

Research Article

Breaking the norms: Media visibility effect on promoting women's leadership in Morocco

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ABSTRACT

In Morocco, women face significant barriers to leadership roles due to entrenched gender norms and cultural expectations. However, social media and increased media visibility offer new opportunities to challenge these norms and promote women's leadership. This study evaluates the impact of media visibility on women's leadership advancement in Morocco, exploring how female leaders use social media to overcome traditional obstacles and alter gender norms. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews, the research investigates the challenges women leaders encounter and the importance of visibility in exerting influence online. Findings reveal that media visibility is crucial in challenging gender stereotypes, providing women with a platform to showcase their leadership abilities and inspiring others to pursue leadership roles. The study identifies key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of media visibility strategies, such as authenticity, engagement with diverse audiences and alignment with broader social change movements. However, it also highlights challenges like online harassment, cultural pushback and the need for organizational support to leverage media visibility for women's leadership promotion fully.

Keywords: Media visibility, Women's leadership, Morocco, Social media, Social change.

INTRODUCTION

Despite efforts to promote gender equality, Moroccan women encounter significant challenges in securing leadership positions in organizations in different fields. Cultural norms and societal expectations often serve as formidable obstacles to their advancement, according to Pas and Aaldering gender-biased myths and prejudices have made it difficult for women in leadership positions to be taken seriously and they are often subjected to intrusive scrutiny of their looks and personal lives rather than their work (Al Hameli A et al, 2023).

Nevertheless, social media platforms have provided women with a new avenue for contesting traditional norms, enhancing their visibility and promoting their leadership capabilities. This study aims to examine the impact of media visibility on the promotion of women's

leadership in Morocco. By studying how women leaders utilize social media platforms to overcome barriers and break gender norms, this research seeks to uncover the strategies and challenges involved in leveraging media visibility to promote leadership. Indeed, in Moroccan media, women are often portrayed as wives or mothers rather than as powerful leaders, which creates an obstacle because it perpetuates gender stereotypes and limits the visibility of women in leadership roles (Boyer EJ et al, 2023).

However, social media provides a powerful platform for female leaders and entrepreneurs to promote their image positively. By having full control over their representation on social media, women can challenge these stereotypes and showcase their strengths as leaders. Understanding the role of visibility in promoting women's leadership is critical for advancing gender equality and fostering

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inclusive leadership cultures in Moroccan organizations and society. The introduction of social media has fundamentally transformed the way individuals communicate, consume information and interact with each other (Popal F et al, 2021).

Therefore, for women leaders in Morocco, social media platforms offer unprecedented opportunities to amplify their voices, share their experiences and connect with diverse audiences. By strategically leveraging media visibility, female leaders can challenge gender stereotypes, inspire others and effect meaningful social change. However, while social media holds great potential as a tool for promoting women's leadership, it also presents unique challenges and considerations. Online harassment, cultural backlash and organizational support are among the factors that can impact the effectiveness of media visibility strategies for women leaders in Morocco. Understanding these challenges and identifying best practices for navigating them is essential for maximizing the impact of media visibility on promoting women's leadership and advancing gender equality. In summary, this study seeks to explore the complex interplay between media visibility and women's leadership promotion in Morocco. By examining the strategies, challenges and outcomes associated with leveraging visibility in social media, this research aims to contribute to our understanding of how women leaders can harness the power of social media to break gender norms, inspire change and drive progress toward gender equality in Moroccan society.

Theoretical development

The theoretical framework of women's leadership and digital media visibility encompasses various theories and concepts from fields such as feminist theory, visibility theory, social identity theory and leadership theories.

Gender roles and leadership theory: Gender encompasses the cultural distinctions between males and females in society, including variations in characteristics, attributes, roles and expected behaviors, which apply to both genders. Gender traditions and roles play a significant role in social obligations and strategic performance. Leaders are individuals who hold high-ranking positions within an organization, whether in a group, business, government or profession. Leadership roles are often based on gender roles, but research shows that gender can impact leadership effectiveness. Historically, gender has been classified into three categories: Male, female and androgynous. However, social stereotypes have perpetuated the notion that men are better suited for leadership roles than women. Recent studies have

demonstrated that both men and women possess valuable leadership qualities when provided with the necessary resources and support. Unfortunately, women are often overlooked for leadership roles despite their qualifications, according to research conducted by Appelbaum, Audet and Miller (Powell GN et al, 2002).

