Performing Leadership: Discourse Analysis of Politicians' Twitter Posts on Women's Day

[1]Syed Tahir Ul Amin, [2]Dr. Hayam Qayyoum, [3]Dr. Mudasar Jahan

Article Details

Syed Tahir Ul Amin
Assistant Lecturer, Department of English, Hafiz Hayat Campus, University of Gujrat, Pakistan. tahir-ul-amin@uog.edu.pk

Dr. Hayam Qayyoum
Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan. hayam.buic@bahria.edu.pk

Dr. Mudasar Jahan
Associate Lecturer in English, Department of English, Hafiz Hayat Campus, University of Gujrat, Pakistan. mudasar.jehan@uog.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores how politicians construct and perform leadership identities on Twitter, particularly in the context of International Women's Day, building on Judith Butler's performativity theory and recent research on women's leadership identities on social media. This study analyzes ten selected tweets from politicians, classified into three themes: Empowering Women and Girls, Call to Action for Gender Equality, and Personal Tribute. Using discourse analysis, the study reveals that female politicians utilize Twitter to construct and perform leadership identities for themselves by emphasizing themes of Empowering Women and Girls, using empowering language and hashtags to promote women's empowerment and challenge patriarchal norms, and employ discursive strategies such as using empowering language and hashtags to negotiate and reinforce their leadership personas on Twitter. The key findings show that female politicians prioritize women's empowerment and inclusivity, while male politicians focus on paying Personal Tribute to women and issuing Calls to Action for Gender Equality. This indicates that though in the modern era of technology and gender equality, still a gap exists of patriarch across the globe. Females still trying to prove themselves and males sympathized them to show equality, Based on these findings, the study recommends future research on the role of social media in shaping public discourse and promoting social change, longitudinal studies to examine the evolution of politicians Twitter discourse, and comparative analyses of Twitter discourse across different social media platforms and cultural contexts, contributing to a deeper understanding of leadership identity construction and performance on Twitter, with significant implications for future research on social media, politics, and gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of social media is revolutionizing the way politicians interact with the public, with Twitter emerging as a crucial platform for leaders to construct and perform their identities (Loader & Mercea, 2011; Parmelee & Bichard, 2012). For politicians, Twitter presents both opportunities and challenges in navigating the complexities of leadership and femininity (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996; Ross, 2010). Regardless of the growing importance of social media in politics, there is a notable gap in research on how politicians use Twitter to construct and perform leadership identities, particularly in the context of female's portrayal. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in the media highlight the need for further research on the ways in which politicians navigate and challenge these issues on social media (Ross, 2010; Van Zoonen, 2006). This research reveals that female politicians use Twitter discourse to construct and perform leadership identities of themselves by emphasizing themes of Empowering Women and Girls, using empowering language and hashtags to promote women's empowerment and challenge patriarchal norms. They employ discursive strategies such as using empowering language and hashtags to negotiate and reinforce their leadership personas on Twitter, constructing a narrative of appreciation and inclusivity. In contrast, male politicians focus on paying Personal Tribute to women and issuing Calls to Action for Gender Equality.

This study examines how female and male politicians use Twitter to construct female leadership identities through discourse, and analyzes the discursive strategies employed by them on Twitter to negotiate and reinforce female leadership personas. That is how females are presented by men and how women are presented by women themselves. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions: How do politicians' Twitter posts reflect or challenge traditional notions of leadership and femininity (Connell, 2005)? What specific discursive strategies do politicians use on Twitter to establish credibility and authority (Fairclough, 1992)? Examining the discursive practices of politicians on Twitter contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersections of leadership, identity, and power in the digital age. This research provides insights into the ways in which politicians use language to construct and perform leadership identities, challenging traditional notions of leadership and femininity (Butler, 1990). This study is grounded in Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which posits that identity is performed through language and action (Butler, 1990). Leadership identity is constructed through discourse, and Twitter provides a platform for politicians to perform

leadership and shape their public identities.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The rise of social media has revolutionized the way politicians communicate with the public, and Twitter has emerged as a crucial platform for leaders to construct and perform their identities (Loader & Mercea, 2011, p. 757). Since its launch in 2006, Twitter has become an essential tool for politicians to engage with citizens, shape public opinion, and build their personal brand (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012, p. 2). For female politicians, Twitter presents both opportunities and challenges in navigating the complexities of leadership and femininity (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996, p. 105). The increasing presence of women in politics has been a significant development in recent decades, with more women holding public office and taking on leadership roles (Lovenduski, 2005, p. 1). However, despite these gains, women in politics continue to face unique challenges, including scrutiny over their appearance, personality, and leadership style (Ross, 2010, p. 10). The intersection of politics and social media has further complicated these issues, with Twitter serving as a platform for female politicians to navigate these challenges and opportunities. Feminist scholarship has long examined the ways in which women are represented and marginalized in politics, and the study of female politicians' use of Twitter is situated within this broader context (Van Zoonen, 2006, p. 287). Through an examination of the discursive practices of female politicians on Twitter, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersections of leadership, identity, and power in the digital age (Butler, 1990, p. 25).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The growing presence of women in politics has not eradicated the obstacles they encounter in establishing and projecting leadership identities. Female politicians persist in navigating intricate issues related to leadership and femininity, including intense scrutiny over their appearance, personality, and leadership approach (Ross, 2010, p. 10). The advent of Twitter has transformed the way politicians interact with citizens, shape public opinion, and cultivate their personal brand (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012, p. 2). The utilization of Twitter by female politicians poses significant questions regarding the construction and performance of leadership identities in the digital era, particularly in relation to the intersection of politics, identity, and power (Butler, 1990, p. 25).

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

This study proposes that female politicians utilize Twitter to construct and perform leadership

identities that embody of leadership attributes. The discursive strategies employed by female for females and of males for female's politicians on Twitter are influenced by the intersections of gender, politics, and media, reflecting the intricacies of leadership, identity, and power in the digital era.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study pursues following two objectives

- To examine how politicians, use Twitter to construct and perform leadership of female's identities through discourse.

- To analyze the discursive strategies employed by politicians on Twitter to negotiate and reinforce female leadership personas.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- **RQ 1.** How do politicians use Twitter discourse to construct and perform female leadership identities, and what linguistic features characterize these constructions?

- **RQ 2.** What discursive strategies do politicians employ on Twitter to negotiate and reinforce female leadership personas, and how do these strategies impact their public image?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant as it investigates Twitter's role in female politicians' identity construction and leadership identities, offering valuable insights into the intersections of gender, politics, and media (Van Zoonen, 2006). Examining the discursive practices of female politicians on Twitter informs the development of effective communication strategies for female politicians and policymakers, contributing to a deeper understanding of leadership, identity, and power dynamics in the digital era (Butler, 1990). The study's findings shed light on how female and male politicians negotiate and reinforce their leadership personas online, manage their online presence, and engage with citizens (Loader & Mercea, 2011). This research provides a nuanced understanding of Twitter's impact on public opinion and political discourse, highlighting the opportunities and challenges female politicians face in the digital age. p. 757).

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The growing presence of female politicians on Twitter underscores the need to understand how social media influences their leadership identities and political engagement. As online platforms

continue to shape public discourse, women in politics encounter both opportunities and challenges in constructing their public personas and interacting with citizens. Recent research emphasizes the importance of examining the intersection of politics, social media, and gender, highlighting the complexities of female politicians' online presence and its impact on their careers and public perception.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

FEMINIST THEORY

Feminist scholarship offers a critical framework for understanding women's experiences in politics, particularly in social media contexts. Krook (2020) notes that violence against women in politics significantly hinders their participation, and social media can exacerbate this issue through online harassment, sexist language, and stereotyping (Sobieraj, 2020). Feminist theory illuminates the structural and cultural factors contributing to these challenges, including patriarchal norms and power dynamics (Walby, 2011). Research highlights how social media amplifies scrutiny and criticism faced by women in politics. Rheault et al. (2019) find that female politicians are more likely to encounter sexist and misogynistic language on Twitter. Evans and Clark (2020) show that female politicians are often portrayed stereotypically and sexistly in online media coverage.

Feminist theory emphasizes intersectionality's importance in understanding women's political experiences. Crenshaw (1991) defines intersectionality as intersecting forms of oppression. Women of color, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities face unique challenges and barriers to participation (Smooth, 2019). Feminist theory informs strategies for promoting women's representation and participation in politics. Examining structural and cultural factors contributing to these challenges can help develop effective solutions.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis is a vital methodology for examining the intricate relationship between language and power in online political communication. Norman Fairclough's foundational work on discourse analysis (1992) remains relevant, and recent studies build upon his framework to analyze discursive strategies employed by female politicians on Twitter. Language and power are intricately linked in online political communication. Discourse analysis reveals how language shapes and reinforces power dynamics, particularly in female politicians' online presence. Female politicians' Twitter posts reflect a blend of traditional feminine and masculine leadership traits, highlighting gender performance complexities (Campus, 2013). They employ

discursive strategies like hashtags, Twitter polls, and personal narratives to establish credibility and engage citizens (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012). However, female politicians' Twitter posts are often subject to sexist and misogynistic language (Evans & Clark, 2020). Research shows female politicians specialize in gender issues on Twitter, reflecting language and power intersections (Rheault et al., 2019). The portrayal of female politicians in the media is often sexist and stereotypical (Sobieraj, 2020). Feminist critical discourse analysis combines feminist theory with critical discourse analysis to examine language and power intersections in female politicians' online presence (Lazar, 2005), providing valuable insights into navigating online political communication complexities.

LEADERSHIP IDENTITY

Leadership identity construction and performance are crucial aspects of politics. Social media provides a unique platform for female politicians to shape their public personas and challenge traditional notions of leadership and power. Connell's (2005) work on masculinity and power highlights the importance of examining the intersection of leadership identity and gender. Leadership identity is complex and multifaceted, encompassing personality, values, and leadership style. Female politicians face unique challenges in constructing and performing leadership identities, particularly on social media, where they face scrutiny and criticism. Societal expectations and stereotypes shape female politicians' leadership identities, often expecting them to be nurturing and empathetic while also being strong and decisive (Ross, 2010). Social media enables female politicians to showcase their personality, values, and leadership style, engaging citizens and building public support (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012). This platform allows them to construct leadership identities that challenge traditional notions of leadership and power.

WOMEN IN POLITICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN POLITICS

Women in politics face numerous challenges, including scrutiny over their appearance, personality, and leadership style (Ross, 2010; Lovenduski, 2005). Social media amplifies these issues, creating a complex environment where female politicians face intense scrutiny and criticism. The media representation of female politicians is often biased and sexist, impacting their public image and credibility (Ross, 2010). Female politicians are frequently portrayed in stereotypical and sexist ways, highlighting challenges in constructing and performing leadership identities. Online harassment is a significant challenge, with many female politicians

experiencing abuse and hostility on social media platforms (Sobieraj, 2020). Stereotyping and bias also impact female politicians' ability to lead and make decisions (Lovenduski, 2005). These challenges have serious consequences, including decreased confidence and increased stress. Social media has created a complex environment where female politicians must navigate multiple platforms and audiences.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICS

Social media plays a significant role in shaping political identity and leadership, particularly for women in politics. Loader and Mercea (2011) and Parmelee and Bichard (2012) have examined the opportunities and challenges of social media for female politicians, highlighting its potential to both empower and marginalize. Social media provides a platform for female politicians to construct and perform leadership identities, engage with citizens, and build their public support. It allows them to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and communicate directly with their audience, which can be particularly beneficial for women who are often underrepresented in mainstream media. However, social media also presents challenges for female politicians, including online harassment, sexism, and stereotyping. Despite these challenges, social media remains a crucial tool for female politicians, offering opportunities for self-representation, networking, and mobilization. Recent studies have explored the ways in which female politicians use social media to shape their public personas and engage with citizens, highlighting the importance of social media in modern politics.

TWITTER AND LEADERSHIP IDENTITY

TWITTER AND POLITICS

Twitter provides a unique platform for female politicians to construct and perform leadership identities. Parmelee and Bichard (2012) have explored the use of Twitter in politics, highlighting its potential to shape the relationship between political leaders and the public. Recent studies have analyzed the opportunities and challenges of Twitter for female politicians, revealing the complex dynamics at play in online political communication. Twitter allows female politicians to present themselves in a controlled and curated manner, building their personal brand, engaging with citizens, and shaping their public personas (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012). However, Twitter also presents challenges, including online harassment, sexism, and stereotyping. Despite these challenges, Twitter remains crucial for female politicians, offering opportunities for self-representation, networking, and mobilization. Female politicians use Twitter to construct and perform leadership identities, utilizing hashtags, Twitter polls, and

personal narratives (Rheault et al., 2019).

LEADERSHIP IDENTITY ON TWITTER

Female politicians utilize Twitter to shape their public personas and engage with citizens. Campus (2013) has examined how female politicians use Twitter to construct and perform leadership identities, highlighting the ways they present themselves and interact with their audience by employing various strategies. Recent studies have built on this work, exploring the discursive strategies employed by female politicians on Twitter, including the use of language, imagery, and tone to convey their message and build their brand (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012). These studies have shown that female politicians use Twitter to showcase their personality, values, and leadership style, and to engage with citizens and build their public support by leveraging the platform's interactive features. By presenting themselves in a controlled and curated manner on Twitter, female politicians can build their personal brand, engage with citizens, and shape their public personas. Twitter's potential to shape the relationship between political leaders and the public is particularly significant for female politicians, who often face scrutiny and criticism in the media (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012). Developing effective Twitter strategies is crucial for female politicians to build their leadership identities and connect with their audience by fostering engagement and authenticity.

DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES AND POWER DYNAMICS

DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES

Female politicians employ various discursive strategies on Twitter to establish credibility and authority, building on Fairclough's (1992) foundational work on discourse analysis. These strategies include using rhetorical devices like metaphor and allusion to convey their message and build their brand (Fairclough, 1992). Sharing personal narratives and experiences on Twitter humanizes female politicians and helps build connections with their audience (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012). The power dynamics at play in online political communication are complex and multifaceted. Female politicians must navigate online challenges like harassment and sexism while building leadership identities and engaging citizens (Kruikemeier et al., 2013). Understanding these power dynamics is crucial, as language and discourse shape female politicians' public personas and influence their relationships with citizens. Recent studies emphasize analyzing these dynamics to develop effective Twitter strategies (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Fatema et al., 2022). By leveraging Twitter's interactive features and carefully crafting their message, female politicians can build their personal brand, engage with

citizens, and shape their public personas.

POWER DYNAMICS

The construction and performance of leadership identities on Twitter involve complex power dynamics, as highlighted by Krook's (2020) work on violence against women in politics. Female politicians often face sexist language, online harassment, and stereotyping, which can impact their visibility and credibility. Recent studies emphasize the significance of understanding these dynamics, particularly in the context of disinformation and fake news (Pérez-Curiel et al., 2022), fact-checking strategies (Rúas-Araujo et al., 2023), and the role of artificial intelligence in political communication (Klinger et al., 2023; Raji et al., 2020). Moreover, social media can both enhance citizen participation (Fontenla-Pedreira et al., 2023) and perpetuate power imbalances. The intersectionality of power dynamics, including racism, homophobia, and transphobia, creates a challenging environment for female politicians from diverse backgrounds. Understanding these complexities is crucial for developing effective strategies to support female politicians and promote gender equality in politics.

CONCLUSION

The literature on female politicians' use of Twitter highlights the intersection of politics, social media, and gender (Krook, 2020; Sobieraj, 2020). Recent studies have explored the opportunities and challenges of social media for female politicians (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012; Loader & Mercea, 2011). Female politicians use Twitter to construct leadership identities, engage with citizens, and build public support (Campus, 2013; Rheault et al., 2019). However, they face online harassment, sexism, and stereotyping (Evans & Clark, 2020; Sobieraj, 2020), which can impact their visibility and credibility. Future research should examine the discursive strategies and power dynamics involved in constructing leadership identities online. This includes exploring social media's potential to promote gender equality in politics and support female politicians (Ross, 2010). Investigating the impact of social media on political engagement and participation can provide valuable insights into how female politicians use Twitter to mobilize support and build their leadership identities.

RESEARCH GAPE

A significant research gap exists in understanding the discursive strategies adopted to present female politicians' leadership identities on Twitter. Existing studies explore how female politicians engage with citizens and shape public opinion on Twitter, but a more complex analysis of the language and discourse used to negotiate leadership personas is needed.

Previous research primarily focuses on challenges female politicians face in the digital age, including online harassment and sexism. However, there's a lack of research on how female politicians use Twitter to resist and challenge these obstacles and how male politicians present them.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a qualitative research design, employing discourse analysis to examine the Twitter posts of female politicians for females and of male politician's tweets for females. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of the discursive strategies used by both gender for female's politicians use to construct and perform leadership identities on Twitter.

DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study comprises Twitter posts from a sample of politicians selected based on specific criteria:

- Female and male politicians who hold or have held public office
- Active Twitter presence
- Significant following on Twitter

Twitter posts are collected using a Twitter archiving tool and span a specified period, such as International Women's Day (March 8th) from 2020 to 2025.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves discourse analysis, a close reading of Twitter posts to identify discursive strategies female politicians use to construct leadership identities (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak, 2009). Guided by research questions, the analysis focuses on patterns and themes in language and discourse, examining how male and female politicians use Twitter to shape public personas and engage citizens.

SAMPLING STRATEGY

This study employs purposive sampling, selecting male and female politicians based on specific criteria (Patton, 2002; Bryman, 2016). The sample size is determined by research questions and data saturation needs. As the study uses publicly available Twitter data, anonymization protects the politicians' identities, adhering to ethical research principles (British Sociological Association, 2017).

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

This study has limitations as its focus on Twitter posts may limit generalizability to other platforms (Borgman, 2010). The sample of male and female politicians active on Twitter might not represent all politicians. The qualitative approach restricts quantitative insights. These limitations are deliberate delimitations. Focusing on Twitter and qualitative analysis enables an in-depth examination of discursive strategies female politicians use to construct leadership identities (Fairclough, 2003). This provides a detailed understanding of leadership, identity, and power dynamics in the digital age.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study's analytical framework examines how politicians construct female leadership identities on Twitter through language and tone, self-presentation, personal narratives, discursive strategies (such as rhetorical devices and hashtags), power dynamics, and the intersection of gender, politics, and media, revealing how they build authority, credibility, and challenge traditional notions of leadership and femininity. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the intersections of gender, politics, and leadership in the digital context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

PERFORMATIVITY THEORY

Performativity theory, developed by Judith Butler (1990), provides a suitable framework for examining how female politicians construct and negotiate leadership identities on Twitter. This theory posits that identity is not a fixed trait, but rather a dynamic and iterative performance that is repeated and reiterated over time (Butler, 1993). In the context of social media, performativity theory offers a valuable lens for understanding how individuals curate and present themselves to a wide audience. This study applies performativity theory to explore the complex interplay between identity, power, and performance in the digital age.

The core concepts of performativity theory are:

- Performativity: The idea that identity is a performance that is repeated and reiterated over time.

- Citation: The process of referencing and reiterating existing norms, values, and power structures.

- Subversion: The potential for performances to subvert or challenge existing norms, values, and power structures.

This study is grounded in performativity theory due to its ability to capture dynamic identity construction, examine complex power dynamics, and provide contextual relevance in the digital age. Performativity theory explores how identities are performed and reiterated over time, aligning with the study's aim to examine female politicians' leadership identity construction on Twitter. Additionally, the theory provides insight into how performances reflect, shape, and potentially challenge existing power structures. Its relevance in the digital age makes it particularly suitable for understanding identity performance and negotiation on social media platforms like Twitter.

DATA ANALYSIS

WOMEN'S TWEETS

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS

SELECTED TWEET 1. *Jacinda Ardern (**New Zealand**) (March 8, 2020): "I'm proud to lead a country where women are valued and empowered to reach their full potential. Let's keep working towards a more equal world #InternationalWomensDay"*

ANALYSIS: Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand) tweeted on March 8, 2020: "I'm proud to lead a country where women are valued and empowered to reach their full potential. Let's keep working towards a more equal world #InternationalWomensDay". This tweet exemplifies how female leaders perform leadership identities through language, aligning with the study's objective to explore how female politicians construct leadership identities on Twitter. Ardern's statement actively constructs a reality where women are valued and empowered, reinforcing gender equality (Butler, 1990). This performative language shapes social realities, promoting gender equality and inspiring others to work towards a shared vision (Bass, 1985).

Butler's performativity theory (1990) provides a lens to understand how Ardern's language performs leadership identity, constructing her as a leader who prioritizes women's empowerment. The use of #InternationalWomensDay aligns New Zealand with international movements, reinforcing the significance of gender equality (McIlvenny, 2002). This tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform leadership, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. Research by Kabeer (2012) and the World Bank (2012) highlights the impact of empowering women and girls on economic growth, education, health, and peace. This tweet's emphasis on women's empowerment aligns with these findings, demonstrating the potential for leaders to shape social realities and promote positive change.

SELECTED TWEET 2. *Shahnaz Wazir Ali (**Pakistan**) (March 8, 2021): "Empowering women is*

crucial for a prosperous society. Let's work together to create opportunities and break barriers #WomenEmpowerment #IWD"

ANALYSIS: Shahnaz Wazir Ali's tweet on International Women's Day in 2021 offers a compelling example of how leaders can promote gender equality and women's empowerment through language. When she states, "Empowering women is crucial for a prosperous society. Let's work together to create opportunities and break barriers," she is emphasizing the importance of collective action in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. Ali's tweet demonstrates how leaders can use language to inspire and motivate others to work towards a shared vision of gender equality. This type of language can be seen as a manifestation of transformational leadership, where leaders inspire and motivate others to work towards a shared vision (Bass, 1985).

Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory (1990), Ali's language performs leadership identity, constructing her as a leader who prioritizes women's empowerment. The use of hashtags #WomenEmpowerment and #IWD further illustrates the role of language in constructing gender equality, aligning Pakistan with international movements towards gender equality and reinforcing the significance of this issue (McIlvenny, 2002). Ali's language emphasizes the importance of women's empowerment, contributing to a broader discourse around gender equality and promoting a culture of empowerment. This tweet addresses the research question, "How do female politicians construct leadership identities on Twitter?" Ali's tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform leadership, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. Research by Kabeer (2012) and the World Bank (2012) highlights the impact of empowering women and girls on economic growth, education, health, and peace. Emphasizing the importance of collective action and creating opportunities for women, Ali's tweet demonstrates how leaders can promote positive change and contribute to a more equitable society.

SELECTED TWEET 3. *Sima Bahous (UN Women Executive Director)* **(New York, USA)** *(March 8, 2024): "Let's accelerate action for gender equality and empower women and girls to reach their full potential #InternationalWomensDay"*

ANALYSIS: Sima Bahous's tweet on International Women's Day in 2024 exemplifies how leaders can promote gender equality and women's empowerment through concise and impactful language. Her statement, "Let's accelerate action for gender equality and empower women and girls to reach their full potential," serves as a call to action, emphasizing the need for collective

effort to advance gender equality. This type of language can be seen as a manifestation of transformational leadership, where leaders inspire and motivate others to work towards a shared vision (Bass, 1985).

Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory (1990), Bahous's language performs leadership identity, constructing her as a leader who prioritizes women's empowerment. The use of the hashtag #InternationalWomensDay aligns with global movements towards gender equality, reinforcing the significance of this issue and positioning UN Women as a key player in the international community's efforts to promote gender equality.

This tweet addresses the research question, "How do female politicians/leaders construct leadership identities on Twitter?" Bahous's tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform leadership, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. Research by Kabeer (2012) and the World Bank (2012) highlights the impact of empowering women and girls on economic growth, education, health, and peace. Emphasizing the need to accelerate action for gender equality, her tweet demonstrates how leaders can promote positive change and contribute to a more equitable society.

Furthermore, the simplicity and accessibility of Bahous's language make it an effective tool for inspiring others to join the effort to promote gender equality (Avolio et al., 2009). This performance of leadership embodies the values of gender equality and empowerment, constructing her identity as a leader who prioritizes women's empowerment.

SELECTED TWEET 4. *Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda (**UN Women Deputy Executive Director**) (March 8, 2025): "Let's accelerate action for gender equality and empower women and girls to reach their full potential. We must work together to create a more equal world #InternationalWomensDay"*

ANALYSIS: Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda's tweet on International Women's Day in 2025 exemplifies how leaders can promote gender equality and women's empowerment through language that emphasizes collective action and shared responsibility. Her statement, "Let's accelerate action for gender equality and empower women and girls to reach their full potential. We must work together to create a more equal world," serves as a call to action, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to advance gender equality. This type of language can be seen as a manifestation of transformational leadership, where leaders inspire and motivate others to work towards a shared vision (Bass, 1985). