A Review of Intragenerational Social Mobility among Government Female Leaders in Inner Mongolia, China

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Abstract
This literature review investigates the intragenerational social mobility of female leaders in Inner Mongolia, China, focusing on the specific challenges they encounter in career advancement. Despite notable strides toward gender equality, systemic barriers impede women's progress into leadership roles. This review aims to analyse how social norms, institutional structures, and personal networks influence the mobility of these female leaders within the government sector. Key themes such as the role of education, mentoring, and contextual factors are explored by synthesising qualitative and quantitative research, including case studies and empirical data. The methodological approach involves a systematic approach to exploring the phenomenon of social mobility in China. Using thematic analysis, patterns across multiple studies reveal the multifaceted factors shaping social mobility. This review contributes to the broader discourse on gender and leadership in non-Western contexts, offering practical insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to enhance equitable opportunities for women in government leadership.
Keywords: Intragenerational Social Mobility, Female Leaders, Inner Mongolia, China

Introduction
In recent years, the study of social mobility has garnered increasing attention, particularly regarding women's unique challenges and experiences in leadership roles. This literature review focuses on intragenerational social mobility among female leaders in Inner Mongolia, China, exploring the factors influencing their career advancement and the implications for broader social dynamics. Despite significant strides toward gender equality, women in leadership often face systemic barriers that hinder their professional growth.

This review synthesises existing research on the trajectories of female leaders, examining the interplay between societal norms, institutional frameworks, and personal networks. By analysing case studies and empirical data, this review aims to identify key themes and patterns that shape the experiences of these leaders, shedding light on how their

backgrounds, education, and mentorship opportunities contribute to their social mobility. Furthermore, this review seeks to contribute to the discourse on gender and leadership in non-Western contexts, offering insights that may inform policy and practice in promoting equitable opportunities for women in the government sector.

The Phenomena of Social Mobility in China
After the reform and opening up, due to the rapid development of the economy, especially the continuous deepening of social reform and the constant expansion of social opening up, China's social mobility has increased dramatically with an unprecedented trend, and the degree of social mobility has therefore increased significantly (Yin, 2017). This growth opened up a multitude of new employment and business opportunities, particularly in urban areas and emerging sectors like technology and manufacturing. As the economy diversified and expanded, individuals found new ways to achieve upward mobility, especially those who could capitalise on the burgeoning private sector and international trade. Whyte (2010), examines how China's rapid economic development, mainly since the economic reforms of the late 1970s, has led to significant changes in social mobility. It discusses how industrialisation and urbanisation have created new job opportunities and wealth, impacting social stratification.

Nijman and Wei's (2020), research addresses regional disparities within China and their impact on social mobility. The study highlights how differences in economic development and access to resources across regions influence individuals' life chances. Li & Sicular (2014) discuss rural-urban migration in China and its implications for social mobility. There is a significant rural-urban divide in China in terms of social mobility. Urban residents often have better access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities than their rural counterparts. This divide has led to large-scale migration from rural areas to cities. It explores how migration presents opportunities for upward mobility for rural residents while highlighting the challenges migrants face due to urban-rural disparities. Access to education has significantly improved in China over the past few decades. Higher education has become a critical pathway for social mobility, with many Chinese students attending universities and colleges (Chan & Zhang, 2021). Wu's (2010) research focuses on the role of education in facilitating social mobility in China, particularly during the economic transition. It highlights the expansion of education as a critical factor in increasing upward mobility and notes the persistence of educational inequalities.

In summary, existing research offers a comprehensive overview of how China's economic reforms have reshaped the landscape of social mobility. Economic growth, educational opportunities, and governmental policies influence social mobility in China. However, limited and outdated literature focuses on the intragenerational social mobility of female leadership. Thus, focusing on intragenerational mobility allows for exploring how women navigate their career paths within their lifetimes. This research can also contribute to a deeper understanding of government sector female leaders' career mobility, specifically in a context that has received limited attention in Inner Mongolia. The researcher can contribute the latest and most updated literature to fill the research gap.

Social Mobility and Occupation

Social mobility, commonly measured by examining changes in socioeconomic status, encompasses occupation, income, and education across generations or within an individual's lifetime (Bloome, 2017; Jarvis & Song, 2017; Sorokin, 1927; Tampubolon & Savage, 2016). Occupational mobility, the ability to move between job positions, is a critical factor in determining social mobility due to its direct impact on income, wealth, and social status (Kraus, Park & Tan, 2017; Marsh, 2018). As a pathway for upward social mobility, higher levels of occupational mobility allow individuals to acquire new skills, achieve higher-paying jobs, and improve their socioeconomic standing (Kalleberg & Mouw, 2018; Bertaux & Thompson, 2017).