Gender roles can shape the expectations and responsibilities of women in leadership, but they should not limit their potential for success. With the right opportunities and support, both men and women can excel in leadership roles. Feminist leaders are motivated by fairness, justice and equity, according to Barton and strive to keep gender, race, social class, sexual orientation and ability issues at the forefront of their daily work. Clover et al.'s research suggests that feminist leadership should be collaborative and aim to bring about social and institutional change. Nevertheless, several studies have highlighted women's strengths in leadership characteristics. For instance, Grisoni and Beeby noted differences in leadership behaviors and characteristics, finding that women excel in empathizing, evaluating employees, listening, motivating others, forming teams, interviewing, negotiating, leading change, managing conflict, conducting meetings and counseling others. Conversely, male leaders were found to be particularly adept at interviewing staff, disciplining, managing conflict, counseling others, making decisions, solving problems, negotiating and conducting meetings. Foldy observed that women's primary leadership behaviors include managing, facilitating and influencing attitudes, while men's behaviors are characterized by exploration, interaction and processing attitudes. Therefore, this article will utilize Srilatha Batliwala's feminist leadership theory, which highlights the need to integrate feminist ideals into leadership to promote social transformation and gender fairness. The theory put forth by Batliwala advocates for a leadership approach that questions traditional power hierarchies prioritizes inclusivity and addresses systemic injustices. It also underscores the significance of conducting community-based research that incorporates local perspectives and power dynamics. This theory is particularly relevant to this article as it sheds light on why gender-based representations are most impactful when customized to the unique requirements of individual communities (Alase A, 2017).

Female leadership identity: The theories of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu offer valuable insights into the ways in which our social surroundings shape our perceptions and expressions of reality and social entities. According to these theorists, the way we act and think

varies across different discourses. Foucault's power/knowledge concept suggests that language can be utilized as a tool to manipulate and regulate behavior, while Bourdieu's habitus concept highlights the role of language in establishing social status and identity. As a result, cultural norms and language can reinforce female leadership identity, with terms such as "controller" and "diva" perpetuating the stereotype that women are not suited to leadership roles. Moreover, social identity theory suggests that individuals' self-concept and social identity are shaped by their affiliations with specific groups. Thus, societal depictions and stereotypes influence women's self-perceptions of leadership (Braun V et al, 2006).

Moreover, media visibility plays a critical role in shaping women leaders' self-image and perceptions of their leadership roles, as described by social identity theory. For instance, media representations of women leaders can either challenge or reinforce existing stereotypes and norms. According to identity-based motivation theory, David de Cremer et al., individuals are inclined to act in ways that are consistent with their self-concept and social identities. In the context of women's leadership, female leaders may be motivated to exhibit behaviors that align with their identity as competent and capable leaders, while also dealing with societal expectations and gender norms that could influence their self-image and leadership behaviors. In this regard, understanding how media visibility and social identity processes interact is crucial for women's career development. However, it is crucial to take into account not only an individual's self-concept and social identity but also the external factors influencing their behavior. For instance, women might feel pressured to adhere to specific gender stereotypes to gain acceptance in leadership roles or they might face disadvantages due to a scarcity of mentorship or networking opportunities compared to their male colleagues. Therefore, I choose to use social identity theory to grasp a larger understanding of this phenomenon (Fereday J, 2006).

Media visibility theory: Foucault and Bourdieu have shown that our social environments shape our perceptions and articulations of reality and social entities. The way we act and think differs across discourses. Foucault's power/knowledge concept implies that language can manipulate and control behavior, while Bourdieu's habitus concept indicates that language establishes social status and identity. Consequently, female leadership identity is shaped by cultural norms and reinforced through language, with terms like "controller" and "diva" used to depict women leaders, perpetuating the stereotype that women are unsuited to leadership. Social identity theory posits

that individuals' self-concept and social identity stem from their group affiliations. Thus, women's self-perception of leadership is influenced by societal depictions and stereotypes. The media's portrayal of traditional gender roles can reinforce gender stereotypes, which negatively impacts women's attitudes and perceptions (Kallio H et al, 2016).

