

## **Barriers Faced by Women in Achieving Leadership Positions in Global Health: A Scoping Review**

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### **Abstract**

**Introduction:** The World Health Organization Report (2019) on Global workforce states that women make up 70% of the global health workforce worldwide, but only 25% of women are in senior positions. Women in middle- and low-income countries are particularly marginalized, holding even a lesser percentage of executive-level roles. This review aims to identify the barriers faced by women in achieving leadership roles in global health and explore the differences in the barriers in high, middle- and low-income countries.

**Methods:** A scoping review was conducted, and we analyzed the barriers faced by women in two high-income (UK and Sweden), two middle-income (Botswana and Moldova), and two low-income (Zimbabwe and Afghanistan) countries. The review included articles from the databases PubMed and Web of Science, as well as documents found through manual searching. Grey literature, peer-reviewed literature in English and published from 2011 to September 2021 were included. Relevant articles contained barriers faced by women to achieve leadership positions in Global Health. Of the 9445 articles, 27 met the inclusion criteria.

**Results:** Of the 27 articles found, 16 (59%) were from high-income countries, 5 (19%) from middle-income countries, and 6 (22%) from low-income countries. A total of 23 barriers were extracted from the articles. Barriers faced were different across high-, middle- and low-income countries, though some common barriers were shared across all three country groups. Barriers charted included lack of training, funding, opportunities, motivation, mentorship, confidence, work-life balance, discrimination, work load and societal myths.

**Conclusions:** The findings of this scoping review suggest that barriers faced by women in high-income countries are mostly interpersonal and institutional barriers, such as improper work-life balance, excessive workload, unequal gender pay gap, lack of confidence in training, and the feeling of not being equal to a male counterpart. However, the barriers faced by women in middle- and low-income countries consists of interpersonal, institutional, community and policy factors such as lack of funding for training, myths associated with women not being capable of being a good leader, lack of motivation, inadequate pay, racial discrimination, and gender stereotypes.