Certain occupations, particularly those requiring advanced education or specialised skills, offer more significant opportunities for income growth, job security, and social advancement (Bathmaker, 2017; Deming & Kahn, 2018). However, limited opportunities for occupational mobility, such as being confined to low-paying jobs, can lead to stagnant social mobility (Du Toit et al., 2018; Weis, 2018). This indicates that occupational mobility plays a dual role as a facilitator and a barrier to social mobility.

Occupations are markers of status attainment and mechanisms through which individuals navigate complex social hierarchies. In regions like Inner Mongolia, occupational dynamics may be particularly influential in shaping the social mobility of female government leaders. Exploring these occupational pathways highlights the need for policy interventions, such as educational and vocational training programs, to promote upward mobility. Future research should also investigate the unique socioeconomic challenges different groups face, particularly women, in achieving occupational mobility within regional and governmental contexts.

This section emphasises the importance of occupations in understanding and addressing social mobility, particularly structural factors that can enhance or inhibit mobility within a person's lifetime.

Social Mobility and Education

Education is critical in determining an individual's ability to move up or down the social ladder (Duncan, 2018). It is widely recognised as a crucial driver of social mobility, with higher levels of education linked to improved job prospects, career advancement, and socioeconomic status across diverse regions and cultures (Jury et al., 2017; Aydemir & Yazici, 2019; Bathmaker, 2017). Individuals with advanced education and skills are better positioned to secure higher-skilled occupations, leading to upward social mobility (Luchinskaya & Dickinson, 2019).

In East and South Asia, including China, higher educational attainment correlates with significantly higher earnings and job security (Fakhruddin, 2020; Song & Zhou, 2019). Studies indicate that postgraduate degree holders earn considerably more than their undergraduate counterparts, and education remains a critical means for improving socioeconomic standing (Suga, 2017; Jian et al., 2018). In China, economic reforms since the late 1970s have reinforced the role of education in shaping career prospects and overall social mobility (Wang, 2019).

Urbanisation and migration from rural to urban areas have further enhanced access to quality education and job opportunities, facilitating upward mobility (Lan & Zhou, 2021).

The link between education and income is particularly relevant in the context of female leaders in Inner Mongolia. According to the Inner Mongolia civil servant salary standard and adjustment plan (Organization Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, 2020), staff with higher education levels are more likely to enter leadership roles and earn significantly higher salaries. Bachelor's and postgraduate degree holders can access higher-paying positions, whereas diploma holders typically earn less. This suggests that education is a powerful tool for improving socioeconomic status and a critical factor in career progression for women in the government sector.

Overall, the literature underscores the robust connection between education and social mobility globally, emphasising that access to quality education can break barriers to occupational advancement. In regions like Inner Mongolia, where female leadership is still evolving, expanding educational opportunities for women is critical to enhancing their upward mobility and addressing income disparities. Future research should explore the nuances of education's impact on social mobility among women in government sectors, particularly within the unique cultural and socioeconomic context of Inner Mongolia.

Social Mobility and Religion

The connection between social mobility and religion is complex and multifaceted, varying across different societies, cultures, and religious traditions (Fakhruddin & Noor, 2020). Religion often shapes social norms, cultural values, and social networks, indirectly influencing social mobility by shaping attitudes toward education, work, and social interactions (Gemar, 2022; Beeghley, 2015). Religious traditions may encourage education and economic pursuits, increasing social mobility among their adherents (Becker, Pfaff & Rubin, 2016). For instance, some religious groups place a high value on education, which can lead to better job opportunities and increased social mobility (Cantoni, 2015). However, different beliefs and practices within religious communities can produce varied outcomes regarding social mobility (Keister & Sherkat, 2014).

Historically, religion has facilitated and impeded social mobility depending on the cultural context. Certain religious ideologies, such as the divine right of kings or the caste system, have enforced rigid social hierarchies, limiting upward mobility for specific groups (Bendix, 1978; Berreman, 1972; Burhani, 2017). Conversely, religious institutions such as monasteries and convents have sometimes provided alternative avenues for education and career advancement, particularly in medieval Europe (Cassidy-Welch, 2001; Farmer & Rosenwein, 2018). In these contexts, religious organisations offered individuals, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the opportunity to improve their social standing through access to education and work.

