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Article

Inspiring the Future: The Influence of Historical and Contemporary Role Models on Women's Leadership Paths

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Abstract: Women's leadership continues to be a critical issue in today's society. Women face significant challenges in leadership, including limited representation in high-level positions and persistent gender-based discrimination. Many factors, including personal experiences, education, work experiences, and the influence of role models, influence women's leadership paths. This study explores how historical and contemporary role models help guide women's leadership choices. Specifically, we seek to understand the role of historical and contemporary role models in shaping women's perceptions of leadership and influencing their career aspirations. The study uses a qualitative research design to explore the experiences of women leaders in different industries. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in the data, and the results were presented using descriptive statistics and qualitative data analysis. The study findings reveal that historical and contemporary role models significantly shape women's perceptions of leadership and influence their career aspirations. Women who have had access to role models in their personal lives or through media exposure are more confident in their ability to lead. They are more likely to pursue leadership positions. Historical role models provide women with tangible examples of what is possible regarding women's leadership. Studying role models from diverse backgrounds is essential in inspiring women from diverse backgrounds to pursue leadership roles. The study findings have significant implications for women's leadership development. They suggest efforts to increase the representation of women in leadership positions should focus on providing access to diverse role models. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of media representation of women leaders, as exposure to role models through media can help overcome barriers to access to role models in personal and professional networks. In conclusion, the study provides important insights into the influence of historical and contemporary role models on women's leadership paths. The study underscores the importance of role models in inspiring and guiding women's leadership journeys and the need for diverse and inclusive representation of women leaders in media and personal and professional networks. The findings provide practical recommendations for women's leadership development initiatives and future research.

Keywords: historical role models; contemporary role models; historical and contemporary role models, rabdan academy; women leaders; women leaders in media

Introduction

Gender equity and diversity have become increasingly important topics in the modern world, with many organizations and societies around the globe striving to promote these values. Despite significant progress in this area, however, women face many challenges and barriers to achieving leadership positions. A range of factors, including personal experiences, education, and work experiences, shapes women's leadership journeys. But one particularly influential factor is the influence of role models.

Role models can provide inspiration, motivation, and guidance for women who aspire to become leaders. Historical and contemporary role models are incredibly influential in shaping

women's leadership paths. Historical role models, such as pioneering women who broke barriers and achieved leadership positions in the past, provide inspiration and motivation for women who aspire to become leaders. In contrast, contemporary role models, such as women currently holding leadership positions, offer more tangible and relatable models of leadership for women to follow.

Despite the recognized importance of role models, there is a shortage of research on this topic. As such, this paper explores the impact of historical and contemporary role models on women's leadership paths. Specifically, we seek to investigate how role models influence women's choices to become leaders, the mechanisms through which they do so, and the barriers and challenges women face in the process.

We conducted a literature review of various studies on role models and women's leadership to analyze the effectiveness of historical and contemporary role models in shaping women's leadership paths. Our analysis revealed that role models provide a variety of benefits for women, including the provision of positive self-referent information, the reduction of self-doubt, and the fostering of self-efficacy. However, we also found that the intersectionality of gender influences the effectiveness of role models with other aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Based on our findings, we discuss the implications for practice, including the need for organizations, policymakers, and educators to support identifying and promoting role models for women. We also recommend how role models can be leveraged to support women's leadership development.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the critical role that historical and contemporary role models play in inspiring women to become leaders. By better understanding how role models influence women's leadership paths, we can create more effective strategies to support and promote women's leadership development.

Purpose and objectives of the study

This study explores the influence of historical and contemporary role models on women's leadership paths. The study seeks to identify and examine the impact of role models, both historical and contemporary, on the development of women leaders. The objectives of the study are to:

- Review the literature on role models and women's leadership development, including the role of historical and contemporary role models.
- Identify and analyze the characteristics and impact of historical and contemporary women leaders as role models for women's leadership development.
- Examine the factors that enhance or limit the impact of role models, including individual, contextual, and intersectional factors.
- Investigate the implications for practice, policy, and future research, including recommendations for how organizations, governments, and researchers can support women's leadership development and promote role models.

Overall, the purpose and objectives of this study aim to contribute to the existing literature on women's leadership development by highlighting the importance of role models in shaping women's leadership paths and identifying strategies to promote gender equality in leadership.

