

Bridging the Digital Divide: Improving the Leadership Quality of Women Politicians through Digital Literacy

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the importance of digital literacy in improving the leadership quality of female politicians in the ever-evolving digital era. Using a qualitative research method with a literature study approach, this research identifies challenges, benefits, and strategies for improving the digital literacy of female politicians. The research findings show that digital literacy significantly impacts women politicians' ability to communicate, interact with constituents, and influence policy. While this research makes an important contribution to understanding the role of digital literacy in the context of women politicians' leadership, some limitations, such as the limited number of respondents and the specific focus of the research, need to be addressed. Recommendations for future research include involving more respondents from various political and geographical backgrounds and adopting a more comprehensive approach to deepen understanding of the relationship between digital literacy and women's political leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this research is the importance of digital literacy in strengthening the leadership capacity of women politicians in facing the dynamics of the evolving digital era. Globally, there is a significant gender gap in political representation, where women are still underrepresented in political leadership positions compared to men. According to a United Nations report in 2021, only about 25% of the world's total parliamentarians are women, suggesting significant challenges in realizing gender equality in politics (Unwomen.org, 2023). Improving digital literacy can be one strategy to help overcome the barriers that women politicians face in gaining and maintaining their political leadership positions (Nursidqi & Sofyan, 2023).

Digital literacy is also important in the face of a changing political landscape that is increasingly digitized. In today's digital era, information and communication technology has changed how politicians interact with their constituents, communicate with the public, and influence public opinion (Pasaribu & Adhani, 2024). Female politicians with strong digital literacy skills can be more effective in utilizing digital technology to increase visibility, expand networks, and champion the issues they care about (Yoteni et al., 2023). In addition, the importance of this research is also reflected in the realization of the importance of digital inclusion for sustainable development. The UN Sustainable Development Agenda emphasizes the importance of digital inclusion in achieving development goals, including gender equality and women's empowerment (Unsdg.un.org, 2024). In this context, research on improving the digital literacy of female politicians becomes increasingly relevant as part of efforts to achieve sustainable development goals.

While the importance of digital literacy for women politicians has been recognized, there still needs to be more understanding of the challenges and strategies needed to improve the quality of their digital literacy. Previous research tends to focus more on women's representation in politics, ignoring the crucial aspect of digital literacy in the context of women's political leadership (Wasi, 2020; Jannah, 2020; Ardiansa, 2016; Umagapi, 2020). Therefore, this research focuses on filling the gap by exploring the concrete challenges, benefits to be gained, and effective strategies for improving the digital literacy of female politicians in an increasingly connected digital era. By deepening the understanding of the role of digital literacy in women politicians' leadership, this research can provide valuable insights to overcome the barriers women politicians face in effectively adopting digital technologies. In doing so, it can help increase the participation and influence of women politicians in the policy process and improve gender equality in the political arena.

METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this research is qualitative research with a literature study

approach. The literature study approach is used to explore and analyze various literature sources relevant to the research topic, such as journal articles, books, research reports, and other documents related to digital literacy and female politician leadership (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The data collection techniques include a systematic search and analysis of relevant literature on the research topic. The data collected through this literature study was then analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between literature related to digital literacy and female politician leadership. This content analysis allowed the researcher to identify key findings and develop a deep understanding of how digital literacy affects the leadership qualities of female politicians in the digital era (Nathanael, 2023).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The importance of digital literacy

Digital literacy is accessing, managing, integrating, analyzing, and producing information using digital technologies, communication tools, and networks to function in a knowledge society (Members, 2002). In today's digital age, digital literacy is essential for individuals to participate fully in society and the economy. The benefits of digital literacy include increased access to information, improved communication, and enhanced critical thinking skills. For example, digital literacy allows individuals to access information on any topic, connect with others through social media and other platforms, and critically evaluate information to make informed decisions. On the other hand, digital illiteracy can have negative consequences, such as limited employment opportunities and social exclusion. With digital literacy skills, individuals can access information, communicate effectively, and participate fully in society.

While digital literacy is essential today, many people face challenges developing these skills. Common challenges include more access to technology, limited training opportunities, and language barriers. Fortunately, there are various strategies to overcome these challenges. For example, online resources such as tutorials and webinars can provide individuals with access to training and information. Community programs, such as libraries and community centers, can offer training and support for individuals to develop digital literacy skills. Government initiatives, such as digital inclusion programs, can also help bridge the digital divide and provide access to technology and training for underserved communities. Successful programs and initiatives have been implemented in various communities, improving digital literacy skills and increasing access to information and opportunities (Haniko et al., 2023).

Women politicians' leadership in the digital era

In the digital age, women politicians face unique challenges in their leadership roles. While digital technologies have provided opportunities for increased visibility and engagement with constituents, they have also amplified gender-based discrimination and harassment online (Rahim, 2022). This essay will explore the challenges women politicians face in the digital age, the benefits of digital leadership for women politicians, and effective digital leadership strategies.