In modern times, the relationship between religion and social mobility remains complex. For example, religious affiliation can limit social mobility in some societies by imposing restrictions on education or economic participation. In contrast, in others, religion may serve as a bridge to social advancement through community networks and support (Gemar, 2022). Religious institutions continue influencing individual and collective attitudes toward work and

education, shaping the opportunities available to different social groups (Keister & Sherkat, 2014).

In China, the role of religion in social mobility is less pronounced due to the state's emphasis on secularism and political ideology. However, traditional cultural and religious values, such as Confucianism, continue to influence social attitudes related to work, education, and social mobility (Lau, 2017). Confucian values, which emphasise respect for hierarchy and education, have historically shaped the social mobility of individuals within Chinese society (Gupta, 2000). However, the impact of religion on social mobility in regions such as Inner Mongolia remains underexplored and warrants further research, particularly about female leaders in government positions.

The literature suggests that social mobility and religion are highly context-dependent. While some religious traditions promote values that enhance social mobility, others may reinforce hierarchies that limit upward movement. This nuanced relationship underscores the need to carefully examine the cultural and historical contexts in which religion operates. Future research should explore how religion interacts with other factors, such as education, government policies, and gender, to influence social mobility, particularly in under-researched areas like Inner Mongolia.

Social Mobility and The Role of Family Institution

Social mobility, the ability to move between social classes, is heavily influenced by the family institution (Fakhruddin & Noor, 2020; Marginson, 2016). Family structures, values, and resources shape social mobility opportunities (Assari, 2018). Research has shown that social mobility can be facilitated through parental awareness and involvement in their children's lives (Devi, 2014; Fakhruddin & Noor, 2020; Hilal, 2016; Muller & Kerbow, 2018). Fakhruddin and Noor (2020) found that family factors, such as parents' awareness and discouragement, were significantly linked to a higher percentage of children achieving better occupational outcomes. Active parental involvement, characterised by awareness and encouragement, is crucial for shaping children's career trajectories. Therefore, parental engagement is essential for ensuring successful social mobility across generations and within a single generation (LaRocque, Kleiman & Darling, 2011).

Parental involvement in children's education at school and home is particularly emphasised (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). This includes assisting with homework, maintaining solid relationships with teachers, consulting on academic performance, and participating in school activities (Bursali & Öz, 2017). Such active engagement fosters a supportive learning environment that enhances children's educational success and future career prospects.

In addition, the dynamics of family relationships, such as parent-child attachment, parental support, family cohesion, expressiveness, and the presence of conflict, also influence career outcomes (Lustig & Xu, 2017). Positive family interactions, powerful parent-child bonds and cohesive family environments are closely tied to better career-related outcomes.

Family resources are another critical factor affecting social mobility (Erola, Jalonen & Lehti, 2016). Families with greater access to quality education, social networks, and job opportunities are better positioned to help their children climb the social ladder (Marginson,

2016). These resources provide a competitive advantage, enabling upward mobility with greater ease. In particular, access to education and social networks empowers families to support their children's upward mobility efforts more effectively.

The body of literature reviewed underscores the family's essential role in determining social mobility outcomes. Active parental involvement, family dynamics, and access to resources such as education and networks are critical determinants of an individual's ability to move up the social hierarchy. This comprehensive view highlights that family influence extends beyond education alone, encompassing emotional and social development vital for career success. The stark disparities in resources among families reveal that those from wealthier backgrounds have a significant advantage in terms of social mobility.

Given these findings, there is a strong case for policies that support families, particularly in terms of education and resource allocation, to promote social mobility. The emphasis on parental engagement in education also points to the critical role of schools and educators in fostering collaboration with families. The literature presents a compelling argument for the family's pivotal role in social mobility, advocating for holistic family support and targeted policies to bridge opportunity gaps.

Social Mobility and the Role of Government

Governments promote social mobility by providing resources, creating programs, job opportunities, and financial aid (Fakhruddin & Noor, 2020; Major & Machin, 2018). Investments in education, such as public schools and financial aid programs, are particularly impactful in enabling upward mobility, especially for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Mitchell, Leachman, Masterson & Waxman, 2018; Hutchings, 2021). Equal access to education and reduced disparities equip individuals with the skills necessary for advancement.