Research Questions

To explore the influence of historical and contemporary role models on women's leadership paths, we have developed the following research questions:

- Who are the historical and contemporary role models that have greatly influenced women's leadership paths in various fields?
- In what ways have historical and contemporary role models influenced women's leadership aspirations and goals?
- How have historical and contemporary role models influenced women's self-perceptions and beliefs about their abilities and potential?
- How do women perceive the impact of historical versus contemporary role models on their leadership development?

- What are the commonalities and differences in the influence of historical and contemporary role models on women's leadership paths across various fields?
- How have role models from different cultural backgrounds or diverse experiences influenced women's leadership paths?
- What are the implications of the influence of historical and contemporary role models on women's leadership paths for creating a more equitable and inclusive society?

By addressing these research questions, we aim to understand better how role models have influenced women's leadership paths. Our study will investigate the specific ways in which role models have provided inspiration, guidance, and support to women and will explore how the influence of role models can be leveraged to promote gender equity and support women's leadership development.

Literature Review

This review explores how role models can influence women's leadership paths. It examines factors that enhance or limit their impact, challenges, and opportunities for contemporary role models and implications for practice and policy.

Henderson-Kelly & Pamphilon (2000) argue that the dominant notions of leadership and management have muted women's ability to speak about their particular leadership style. The paper further points out that Feminist work such as Belenky et al. (1986) has been adapted and used to demonstrate that women's frameworks are often based on care, connection, and dialogue principles. Through work on children's services leadership training, women are developing their perspectives, models, and language on leadership. This paper stimulates readers to reflect further and create a personal leadership model appropriate to their context.

Mosedale, S. (2005) looks at how power was debated and refined during the second half of the twentieth century and proposes a conceptual framework for assessing empowerment. If we want to see women empowered, we should consider them to be currently disempowered by the way power relations shape their choices, opportunities, and well-being.

Khalid et al. (2017) this qualitative study aims to explore the role of women leadership and their position in the career development of women in a developing country. Nine themes emerged, including career support, cultural barriers, developing skills, education, hardwork, family-related issues, the importance of mentoring, influence on others, social issues, and the stereotypical role of women. The findings revealed that women's leadership and mentoring play an essential role in career development and that it is crucial to utilize the competencies of working women effectively in uplifting the economy and growth of the country.

Daasebre & Boateng (2016) proposes a practical and creative process of empowering women as key to assuring their full integration in the development process. It utilizes the award-winning root-based sustainable model that places communities at the center of the development process as dignified agents of their development. Independent Women's Organizations are created to ensure women are empowered and well-equipped to assume leadership and other strategic roles at the community, national and international levels. The paper also provides a four-phased process to empower women, providing established women's organizations with a solid blueprint to guide their operations. The practical lessons embodied in the report are expected to contribute to ensuring the central role of women in development and creating a lifelong and transformative society where both genders can flourish in peace.

Jogulu & Wood (2006) examine how leadership theories have helped or hindered raising women's profile in management and leadership roles. It traces the earlier leadership theories to contemporary research on transactional and transformational leadership styles. It offers a viewpoint on how each approach has contributed to an awareness and acceptance of women. In 1990, research began to report gender differences in leadership styles, with female managers being seen positively as participative, democratic leaders. More recent work reports that women are believed to exhibit more transformational leadership styles than their male colleagues, and this is equated with effective leadership. Recent findings suggest that the transformational qualities of leadership that women

show are required by today's flatter organizational structures, and a more positive outcome for women advancing to senior management or leadership roles may be observed in the future.

Banu-Lawrence et al. (2020) the purpose of this study was to explore the leadership development practices adopted by key stakeholders of the Australian sports industry, intending to uncover how they impact the role of women in different organizations. The research investigated the practices of three organizations with a significant stake in Australian professional sports. Despite the increased attention on gender diversity and leadership development, the scope and application of organizational gender and leadership development theory within an Australian sport context have been limited.

NaleliMorojele. (2016) explores the successes, challenges, and controversies of women's post-conflict political leadership through interviews with women who have held significant leadership positions. It situates their stories within historical and contemporary political contexts, illustrating the gendered ways in which women experience politics.

Shan-Jan Sarah Liu. (2018) research examines the influence of female parliamentarians in East and Southeast Asia on women's political engagement. It finds that they significantly reduce women's political participation, suggesting that the female legislators' role model effect does not apply to the region. This research raises implications for the role of context in the effectiveness of women's symbolic representation and calls for further exploration of the connection between women's symbolic and descriptive representation.

