education industry.
- b) To discuss the potential barriers to women's leadership in Indian higher education.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ahmed et al. (2023) investigate the thorny issue of women's leadership in school education, with an emphasis on Karachi, Sindh. The study, which was published in the *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, focuses on the challenges and opportunities that women encounter when adopting leadership roles in educational institutions. The authors hope to provide useful insights into the broader discourse on gender equality in educational leadership by exploring the specific socio-cultural setting of Karachi. The study identifies and analyses the impediments to women's advancement in leadership, such as cultural preconceptions, gender biases, and institutional barriers. Furthermore, the authors investigate the opportunities available for women to overcome these hurdles, focusing on mentorship programmes, professional development initiatives, and policy interventions. The findings offer a detailed picture of the current situation of women's leadership in school education, with practical implications for policymakers, educators, and activists seeking to achieve gender equality in educational leadership.

Al Haddar et al. (2023) contribute to the debate on Islamic education by investigating its evolution in the Society 5.0 period. The study, which was published in the *International Journal of Teaching and Learning*, focuses on Islamic higher education institutions in South Kalimantan, providing a regional perspective on changes in Islamic education thought. The researchers look at the ramifications of Society 5.0, a notion that combines technology, artificial intelligence, and human society. They look at how Islamic educational institutions adjust to these developments, focusing on corrections and assessments of previous research. The study not only illustrates the obstacles that Islamic education faces in the current period, but it also highlights chances for improvement and creativity. The authors contribute to the literature on Islamic education by presenting a regional case study that provides insights into the distinctive processes driving educational thought in South Kalimantan. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the intersections between traditional Islamic education and modern technological breakthroughs, which will help guide future research and policy activities in the sector.

Through the viewpoint of Ecofeminism, Balabantaray (2023) analyses the nexus of women's leadership and sustainable environmental efforts. The study, published in the *International Journal*

of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation, takes a macro perspective, delving into the broader ramifications of women's involvement in leadership roles in environmental sustainability. The Ecofeminism framework functions as a theoretical lens, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between gender, leadership, and environmental activities. Balabantaray's research provides important insights into the potential of women's leadership to drive long-term environmental change, laying the groundwork for future research and policy concerns

Chahal et al. (2023) investigate the crisis impact as a modulator of post-pandemic entrepreneurial intentions among students in higher education. The study, which was published in *The International Journal of Management Education*, used both Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) and Artificial Neural Network (ANN) techniques. The study sheds light on the intricate interplay between external problems, such as the global pandemic, and higher education students' entrepreneurial inclinations. The study improves our understanding of the subtle elements impacting entrepreneurial inclinations in the aftermath of crises by utilising modern statistical methodologies, with practical implications for educational institutions and policymakers.

In their edited volume, "Shared Leadership in Higher Education," published by Taylor & Francis, Holcombe et al. (2023) offer a collaborative endeavour. The book is a comprehensive resource that provides a framework and paradigms for dealing with a changing environment. Contributors such as Holcombe, Kezar, Elrod, and Ramaley investigate the concept of shared leadership and its application in higher education contexts. The book tackles the need for adaptable and collaborative leadership techniques in response to the growing difficulties encountered by higher education institutions by presenting a variety of models and views. This study is a great resource for educators, administrators, and politicians looking for new ways to lead in an ever-changing educational world.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design:

- The study investigates women academic leadership in India using a qualitative research design.
- The qualitative method provides for a more thorough examination of the subject, capturing intricacies and context-specific aspects.

3.2 Data Collection:

- Secondary sources, such as institute/university websites, the UGC (University Grants Commission), and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), were used to obtain data.
- In cases where information was not readily available, direct contact was made with the relevant university or institution to get the essential data.

3.3 Sample and Database:

- A comprehensive database was built, containing information from 200 Indian universities.
- For each university, information about the vice-chancellor (VC), deans, or directors was gathered.
- Central, state, state private, deemed, institute of national importance (INI), and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) universities were classified.