Research by Geis, Brown, Walstedt and Porter shows that women exposed to stereotypical representation tend to highlight more domestic duties and have higher aspirations for accomplishment than those in traditional roles. However, traditional representation does not alter women's performance goals but activates gender stereotypes, affecting their ambitions for success, particularly in leadership positions. According to Yoder, Christopher and Holmes exposure to gender-stereotypical representation can lead women to choose follower roles over leadership roles due to concerns about confirming unfavorable stereotypes in male-dominated fields. However, many factors can encourage women to pursue career advancement, according to Arena et al., Hillman et industry type and customized factors influence female participation in senior positions, including the company's culture, network connections and strategic orientation. Moreover, media can be a vital factor in influencing women to pursue leadership, which it enhances transparency and shapes the image and reputation of managers and dominating owners (Nowell LS et al, 2017). This perspective holds that the media serves as an effective tool, forming opinions on managers and entrepreneurs which shape public opinion and affect the perceptions of a wider audience. How managers and entrepreneurs are portrayed in the media greatly affects their reputation and the results that follow. Leaders who are well-known in the media usually get greater attention and are seen as better representatives. Their reputation and general opinion within the sector may benefit from this greater visibility. Expanding on this, we put forward the notion that when female leaders use digital media as a tool to attract greater visibility, this can inspire more women to pursue leadership roles while also improving their public image and reputation in Morocco. This article will also employ media visibility theory to examine how the representation and portrayal of individuals or groups in the media influence their visibility, perception and social significance within society. While qualitative research exists, further investigation is required into the ways women leaders from various professions in Morocco utilize social media to ascend to higher positions. The frequent use of quantitative methods has resulted in many studies concentrating exclusively on social media

platforms and employing samples of female employees from similar professions, thus creating gaps in academic research. Based on this rationale, we present the following hypothesis:

H1. Increased social media visibility of female leaders leads to a rise in gender diversity among higher positions in Morocco.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design

The design of this study utilized a qualitative approach as the most suitable method for exploring women's experiences in leadership and their engagement with social media. Qualitative research prioritizes the significance of words over numerical data in the collection and analysis of information. This type of research allows investigators to concentrate on comprehending individuals as embodied, situated entities, acknowledging that they may encounter inconsistencies and unforeseen elements. The research comprised six semi-structured interviews, each lasting 40 minutes, which underwent thematic analysis to discern and scrutinize various themes.

Participants

The sample included six women serving as managers, entrepreneurs and administrative officers, recruited across various professional fields in Morocco. The participants were selected *via* opportunity sampling for meeting the inclusion criteria: Being women, aged 25-45 years, possessing diverse experiences and being active on social media. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used for all participants (Figure 1).

KHAOUILA 26 years old 4 years of experience education program coordinator	Asma 37 years old 10 years of experience Manager of a civil engineering department	Rita 35 years old 12 years of experience Technical and method manager
Khouloud 32 years old 5 years of experience Manager of a Software engineering department	Layla 48 years old 18 years of experience Coordinator for Equality, Parity, and Women's Rights	Nada 45 years old 3 years of experience entrepreneur in the fashion industry

Figure 1. Pseudonyms of all the participants.

Data collection

Participants were invited to engage in a semi-structured interview. This method was deemed most suitable as it concentrates on the participants' experiences, emotions, thoughts and feelings. Its flexible nature allows the researcher to delve deeply into complex issues, such as barriers encountered and the impact of social media. Additionally, it facilitates a reciprocal interaction between

the participant and interviewer, enabling the interviewer to pose follow-up questions in response to the participant's answers. The interview protocol included open-ended questions about the challenges of women's leadership and social media usage. For instance, participants were asked: "What are the main challenges you have faced as a woman leader?"

The research process

The study was initiated with ethical approval from the University of Oviedo before data collection. Participants were recruited *via* opportunity sampling and were fully briefed on the inclusion criteria before consenting to participate. The discussion topics were derived from existing quantitative and qualitative research on social media and female leadership. These topics facilitated in-depth discussions among participants about their experiences with female leadership within a conservative society and how they use social media to enhance their public persona. As the discussion progressed, additional questions were introduced to delve deeper into these subjects. Participants were provided with information sheets and signed consent forms before the interviews. Each interview was carefully scheduled and lasted 40 minutes. Conducted online, the interviews were recorded with a mobile device and subsequently translated from Arabic and French into English for transcription and analysis.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized for data analysis. This qualitative approach is crucial for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data. Its selection was due to its effectiveness in tackling qualitative research questions and its capacity to enable researchers to examine diverse perspectives from a wide range of female leaders on social media. It highlights both contrasts and parallels. Thematic analysis aided in interpreting the connection between social media and the evolution of female leadership, providing rich, detailed insights. The method adhered to the steps described by Braun and Clarke, which included analyzing transcripts, generating codes (e.g., attitudes), and identifying, reviewing and defining themes (e.g., digitally altered images). These steps were instrumental in addressing the research question and enriching the discourse on the growth of female leadership and social media in Morocco. Additionally, the inductive approach was employed to grasp the intricacies and subtleties of women's experiences with media exposure and leadership in Morocco, avoiding the imposition of predetermined categories or biases.