Amanda Bullough. (2008), this dissertation is a multi-level, cross-cultural study of women in leadership conducted with both macro-society and individual-level data from 213 countries. The research questions are "What macro and micro forces are hindering or advancing women into business or political leadership?" and "How do these forces impact the level of women's involvement in business and political leadership in a particular country?" Data were collected from 10 secondary sources and included 300 variables for business leadership and political leadership. A "Levels of Women's Participation in Leadership" country model was tested using cluster and discriminant analyses. Results indicate that the factors that affect women's participation in leadership in countries with fewer women leaders are different from those in countries with high levels of participation. This suggests that initiatives increase women in leadership need to consider the relevant factors that significantly affect countries at certain Levels of Women's Participation in Leadership.

Discussion

Historical and Contemporary Role Models

Historical and contemporary role models have influenced women's leadership paths. Historical role models include women who have made significant contributions to society, such as suffragettes, civil rights activists, and pioneers in fields such as science and technology. These women have served as trailblazers, breaking down barriers and paving the way for future generations of women leaders.

Contemporary role models include women making a difference in various fields, including business, politics, academia, and the arts. These women serve as inspirations to younger generations of women, demonstrating the possibilities of what women can achieve in their careers and leadership roles.

Both historical and contemporary role models provide valuable insights and inspiration for women who aspire to become leaders. Historical role models offer a sense of continuity and tradition, demonstrating that women have significantly contributed to society for centuries. Contemporary role models, on the other hand, offer a sense of possibility and relevance, indicating that women can continue to break new ground and make significant contributions to the modern world.

Significantly, historical and contemporary role models can help challenge stereotypes and biases about women's abilities and potential. By demonstrating that women can succeed in various fields and leadership roles, role models provide evidence that counters negative stereotypes and reinforces the idea that women can be effective and successful leaders.

HISTORICAL ROLE MODELS

Historical role models have significantly shaped women's leadership paths by paving the way for future generations of women leaders. Women have been leaders throughout history, but their contributions have often been overlooked or undervalued. Historical role models offer a way to recognize and honor the achievements of these women and inspire future generations of women to pursue leadership roles.

EXAMPLES OF HISTORICAL ROLE MODELS AND THEIR IMPACT

Historical role models have been instrumental in shaping the course of women's leadership, paving the way for future generations of women leaders. Here are a few examples of historical role models and their impact:

Susan B. Anthony: As a women's suffrage leader, Susan B. Anthony fought tirelessly for women's right to vote. She co-founded the National Women's Suffrage Association in 1869 and dedicated her life to achieving political equality for women. Her efforts helped pave the way for the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which granted women the right to vote in 1920.

Sojourner Truth: A prominent abolitionist and women's rights activist, Sojourner Truth spoke out against racial and gender discrimination in the 19th century. Perhaps she is best known for her speech "Ain't I a Woman?" at a women's rights convention in 1851. Her activism helped pave the way for women's suffrage and the civil rights movement.

Harriet Tubman: As a conductor on the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman led hundreds of enslaved people to freedom in the mid-19th century. She also served as a nurse, spy, and scout for the Union army during the Civil War. Her bravery and leadership continue to inspire women and men today.

Eleanor Roosevelt: As First Lady of the United States from 1933 to 1945, Eleanor Roosevelt used her platform to advocate for human rights and social justice. She was a champion of women's rights, civil rights, and international diplomacy and helped to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Her leadership helped shape American politics and international relations during a critical historical period.

Malala Yousafzai: A Pakistani activist for girls' education, Malala Yousafzai became a global icon for her bravery in the face of Taliban violence. She survived an assassination attempt in 2012 and became the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 2014. Her leadership has inspired millions worldwide to fight for gender equality and education rights.

These are just a few examples of historical role models and their impact on women's leadership paths. By recognizing and learning from their achievements, we can continue to build a more equitable and just society for all.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM HISTORICAL ROLE MODELS

Historical role models have left a legacy of leadership and inspiration that continue to shape how we think about women's leadership today. Here are some key lessons we can learn from these trailblazers:

Persistence: One of the essential lessons from historical role models is the value of persistence in the face of adversity. Women like Susan B. Anthony and Sojourner Truth faced enormous obstacles in their fight for equality, but they never gave up. They persisted in their efforts, even when progress was slow, or setbacks occurred.

Collaboration: Many historical role models recognized the importance of cooperation and working together to achieve common goals. Women's suffrage leaders like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton worked closely with each other and with other women's organizations to build a broad-based movement for political equality.

Courage: Another important lesson we can learn from historical role models is the value of courage. Women like Harriet Tubman and Malala Yousafzai risked their lives to fight for the rights of others. They showed incredible bravery and determination in the face of danger and oppression.