Vocational training is another tool governments use to enhance employability, bridging the gap between low- and high-skilled jobs (Marope, Chakroun & Holmes, 2015; Zwart & Baker, 2018). Safe and affordable housing provides individuals with better access to education, employment, and social networks, thus contributing to social mobility (Richardson & Fletcher, 2020). Financial assistance programs, such as grants and scholarships, help individuals escape poverty (Lee & Morris, 2016; Berg, 2016). These strategies highlight the need for inclusive government policies that address various population needs for maximum impact.

In China, poverty alleviation programs and infrastructure investments have reduced inequality and promoted social mobility (The State Council of PRC, 2010). However, factors like personal connections (guanxi) and the household registration system (hukou) significantly influence career advancement and access to resources, often exacerbating disparities between urban and rural residents (Ren & Chadee, 2017; Hung, 2022; Vortherms, 2019). Traditional cultural values, particularly the emphasis on education and hard work, also shape social mobility (Li, 2018).

While the literature extensively covers these factors, there is limited research on the specific experiences of female government leaders in Inner Mongolia. The region's unique sociopolitical and cultural dynamics, alongside rapid socio-economic changes in China, likely

influence these women's social mobility and career trajectories. This research aims to explore these experiences, offering insights into gender dynamics in leadership, regional career advancement differences, and the interplay of traditional and contemporary factors affecting social mobility.

Social Mobility and the Role of Cultural Traditions and Values

Cultural traditions and values refer to the beliefs, norms, and practices passed down through generations, shaping how individuals perceive the world, interact with others, and make decisions (Smith, Florence & Maria, 2018; Cain, Surbone, Elk & Kagawa-Singer, 2018). These cultural elements significantly impact social mobility, influencing individual mindsets and available resources (Fakhruddin, 2020; Manstead, 2018). Understanding a society's cultural framework helps explain existing social stratifications and their effects on mobility (Desai, Dodor & Carroll, 2020).

Cultural norms and values play a dual role in shaping social mobility—they influence individual identity and determine access to opportunities. For example, values passed through generations create a sense of belonging, directly affecting one's identity and social roles, which in turn influences mobility (Di Pietro, Guglielmetti, Mugion & Renzi, 2018; Galliher, McLean & Syed, 2017). Fakhruddin and Noor (2020) found that Islamic and Malay's values emphasise harmony and *ahala*. Such beliefs guide individuals' social behaviours and aspirations.

Mindsets shaped by cultural traditions can either support or hinder upward mobility. Those with progressive values may be more likely to seek social advancement (Browman, Destin, Kearney & Levine, 2019), demonstrating the influence of culture on mobility trajectories. Cultural norms can, therefore, act as both barriers and facilitators of social mobility by shaping personal outlooks and societal expectations.

In summary, cultural traditions and values are deeply embedded in social structures and are crucial in defining social mobility pathways. They influence how individuals view their potential for upward movement and the opportunities available to them. Fakhruddin and Noor's (2020) study of Islamic and Malay values illustrates how cultural beliefs can encourage positive social behaviours and foster mobility. This dynamic interplay between culture, identity, and mobility highlights the need for culturally informed policies and programs. More research is needed to explore how different cultural frameworks impact social mobility across various contexts.

Social Mobility and Individual Attitude

Individual attitudes encompass personal beliefs, feelings, and evaluations shaped by personal experiences, socialisation, cultural influences, and cognitive processes (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018; Evans & Furlong, 2019). These attitudes, which can be positive, negative, or ambivalent, play a significant role in social mobility by influencing motivation, ambition, and resilience (John, Stoebenau, Ritter, Edmeades, Balvin & UNICEF, 2017).

A positive attitude drives individuals to set ambitious goals, work diligently, and pursue advancement opportunities (Fakhruddin & Noor, 2020; Liu, 2019). It aids in resilience, helping individuals overcome challenges and setbacks (Neenan, 2017). Moreover, a growth mindset,

the belief that abilities can be developed through effort, complements a positive attitude by fostering a commitment to personal and professional growth (Dweck & Yeager, 2019; Bess, 2020).