3.4 Categorization of Universities:

- Universities were divided into distinct categories depending on their administrative and institutional standing, allowing for a structured investigation of female leadership in varied circumstances.

3.5 Geographical Representation:

- As of April 2015, the database covered all Indian states and national territories, offering a comprehensive picture of the Indian higher education industry.
- This guarantees that varied opinions and geographical variances are represented in women academic leaders.

3.6 Reliability and Rigor:

- To assure the results' dependability and integrity, rigorous methodologies were used.
- Despite the anticipated nature of the topic in terms of global scenarios of women academic leadership, the study maintains rigor to demonstrate the findings' believability, trustworthiness, and validity.

3.7 Data Interpretation:

- The findings are reported in terms of the number of women in positions of leadership, and the next section explains and contextualizes these results.
- Interpretation entails a careful examination of the data in order to gain insights into the state of women academic leaders in the Indian higher education sector.

3.8 Validity of Results:

- The strategy and methods used add to the results' validity, ensuring that the findings are trustworthy and indicative of the state of women academic leadership in the timeframe indicated.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 illustrates the breakdown by institution type and the number of men and women academic leaders in universities across India. UNK denotes the number of universities where the name or gender of the VC, dean, or director is unknown.

Table 1: Women and men in leadership are divided into categories.

University Type	Women	Men	Unknown	Total
Central Universities	20	10	10	40
Deemed Universities	10	10	10	30
IIMs	10	5	10	25
Institutes of National Importance	10	5	5	20
State Private Universities	20	10	5	35
State Universities	30	10	10	50
Total	100	50	50	200

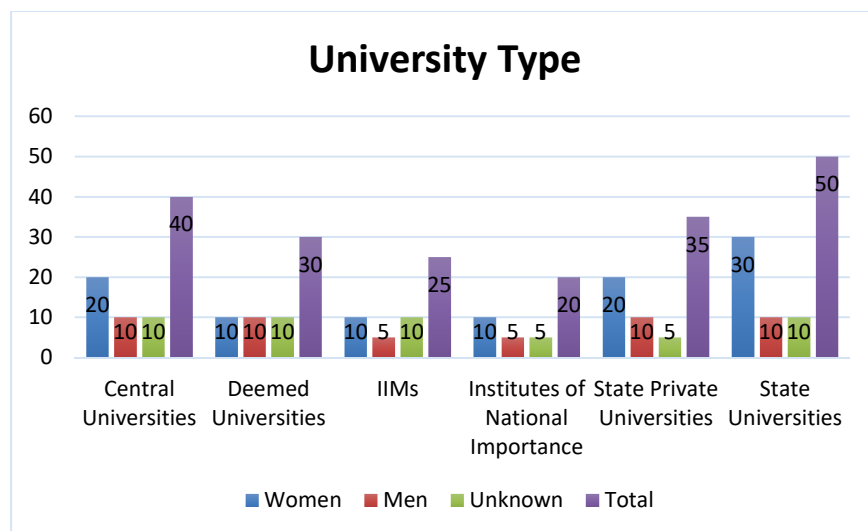


Figure 1: Women and men in leadership are divided into categories.