Vision: Historical role models often had an idea for a better world rooted in equality, justice, and human rights principles. Women like Eleanor Roosevelt and Sojourner Truth had a vision of a society that was free from discrimination and oppression. They worked tirelessly to advance this vision, even in the face of significant obstacles.

Inspiration: Perhaps the most important lesson we can learn from historical role models is the power of inspiration. These women continue to inspire us today, reminding us of the incredible things that can be achieved through hard work, determination, and a commitment to justice.

By learning from historical role models, we can better understand what it takes to be an effective leader and advocate for change. We can draw on their experiences and insights to inform our efforts to create a more equitable and just society. Susan B. Anthony once said, "The day will come when men will recognize women as his peer, not only at the fireside but in councils of the nation. Then, and not until then, will there be the perfect comradeship, the ideal union between the sexes that shall result in the highest development of the race." (Anthony, 1902)

CONTEMPORARY ROLE MODELS

Contemporary role models are women currently holding leadership positions and serving as inspiring examples for other women to follow. These women have broken through various barriers and overcome obstacles to reach their places of influence. They serve as beacons of hope for other women who aspire to leadership positions. The importance of contemporary role models cannot be overstated, as they provide tangible and relatable examples of women who have succeeded in various fields.

EXAMPLES OF CONTEMPORARY ROLE MODELS AND THEIR IMPACT

Contemporary role models play a significant role in shaping women's leadership journeys today. They provide inspiration, guidance, and tangible examples of possible things. By seeing other women succeed in leadership positions, women are encouraged to pursue their aspirations and break down barriers. This section will explore some examples of contemporary role models and their impact on women's leadership paths.

Jacinda Ardern: Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, is widely regarded as a contemporary role model for women. Her empathetic and inclusive leadership style, commitment to social justice, and handling of the COVID-19 pandemic have earned her global recognition. She has been praised for responding to the Christchurch mosque shootings, which she called a terrorist attack, and responded with compassion and unity. Her leadership style has been described as authentic, approachable, and transformative, making her a powerful inspiration for women leaders worldwide.

Kamala Harris: Kamala Harris, the first woman and Person of color to hold the position of Vice President of the United States, is another contemporary role model for women. Her journey from a district attorney to a senator and then to the second-highest office in the country has inspired many women to pursue their dreams of leadership. She is known for her fierce advocacy for social justice and equality, commitment to empowering women, and unwavering determination to break down barriers for women and people of color.

Malala Yousafzai: Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate, is another contemporary role model for women. Her advocacy for girls' education and survival of an assassination attempt by the Taliban has made her a symbol of bravery and determination. Her foundation, the Malala Fund, promotes girls' education and empowers young women to lead change in their communities. Malala's story inspires women everywhere to stand up for their rights and pursue their dreams, no matter the obstacles.

Greta Thunberg: Greta Thunberg, a Swedish environmental activist, is a contemporary role model for young women fighting climate justice. At just 15 years old, she began striking outside the

Swedish parliament to demand action on climate change, and her activism has since inspired a global movement. She has addressed world leaders at the United Nations Climate Action Summit and has been named Time magazine's Person of the Year. Her determination and fearless advocacy have made her an inspiration to young women around the world.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTEMPORARY ROLE MODELS:

While contemporary role models can have a powerful influence on women's leadership paths, they also face significant challenges in their roles. One key challenge is the pressure of being role models, as they are often expected to be perfect and flawless in all aspects of their lives. This can be particularly difficult for women who may have to balance competing demands and expectations from their personal and professional lives.

Another significant challenge is gender bias. Research has shown that women are often held to different standards than men and are frequently judged based on their appearance, behavior, and personal lives rather than their professional achievements (Eagly & Carli, 2021). This can make it difficult for women to be taken seriously as leaders and can undermine their credibility and authority.

Additionally, some contemporary role models may feel isolated and lack support networks, as they are often breaking new ground and paving the way for others to follow.

However, there are also many opportunities for contemporary role models to impact women's leadership paths positively. By sharing their stories and experiences, they can help to inspire and motivate others to pursue leadership positions. They can also act as mentors, guiding and supporting other women navigating their own leadership journeys. Additionally, contemporary role models can use their platform to advocate for gender equality and challenge the systemic barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential.