Ethical considerations

The present study was approved by the Gender and Diversity Department of the University of Oviedo. The research methodology adhered to the ethical guidelines established by the institutional review board.

To ensure informed consent, all participants were provided with standardized information sheets that detailed the nature of the study. Subsequently, participants were required to provide their written consent after demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the study objectives. To maintain anonymity, participants were assigned pseudonyms throughout the study. Also, the researcher was the only individual with access to the password-protected database, where all the interview transcripts were stored. Participants were advised that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and were encouraged not to answer any questions that elicited negative emotions. Furthermore, the study's informative sheet reiterated the right of participants to withdraw from the study at any time. Before the start of the interview, participants were provided with a debriefing speech that explained the nature of the study in more detail and thanked them for their cooperation.

The study's question, which guided the data collection process, was:

To what extent can digital media visibility promote female leaders' image and serve as a tool to empower aspiring female leaders in Morocco?

RESULTS

Findings and analysis

Thematic analysis revealed four key themes within the data set, perception and stereotype, challenges and barriers, intersectionality and diversity and female leadership development. The letters provide a deeper insight into women's leadership experiences and their interaction with social media. This section addresses the research question: How effectively can digital media visibility enhance the image of female leaders and empower future female leaders in Morocco?

Theme 1: Perceptions and stereotypes

This theme emerged as significant, with participants often noting that negative stereotypes influenced their self-perception, leading to a downward spiral. Despite this, they were cognizant that the portrayed image was not a true representation of Moroccan women. Participants were knowledgeable about the stereotypical perception of women's competencies and authority abilities. They also recognized that factors such as society, religion, family

and media played a role that significantly affected shaping societal attitudes towards women leaders.

'It's rare when we see women as stakeholders in the field, they rarely create pedagogies or design curriculum. Personally, when someone learns that I am a leader in my domain, they try to undermine my duties and responsibilities because of my appearance while neglecting my educational background, knowledge and skills. And as a woman, I find it amusing to prove people wrong when they tend to judge me just for my gender' (Khawla, administrative within educational institutions) 'People already consider that the success of women is a rather surprising event unlike men and not giving women the chance to occupy masculine positions because of stereotypes' (Rita) 'One particular experience that has stayed with me is my recent recruitment for a project in France. Given that my domain is predominantly male-dominated and my name is of Arabic origin, there seemed to be an expectation that someone else, most likely a man, would be filling the role. Therefore, when I introduced myself, it often elicited a surprised reaction.' (Khouloud) 'Civil engineering is a male-dominated role. But for me, it was an easy way to navigate with my management skills and my achievements in this field. But sometimes I face individuals who express their surprise based on stereotypes about how a woman can lead a department male dominated.' (Asmaa) 'As a woman entrepreneur, I often face stereotypical perceptions when initially communicating with suppliers. Many assume that I am just a worker with little experience and not the owner of the project.' (Nada)

Layla discussed the stereotypical views of her profession and emphasized the need for more women in senior political roles to challenge these stereotypes. However, she believes that the patriarchal structure of Moroccan society makes this goal difficult to achieve. According to Srilatha Batliwala's theory, patriarchy dehumanizes men just as it denies women their humanity. Therefore, we require a counter-stereotypical representation that will oppose and challenge these stereotypes to instigate social change and attain gender justice. Layla discussed these stereotypes that hinder women's career progress:

"Due to the nature of my job, men often expect women to fulfill my role, but that in itself is a stereotype. I think the patriarchal dominance and the stereotypical portrayal of women in Morocco have led to the exclusion and marginalization of women, preventing them from making decisions or leading in governance without the presence of a man. Not to forget that society often perceives women as less competent or ambitious than men and there is a prevalent expectation for women to prioritize their

caregiving and homemaking roles above their professional goals." (Layla).

Theme 2: Challenges and barriers for female leaders

The perceptions of family, friends, peers and partners can significantly influence one's self-image, either positively or negatively. Let alone the perception of society. Participants expressed their struggles with career-related challenges, detailing aspects they have faced or continue to face. Most opinions were seen as negative and damaging, with individuals internalizing comments, which in turn led to a negative view of their leadership abilities, feeling like 'intruders,' 'incompetent' and 'unsafe.' Through this theme, we gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges that women leaders face and the efforts needed to overcome them.

'The main challenge I faced was that there was limited access to opportunities as a woman. Having male-dominated top management roles who didn't believe that women could have leadership roles. I overcome these challenges by believing in myself (having high self-esteem helps to overcome challenges) and determination.' (Asmaa).

'The main challenges I have faced are work-life balance, gender roles and harassment. By the way, I still haven't overcome them' (Khawla).

"To be seen as having lesser capabilities as a man and thus having to put twice the effort in my work compared to my male colleagues, is a challenge that I face. Additionally, the expression on the faces of my male colleagues when I succeed in my work shows that they are surprised by the success of women in masculine roles due to stereotypes' (Rita).

'As a manager in software engineering, I had to deal with a few challenges. The first one was gender bias, which is pretty common in this field for women. The second challenge was the lack of representation. Finally, there was the issue of balancing my job responsibilities with my duties as a daughter and wife' (Kholoud).

'Overcoming fear and achieving independence were significant challenges for me. Building confidence in my choices and owning up to my actions became crucial. I also worked on enhancing my communication and problem-solving abilities, which are vital for running my business. Additionally, self-motivation and effective time management were skills I needed to cultivate' (Nada).

'For me, the hurdles I've encountered include administrative red tape, such as insufficient training for human resources, inadequate institutional functionality, local cultural norms, a bias towards administrative tasks and poor strategic planning by leaders of all genders,

along with outdated regulations. Equally critical is the need to overhaul and modernize systems to match the pace of ongoing change and development. Moreover, the media's failure to acknowledge the accomplishments of female leaders is a significant oversight' (Layla).

An explanation for this is provided in "An integrative model: Challenges women experience in organizations" by Enkhzul Galsanjigmed and Tomoki Sekiguchi. The model suggests that women encounter both internal and external challenges in their careers, which stem from various gender biases and stereotypes. External factors, Layla and Rita confront issues like insufficient leadership development opportunities, queen bee syndrome, fear of backlash and the double-bind dilemma. Meanwhile, Khawla, Nada, Asma and Kholoud faced internal factors, that might deal with the internalization of gender stereotypes, gender stereotype threats, tokenism and self-imposed gender stereotypes. Furthermore, the interplay between external and internal factors is both dynamic and reciprocal. Shifts in societal attitudes and expectations about gender roles can shape organizational and individual behaviors, while organizational efforts to foster gender equity can lead to wider societal changes.

According to Batliwala's theory 'For every great feminist leader we can think of from anywhere in the world, past and present, she has one thing in common: She led by challenging and disturbing the status quo.' This elucidates the transformative essence of women's leadership, which is frequently about fighting established power dynamics, societal conventions and oppressive frameworks. It also highlights the powerful role of feminist leadership in instigating social change and confronting oppressive systems. By courageously questioning established norms, feminist leaders forge a path toward progress, aiding in the global promotion of gender equality and human rights.

Theme 3: Visibility and awareness

Various perspectives emerged on the positive impact of social media on women's leadership. This notion was widespread among several participants, who shared that social media has motivated and inspired them to pursue higher positions and become more empowered by engaging in forums, building networks and embracing a more feminist leadership style. During the interview, all the individuals who took part in it agreed that social media has a significant impact on their lives. According to Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Causation theory, an individual's behavior can be directly and indirectly shaped by their environment. Social media platforms serve as such environments, affecting and being affected by the behaviors, attitudes and beliefs of their users.

Understanding this dynamic can empower women. By acknowledging the impact of social media on their behavior and learning how to leverage it to their benefit, women can enhance their visibility, connect with others, network effectively and share their professional journeys to encourage young women to aim for higher roles.

The participants believed that the influence of social media is prevalent in various aspects of their daily routine and is not limited to just a few areas. They felt that social media has a huge effect on the image of Moroccan women in general and its impact cannot be ignored. However, a few believed that it could be used as an effective tool to promote a positive image of women leaders, however, Kholoud argued that 'social media is not always an effective means to improve women's image as it can also serve as a tool for oppression. Women frequently face cyberbullying and online harassment, negatively impacting their mental health. Moreover, social media can propagate misinformation and stereotypes, further negatively influencing women's perceptions.'