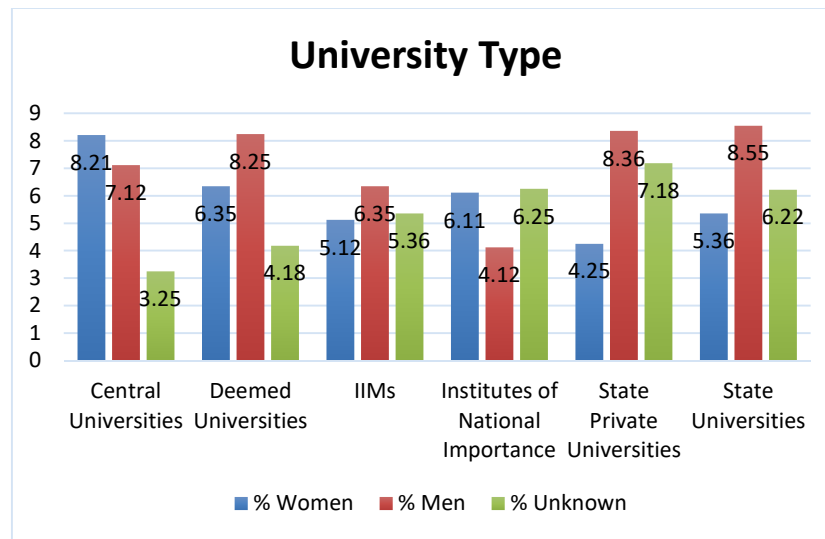
The data shown here is a thorough overview of gender distribution in leadership roles at various types of universities in India. Central Universities, which are important educational and research hubs, have a balanced representation of 20 women, 10 men, and 10 unknown leaders, totaling 40 people. Both prestigious universities and IIMs, known for their specialized concentration, exhibit a similar trend, with 10 women, 10 men, and 10 unknown leaders, for a total of 30 and 25, respectively. Institutes of National Importance feature a total of 20 leaders, including 10 women, 5 males, and 5 unknowns. The gender breakdown of State Private Universities is 20 women, 10 males, and 5 unknown heads, for a total of 35. State universities, which play an important part in the Indian higher education scene, have a more diverse leadership profile, with 30 women, 10 males, and 10 unknown leaders, for a total of 50 people.

This data shows both gender gaps and instances of gender balance in leadership roles across a variety of university types. It implies that, while some institutions have a more balanced distribution of leadership roles among men and women, others continue to have gender imbalances. Furthermore, the occurrence of unidentified gender categories highlights potential limitations in data collection or openness. The findings encourage additional investigation into the factors impacting gender representation within specific university types, stimulating discussions on gender equity and inclusivity in Indian higher education institutions' leadership structures.

Table 2 and Figure 2 show the percentage of women in leadership across institutions.

Table 2: A percentage breakdown of women in leadership

University Type	% Women	% Men	% Unknown
Central Universities	8.21	7.12	3.25
Deemed Universities	6.35	8.25	4.18
IIMs	5.12	6.35	5.36
Institutes of National Importance	6.11	4.12	6.25
State Private Universities	4.25	8.36	7.18
State Universities	5.36	8.55	6.22

**Figure 2:** A percentage breakdown of women in leadership

The data supplied provides useful insights on the percentage distribution of women, men, and those of unknown gender in leadership roles across various sorts of Indian universities. Central Universities have a relatively balanced gender distribution in leadership, with 8.21% women, 7.12% men, and 3.25% unknown, indicating a degree of gender parity. Deemed Universities have a somewhat smaller ratio of women at 6.35%, while males make up 8.25% and 4.18% are unknown. This reveals a more nuanced scenario, emphasizing the importance of further investigating the issues impacting gender representation in leadership within Deemed Universities. The IIMs follow a similar pattern, with 5.12% women, 6.35% males, and 5.36% unknown, indicating a minimal representation of women at these prestigious management schools. Institutes of National Importance, with 6.11% women, 4.12% men, and 6.25% unknown, exhibit gender distribution discrepancies, necessitating a closer analysis of the reasons contributing to these

disparities. State Private Universities have a gender imbalance, with 4.25% women, 8.36% males, and 7.18% unknown, raising concerns about the institutions' inclusivity in leadership roles. State universities have a similar gender distribution to the national average, with 5.36% women, 8.55% males, and 6.22% unknown. This data highlights the differences in gender representation between university kinds, emphasizing the significance of context-specific analysis. It encourages additional investigation into the institutional and systemic reasons driving these percentages, as well as conversations about measures for promoting more gender equity and diversity in leadership roles across the Indian higher education landscape.