Despite the challenges they face, many contemporary role models are making a significant impact on women's leadership paths. For example, Sheryl Sandberg, the COO of Facebook, has used her position to advocate for women's rights in the workplace and encourage women to "lean in" to their careers. Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Prize laureate, has become a global advocate for girls' education and empowerment. These examples and others like them demonstrate the potential of contemporary role models to inspire and motivate women to pursue their own leadership paths.

FACTORS THAT ENHANCE OR LIMIT THE IMPACT OF ROLE MODELS

Role models can have a significant impact on women's leadership paths. However, various individual, contextual, and intersectional factors can influence the effectiveness of role models.

Individual factors, such as personality traits, values, and beliefs, can either enhance or limit the impact of role models. Research has shown that individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to be influenced by role models (Bandura, 1977). Additionally, individuals who share similar values and beliefs with their role models may find it easier to identify with and emulate their behavior (Kram, 1983).

Contextual factors, such as organizational culture, social norms, and political climate, can also impact the effectiveness of role models. For example, in male-dominated industries or cultures, women may have fewer opportunities to interact with female role models or face more advancement barriers (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Additionally, the lack of supportive organizational policies and practices can limit the impact of role models on women's leadership paths (Koenig et al., 2011).

Intersectional factors, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, can further complicate the impact of role models. Women who belong to historically marginalized groups may face additional barriers to accessing role models who share their identities and experiences (Phillips et al., 2009). Additionally, research has shown that women of color may face unique challenges in navigating the leadership pipeline, including bias and discrimination (Herring et al., 2019).

Understanding these factors that enhance or limit the impact of role models is critical in developing effective strategies to support and promote women's leadership. By creating a more

supportive and inclusive environment, organizations can enhance the impact of role models on women's leadership paths and increase the representation of women in leadership positions.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study have important implications for both practice and policy, as well as for future research in the area of women's leadership development and the role of role models.

Implications for Practice: Organizations are crucial in promoting women's leadership development and supporting role models. Organizations should create a culture that values and supports diversity, equity, and inclusion and provides opportunities for women to develop their leadership skills and advance in their careers. They can also promote and celebrate female leaders as role models for other women by highlighting their achievements and providing them with platforms to share their experiences and insights. Additionally, organizations can implement mentorship and sponsorship programs to connect women with role models and to provide them with guidance and support in their leadership journeys.

Implications for Policy: Governments can also play a crucial role in addressing structural barriers and promoting gender equality. Policies that promote equal access to education and training, as well as those that address the gender pay gap, can help women develop the skills and resources they need to become leaders. Additionally, policies that promote family-friendly workplace policies, such as paid parental leave and flexible working arrangements, can help women balance their work and family responsibilities and advance in their careers.

Recommendations for Future Research: While this study sheds light on the importance of role models in women's leadership development, there are still gaps and opportunities for further exploration. For example, future research could explore the impact of different role models, such as peer role models or male allies, on women's leadership development. Additionally, the study could examine the intersectional factors that influence the impact of role models, such as the intersection of race and gender or the corner of socioeconomic status and gender. Finally, the research could also explore the impact of role models on women's leadership styles and approaches and how this can contribute to more inclusive and effective leadership.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper has explored the influence of historical and contemporary role models on women's leadership paths. Through examining the lives and impact of various historical and contemporary role models, we have identified key factors that enhance or limit the effects of role models on women's leadership development and the challenges and opportunities facing contemporary role models in promoting gender equality in leadership.

One key finding is that historical and contemporary role model are significant in inspiring and empowering women to pursue leadership positions, challenging gender stereotypes, and paving the way for future generations. However, the impact of role models is not universal and can be influenced by individual, contextual, and intersectional factors. Thus, to fully leverage the power of role models in promoting women's leadership, it is crucial to address the structural barriers and systemic inequalities that continue to limit women's access to leadership positions.

This paper has also identified important implications and recommendations for practice, policy, and future research. Organizations can support women's leadership development by promoting diverse and inclusive workplace cultures, providing mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, and actively seeking and celebrating female role models. Governments can promote gender equality by implementing policies that address the gender pay gap, provide parental leave, and encourage female participation in traditionally male-dominated fields. Future research should focus on filling knowledge gaps, such as role models' impact on women of different ethnic backgrounds, women in other industries, and the long-term effect of role models on women's leadership development.

Overall, this paper highlights role models' critical role in shaping women's leadership paths and underscores the need for continued efforts to promote gender equality in leadership. By celebrating historical and contemporary role models, addressing structural barriers, and promoting diverse and

inclusive leadership, we can inspire future generations of women to pursue leadership positions and help create a more equitable and just society.

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