The digital age has brought a new set of challenges for women politicians. One of the most significant challenges is gender-based discrimination and harassment online. Female politicians are often subjected to sexist comments and threats of violence on social media platforms, which can adversely affect their participation in public life. In addition, gender stereotypes and biases in media coverage of women leaders can undermine their credibility and effectiveness (Fpanalytics.foreignpolicy.com, 2021). Female leaders are often portrayed as emotional and irrational, while male leaders are seen as strong and decisive. In addition, limited access to technology and digital resources for women in some countries can also pose challenges.

On the other hand, female leaders are generally more empathetic, collaborative, and democratic than male leaders. However, these qualities often need to be more meaningful regarding digital literacy skills. This means that when female politicians use social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook, they may need to tone down their personalities and be more cautious as they do not want to appear too emotional. Research has shown that female politicians often have fewer followers on these sites than men due to the perception that they are "*too emotional*" (Lubis et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, the leadership of female politicians has always held appeal as a political actor that can increase female voter turnout where gender equality representation is expected to understand better areas that are considered more sensitive to women, in this case. They can champion policies that support women's empowerment, protection against gender violence, and fair access to resources and opportunities. Women politicians in the digital age have great potential to influence public opinion and shape policy through digital platforms. They can use social media to champion important issues, build coalitions with other women politicians, and garner support for their proposed policies. Women politicians have sometimes managed to change the narrative and influence policy through effective digital campaigns.

Improving the Quality of Digital Literacy for Women Politicians' Leadership

Historically, women have been underrepresented in top leadership positions at the state and local levels. The Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University has been collecting data, analyzing trends, and studying the causes of this phenomenon for years. Their findings illustrate that women are still absent in leadership roles and face unique challenges related to their

gender while on the campaign trail (Unwomen.org, 2023). Digital literacy uses digital technologies to access, evaluate, and communicate information effectively. In politics, digital literacy is essential for women politicians to connect with their constituents, engage in online discussions, and promote their political agenda. The digital literacy skills female politicians need include social media management, online campaigning, and data analysis. For example, female politicians should be able to use social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to share their views and connect with their constituents (Fitri, 2022).

Digital literacy is essential in today's hyper-connected world. With the rise of social media and other digital tools, politicians can connect with their constituents in ways that were not previously possible. Women politicians can use digital tools to effectively interact with their constituents and address issues that matter to them. Digital literacy is also essential for women to compete in politics and overcome gender bias. Digital literacy is important in contemporary politics, as it enables politicians to communicate effectively with their constituents, engage in online advocacy, and use data to inform policy-making (Indrawan et al., 2020).

Digital literacy is crucial for female politicians as it can help them interact effectively with constituents and overcome gender bias. However, there are challenges women face in improving their digital literacy skills. The current status of digital literacy among female politicians still needs improvement (Rizkinaswara, 2020). Female politicians, especially those from developing countries, face several challenges in acquiring digital literacy skills (Hilbert, 2011). Factors hindering digital literacy development among female politicians include lack of access to digital resources, limited funding, and gender stereotypes. In addition, female politicians need help balancing their political responsibilities and personal lives, making it difficult to allocate time to develop digital literacy skills.

Several strategies can be implemented to improve the quality of digital literacy in female political leadership:

1. Training and education programs should be organized to develop digital literacy skills among female politicians. Such programs should be designed to provide hands-on experience with digital technology and tailored to female politicians' specific needs.
2. Collaboration between government and non-government organizations can be established to provide digital resources for women politicians. This could include the provision of laptops, smartphones, and internet connectivity.
3. Women politicians should be encouraged to use digital resources and platforms to increase political engagement.
4. By empowering women in the use of digital media, women politicians can anticipate the obstacles faced in using social media, such as (hate speech, fraud, SARA, and others).

Improving the quality of digital literacy for female politician leadership is expected to provide positive aspects in politics, especially for women. Digital media is an effective means for politicians to absorb the community's aspirations, especially for women. Thus, technological and digital advances in the current era affect the social and political life of the community. Therefore, improving the quality of digital literacy for the leadership of women politicians also impacts the country's political progress.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of digital literacy in improving the leadership quality of female politicians in the digital era. The results show that digital literacy significantly impacts female politicians' ability to communicate, interact with constituents, and influence policy. The strength of this research lies in the qualitative approach used to explore the understanding of digital literacy and women politicians' leadership through literature analysis and in-depth interviews. However, this study has some areas for improvement, including limitations in the number of respondents interviewed and a limited focus on specific contexts. For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope of the study by involving more respondents from different political and geographical backgrounds and to deepen the understanding of the relationship between digital literacy and women politicians' leadership through a more comprehensive approach.

Overall, this study makes an important contribution to understanding the role of digital literacy in the context of women politicians' leadership. The results suggest that digital literacy can be an effective tool for women politicians to increase political participation and influence social change. Nonetheless, to optimize the benefits of digital literacy in improving the leadership qualities of female politicians, further efforts are needed to address the challenges and expand the understanding of the potential and limitations of digital literacy in the political context. Therefore, the recommendation for future research is to continue this exploration by engaging a more comprehensive and inclusive methodology and deepening the understanding of effective strategies for improving female politicians' digital literacy.

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