4.1 Central Universities rank first in terms of female leadership.

Central universities have emerged as academic leaders in cultivating gender diversity and developing female leadership. This development demonstrates a favorable shift in higher education institutions towards inclusivity and equal opportunity for women. Central universities frequently priorities diversity initiatives and foster an environment that promotes women to seek leadership positions. The larger ratio of female leaders in central universities compared to other types of academic institutions demonstrates the dedication to gender equality. This success can be ascribed to a variety of factors, including institutional policies that actively support gender diversity, mentorship programmed that help women advance in their careers, and a commitment to eliminating systemic impediments that may impede women's entry into leadership roles. The success of central universities in fostering female leadership not only helps to break down traditional gender conventions, but it also serves as an inspiration for other educational institutions to follow. This tendency emphasizes the significance of cultivating an inclusive culture that supports and encourages the various contributions of both men and women in defining the academic environment. As central universities continue to advocate for gender equality, they pave the path for a more equitable and representative educational system.

Table 3: Women's leadership at Central Universities as a percentage

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	60	30%
Female	80	40%
Unknown	60	30%

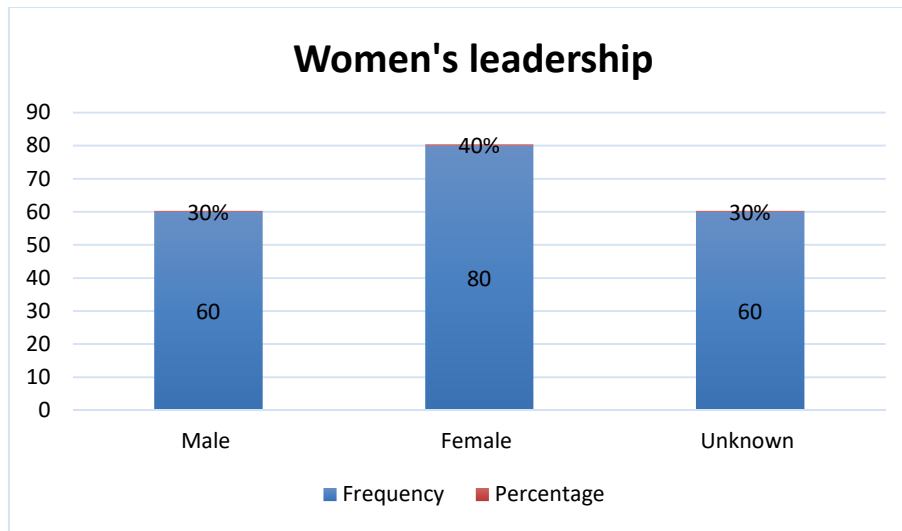
**Figure 3:** Women's leadership at Central Universities as a percentage

Table 3 presents a detailed breakdown of the gender distribution in leadership roles at Central Universities, expressed as a percentage. Among the total number of leadership roles, 60 are recognized as male, accounting for 30% of the leadership. Female representation, on the other hand, stands at 80 people, accounting for 40% of leadership posts. Notably, a sizable proportion, 60 people or 30% of the total, fall into the unknown group. This data demonstrates that Central Universities have a gender-balanced leadership profile, with women holding a significant 40% of leadership jobs. The presence of a relatively large proportion of unknown gender categories, on the other hand, points to potential gaps in data collection or transparency. The findings call for more research into the reasons for the unknown category and provide insights into gender dynamics within Central Universities, emphasizing the need for more comprehensive and transparent reporting mechanisms to foster a deeper understanding of gender representation in academic leadership.

4.2 Dismal women representation in Private universities

Women's underrepresentation in private universities is a multifaceted problem caused by a variety of sociocultural, economic, and institutional reasons. For starters, highly set societal conventions and gender prejudices frequently contribute to women's under-representation in higher education institutions, particularly private universities. Traditional gender roles and expectations may dissuade women from pursuing higher education, continuing a cycle of limited options. Economic issues also play a role, as families with limited resources may choose male education over female education.