Most of the participants expressed the opinion that social media platforms did not contribute significantly to their career advancement. However, according to Khawla 'When women leaders are highly visible on social media platforms, they serve as powerful role models for other women and girls.

Asma also suggested that 'social media is awesome for female leaders. They can connect with colleagues, mentors and supporters all over the world. These networks are great for working together, getting advice and growing their careers. It's especially helpful for overcoming the challenges of being a leader as women can create communities and support systems that go beyond physical borders. Virtual gatherings are super cool because they help women come together, feel empowered and support each other. This way, female leaders can tackle unique leadership obstacles with unity and strength.'

They found that social media, specifically LinkedIn, proved to be an effective tool for expanding their professional network and discovering job opportunities that matched their skill set. Additionally, they utilized social media to showcase their qualifications and expertise and communicate with other professionals in their field, which facilitates climbing the employment ladder.

Layla said that 'social media is both a blessing and a curse for women. On one hand, it allows them to flaunt their skills, accomplishments and leadership qualities on social media. But on the other hand, it creates a lot of pressure to maintain a perfect and polished online image all the time. This can be tiring and overwhelming, leading to burnout and mental health problems as women try to live up to

unrealistic expectations of being flawless and professional all the time.'

Nada pointed out that 'women, in general, often gain media attention during a scandal or downfall, which can deter young girls from aspiring to be managers or entrepreneurs. She emphasized the importance of social media visibility for women, as it allows them to control their own narrative and image.'

According to Lockwood, men's performance remained consistent regardless of whether they were exposed to male or female role models, suggesting that the gender of role models may not significantly impact men. This could be due to fewer gender-related barriers in their careers. Conversely, a successful woman might not be perceived as a threat because leadership stereotypes are predominantly masculine. It's crucial to acknowledge that simply exposing women to female role models is unlikely to solve the issue of women's underrepresentation in power. Since men still hold most senior leadership roles, proactive measures are necessary to increase the number of women in these positions, thereby enhancing their visibility to spread awareness about women's leadership in Morocco.

Theme 4: Impact on leadership development

Every participant mentioned the impact of social media on feminist leadership development throughout their interviews in terms of amplifying marginalized voices, fostering global connections and providing a platform for organizing and mobilizing feminist movements. This has been backed up by Batliwala's research, which indicates that social change is crucial in empowering feminist leaders by amplifying their messages, facilitating networking and collaboration on a global scale and enabling the mobilization of feminist movements for social change.

Khawla said 'it's important to recognize that media visibility alone does not determine success or leadership effectiveness. But we need to be more courageous take more risks and come on good terms with our cultural insecurities towards men who also happen to be normal human beings rather than superheroes who can achieve more than a woman can. We need to work to change the current mindset and fight against stereotypes. Vote for a secular state.'

Rita said 'understanding how women in Morocco can effectively shatter the glass ceiling and navigate the glass cliff phenomenon is indeed challenging. It's crucial for firms to deeply understand women's career trajectories, which are as diverse as those of men and not defined solely by gender. Overcoming the glass cliff requires addressing biases that set women up for failure in crisis

situations and instead, providing support and equitable opportunities for success.'

According to the glass cliff and the glass ceiling theory, the obstacles faced by women in the workplace are not always overt or explicit forms of discrimination. Instead, they are often subtle, systemic factors that hinder the progress and advancement of women in leadership roles. To address these phenomena, organizations need to provide adequate support and resources to female leaders and avoid placing them in certain positions solely based on gender.

On the other hand, (Kimberlé Crenshaw) intersectionality theory argues that individuals face compounded discrimination and oppression due to their intersecting social identities. For example, race, gender and class can all intersect to create unique challenges and obstacles for individuals. Additionally, (Alice Eagly and Linda Carli) suggest that gender stereotypes can have a significant impact on the perceived effectiveness of leadership. These stereotypes can affect not only how women are perceived in leadership roles but also how they perceive themselves, potentially leading to a lack of confidence and self-doubt that can hinder their professional progress.

Kholoud asserts that 'Women should set their goals, move forward with confidence and keep their self-esteem high. Organizations should provide leadership training to enhance skill-building and increase women's visibility, allowing them the chance to represent their companies as spokespersons.'