Additionally, a positive attitude enhances self-confidence, which is crucial for seizing opportunities and pursuing goals assertively (Thomson & Jaque, 2019). It also improves interpersonal skills, facilitating the formation and maintenance of networks and relationships essential for career advancement (Nowland, Necka & Cacioppo, 2018). Optimistic individuals are perceived as approachable and cooperative, attracting mentors and sponsors who can provide access to further opportunities (Serpell, Harrison, Dower & Cook, 2023).

Overall, individual attitudes critically shape one's ability to navigate and ascend the social ladder. Positive attitudes, in particular, catalyse social mobility by fostering motivation, resilience, self-confidence, and networking capabilities. The importance of individual attitudes in personal development and upward mobility highlights the need for environments that nurture these qualities, especially in challenging circumstances. Encouraging positive mindsets is crucial for societal progress and individual advancement, requiring supportive policies and programs that enable individuals to effectively cultivate and apply positive attitudes.

Challenges of Social Mobility
Social mobility challenges refer to the obstacles individuals face when transitioning from one socio-economic class to another (Crul et al., 2017). These barriers include income inequality, limited access to education, and insufficient social capital (Castelli, 2018; Mijs, 2021; Wiltshire & Stevinson, 2018). A primary challenge is the persistence of significant income inequality within societies (Kraus et al., 2017). When wealth is concentrated among a few, it restricts access to resources and opportunities for upward mobility, creating barriers that prevent individuals from climbing the social ladder (Piff et al., 2018). Education, another critical factor in social mobility, equips individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for improved job prospects (Cole, 2022). However, limited access to quality education, particularly in marginalised communities, perpetuates cycles of disadvantage and hampers upward mobility (Jia et al., 2021). Geographic and income disparities exacerbate this issue, as those from low-income backgrounds or remote areas often lack access to educational resources, leading to unequal opportunities (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Makridakis, 2017).

Further complicating the picture, social and behavioural challenges can impede intergenerational mobility. Fakhruddin and Noor (2020) highlighted the detrimental effects of social problems such as laziness, disrespect, jealousy, political disagreements, drug abuse, and dependency on elderly parents. These societal issues weaken social mobility by fostering negative behaviours that hinder progress. Social capital, defined as the networks, relationships, and resources available to individuals, plays a pivotal role in social mobility (Claridge, 2018). Those with access to solid social capital—such as individuals with influential family connections—are more likely to ascend the social hierarchy (Dickinson et al., 2017). Conversely, those from disadvantaged backgrounds often face limited social capital, which hinders their access to vital networks and opportunities for career advancement (Gericke et al., 2018).

Overall, social mobility challenges are deeply rooted in societal structures and manifest across multiple dimensions, including income inequality, educational access, and social capital disparities. Geographic and income-related barriers to education perpetuate inequality, while societal issues, such as social and behavioural challenges, exacerbate the problem. Limited social capital among underprivileged groups further restricts access to career-enhancing networks. These interconnected challenges highlight the need for holistic policies that address income disparities, educational inequities, and social capital gaps. Comprehensive strategies that tackle these issues are essential for creating systemic change and ensuring equitable opportunities for social mobility, particularly for disadvantaged groups.

The challenges of social mobility in China reflect the complexity of its rapidly evolving society (He & Qian, 2017). Government policies, such as the household registration (hukou) system and persistent gender inequality, significantly impact social mobility (Li, 2021). The hukou system divides the population into urban and rural residents and restricts access to resources and opportunities for rural individuals, contributing to stark urban-rural divides and limiting upward mobility (Hung, 2022; Vortherms, 2019). While urban residents enjoy various benefits, class differences within urban areas further complicate mobility (Li, 2021).

Regional disparities in China also pose challenges to social mobility. Life in the suburban areas of major cities like Beijing or Shanghai differs vastly from that in rural or smaller towns. These regional factors and hukou origins create divergent mobility patterns and trends (Li, 2021). China's educational system presents additional barriers to social mobility. Li (2022) explores the urban-rural education gap and the influence of family economic and cultural capital on social mobility. Individuals from privileged family backgrounds, particularly those with high-ranking cadre status, often enjoy distinct advantages in education and career opportunities (Li, 2021). These disparities further reinforce social stratification.

While existing literature extensively examines the impact of China's hukou system on social mobility, particularly concerning the rural-urban divide, there is a notable gap in understanding how these dynamics specifically affect intragenerational social mobility among female government leaders, especially in unique regions like Inner Mongolia. This study explores the challenges and opportunities faced by female government leaders in Inner Mongolia, focusing on how the hukou system and regional socio-political factors shape their career trajectories and social mobility over their lifetimes.

Methodology
This literature review takes a systematic approach to exploring the phenomenon of social mobility in China. It focuses on the factors influencing social mobility, such as education, occupation, family institutions, government roles, cultural values, and individual attitudes. Additionally, it emphasises the unique challenges female leaders, particularly in Inner Mongolia, face in the context of these structural and socio-cultural factors.

Research Strategy and Data Sources
The review was conducted by identifying, analysing, and synthesising journal articles, books, reports, and academic theses on social mobility in China. It mainly focused on studies published after 2010, reflecting the country's rapid economic growth and policy shifts. The

following databases were utilised for sourcing the literature: Google Scholar, JSTOR, Web of Science, Scopus, and China National Knowledge Infrastructure(CNKI).

Key search terms included combinations of "social mobility," "China," "economic reform," "education and mobility," "rural-urban divide," "gender and leadership," "Inner Mongolia," and "female leaders."

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria
The following criteria guided the selection of sources for this review:
- **Inclusion Criteria**:
  - Studies focused on social mobility worldwide, particularly in China, and emphasised the post-reform era (1978 onwards).
  - Research examines social mobility through education, occupation, gender, family, and government intervention.
  - Studies that address regional disparities, such as the rural-urban divide, or focus specifically on Inner Mongolia or female leadership.
- **Exclusion Criteria**:
  - Research that does not explicitly address social mobility or related concepts.
  - Research conducted before 2000 provides foundational insights into the historical context of social mobility in China.
  - Studies that examine social mobility do not consider the factors of education, occupation, gender, family, or government intervention.

Data Analysis
A thematic analysis was conducted to synthesise the literature. Key themes were identified from the literature, including the role of education, occupation, family institutions, government policies, cultural values, and individual attitudes in shaping social mobility. Each theme was analysed concerning how it facilitates or inhibits upward mobility in China, particularly for women in government positions.

Specific attention was paid to how factors—like regional disparities, the hukou system, and cultural traditions—interact with gender, focusing on female government leaders in Inner Mongolia. The review also considers the implications of these factors on broader social mobility trends and policies aimed at promoting equality.

Limitations
This review is limited to studies published in English and Mandarin, which may exclude relevant literature published in other languages. Additionally, while the review focuses on social mobility in China, it primarily explores intragenerational mobility among female government leaders in Inner Mongolia, potentially limiting generalizability to other regions or sectors.

Conclusion
The literature on social mobility in China highlights a dynamic landscape shaped by economic reforms, industrialisation, and urbanisation. While these developments have created new opportunities for upward mobility, disparities persist, particularly between rural and urban

areas. Access to education remains crucial for social advancement, with higher education enabling upward movement.

Occupational mobility plays a key role in social mobility, with advanced education and specialised skills providing better opportunities. Yet, access to high-status jobs is uneven, particularly in less-developed regions. Beyond education, factors such as family structure, cultural traditions, and government policies also influence mobility. This review calls for targeted interventions in education and vocational training to ensure equal access to leadership positions and promote social mobility for all.

However, the literature is lacking regarding the intragenerational mobility of female government leaders, particularly in Inner Mongolia. Understanding how these women navigate their careers is essential for addressing gender equality in leadership roles.

In summary, while much has been explored regarding the general dynamics of social mobility and occupational advancement, a gap remains in understanding how these forces uniquely impact female government leaders, particularly in underrepresented regions like Inner Mongolia. Future research should focus on these under-explored groups to better understand the factors influencing their career trajectories and social mobility.

Furthermore, challenges related to social mobility—such as income inequality, limited access to education, and insufficient social capital—are especially pronounced in marginalised and disadvantaged communities. The hukou system, regional disparities, and educational inequities exacerbate these issues, particularly in rural areas. Family background and social capital also play critical roles in perpetuating or mitigating these barriers, often benefiting privileged families while leaving disadvantaged groups with fewer opportunities for upward mobility.

The literature review underscores the need to explore further how these challenges affect the intragenerational social mobility of female government leaders in regions like Inner Mongolia. Understanding the intersection of regional socio-political dynamics, such as the hukou system, with these leaders' personal and professional development will offer new insights into the gendered mobility experience in China's rapidly changing social landscape. Ultimately, this research has the potential to inform more equitable policies that foster inclusive social mobility for all citizens, particularly for women in leadership positions in less-studied regions.

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