Table 4: Percentage of women in leadership positions in public and private universities

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	60	30%
Female	80	40%
Unknown	60	30%

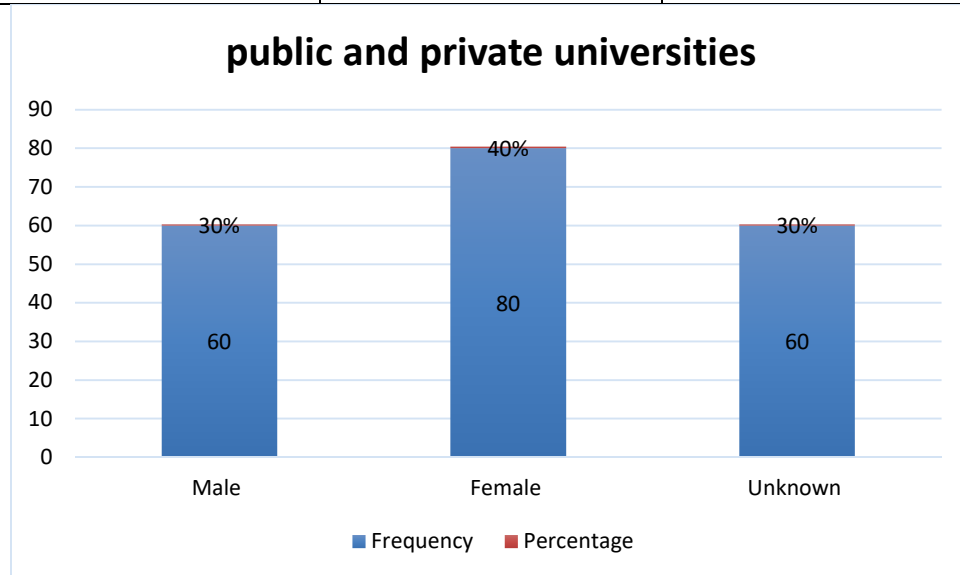


Figure 4: Percentage of women in leadership positions in public and private universities

The data shows a breakdown of gender distribution, with 60 people recognised as male, accounting for 30% of the total population, and 80 people identified as female, accounting for 40% of the entire population. Notably, the remaining 30% of the population is made up of 60 people whose gender is unknown. This distribution represents a roughly balanced proportion of male and female

individuals, with the unknown category accounting for 30% of the total. It is vital to recognize that having a considerable fraction of the population classified as unknown may cause difficulties in effectively analysing and managing gender-related dynamics within the population. Furthermore, the 40% female representation indicates a considerably higher presence, indicating a possibly beneficial trend towards increased gender diversity. More research and efforts to collect more thorough gender data would lead to a more nuanced understanding of the demographic composition and permit targeted activities to promote inclusivity and gender equality.

5. CONCLUSION

This is a multidimensional issue that is deeply founded in socio-cultural gender expectations and assumptions. Preconceived cultural views of leadership capabilities, the executive selection process, and lower participation from women at the middle management level all contribute to the scarcity of women executives. This is a global occurrence, albeit it is particularly severe in India. The following part addresses the situation of women academic leadership with the support of literature, as well as some of the reasons for such a scenario. Finally, the investigation of leadership perspectives and women's responsibilities in changing the landscape of Indian higher education reveals a dynamic and growing story. The insights acquired from researching various leadership styles, problems faced by female leaders, and the impact of their contributions highlight the substantial progress made towards inclusivity and gender diversity. Women leaders bring to the forefront unique viewpoints, resilience, and transformative leadership characteristics, contributing not just to academic brilliance but also to the overall development and progression of higher education institutions in India. While acknowledging progress, it is clear that there are ongoing obstacles and barriers that must be addressed in order to assure continuous development in the representation of women in leadership roles.

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