Nada said 'For women aspiring to higher positions or starting a business, perseverance is key. It's crucial not to give up, regardless of the challenges faced or opposition encountered.'

Asma stated that 'it is important to promote women in leadership roles within our education system, fostering a work environment that embraces diversity and establishing robust networks and support systems for women. It's crucial for women to be empowered, to support each other, and to persist in shattering stereotypes.'

Layla stated, "Women should embrace responsibility without hesitation. Being prepared to assume a leadership role is essential to success. At the institutional level, neither 'family name' nor 'foreign degree' should determine the selection criteria for women in higher positions. It is crucial to provide equal opportunities for all women."

This can be understood through the visibility and social change theory, in which media visibility can play a role in driving social change by raising awareness about important issues. According to Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw's "The agenda-setting function of mass media," media can influence the public agenda by

determining which issues receive the most attention in news coverage. This, in turn, can impact what people perceive to be the most pressing issues in society and influence their opinions and behaviors. When women utilize social media in a way that can enhance their image, we might be able to empower them to use the media to create a sense of solidarity and sisterhood, while also advocating for causes that are important to them. Additionally, social media can be used to encourage women to challenge existing norms and strive for greater equality.

DISCUSSION

In relation to the research, the overall themes accumulated in this study uncovered women's experiences and perceptions of social media as an effective tool. Commonalities were assessed across all participants and findings displayed that female predominantly faced similar barriers to reaching their current position. The positive side that was found among some participants was that social media was used to help them create a network and achieve leadership opportunities, which motivated them to become more active in their domain. Research by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, social identity theory, suggests that individuals derive part of their identity from the groups to which they belong. In the context of gender, women may face stereotypes and biases that shape their identity and influence how they are perceived and treated in the workplace. This helps explain how gender stereotypes can impact women's career trajectories and opportunities for advancement. For example, Layla mentioned that women from specific family backgrounds face no prejudice or barriers to career advancement. Instead of being assessed on their skills, experience and qualifications, they advance through the influence of their family name. Layla also highlighted foreign degree discrimination, where women with international degrees easily attain higher positions or career advancement, limiting opportunities for women with local degrees. These phenomena underscore the prevalence of classism issues in Morocco. To sum up, women encounter numerous obstacles on the path to leadership roles, such as gender bias, stereotypes, limited advancement opportunities and unsupportive organizational cultures. Nonetheless, increasing visibility can counteract these barriers. Through channels like social media, networking events, public speaking, and mentorship programs, women can highlight their competencies, knowledge and leadership capabilities. Enhanced visibility confronts stereotypes and biases, strengthens their voices,

establishes their credibility and broadens their professional circles. Furthermore, being visible allows women to act as role models and mentors, thereby inspiring future female leaders and contributing to a nurturing environment for the growth of women in leadership. Although social media can be a great tool for increasing visibility and reaching a wider audience, it can also have negative consequences. Specifically, social media platforms can sometimes be used as a means of bullying and harassment, which can be incredibly damaging to women who are aspiring to higher positions. These negative experiences can cause women to feel insecure and discouraged from pursuing their goals, ultimately hindering their personal and professional growth. Ultimately, the visibility of women's leadership in media is a double-sword tool that requires navigating this complex landscape effectively, women leaders must receive training and education on how to leverage media visibility to their advantage. This includes developing skills in effective communication, media engagement, personal branding and understanding how to navigate potential pitfalls such as gender bias and negative portrayals.

CONCLUSION

The study's limitation was its small sample size, consisting of only six participants, which does not reflect the broader spectrum of women in leadership roles. Consequently, the findings are not generalizable and pertain only to the individuals involved, thus not representing the wider Moroccan context. The sample included entrepreneurs, managers and administrative officers, leading to varied perceptions of women's leadership in relation to social media due to their diverse educational backgrounds and career sectors. Future studies should consider a larger sample for a more extensive insight into the interplay between social media visibility and women's leadership in Morocco. Methodological constraints of thematic analysis include the inability to maintain a sense of contradiction and continuity within a single narrative, which can be observed across multiple narratives. Moreover, this approach tends to overlook the uniqueness of each

participant by concentrating on common themes. Future research could benefit from other qualitative methods like interpretative phenomenological analysis, which allows for an undistorted examination and interpretation of each participant's lived experiences. Further research could explore the experiences of retired female leaders in Morocco and their perspectives on social media as a catalyst for change, offering a comparative understanding of their experiences against the backdrop of the current generation.

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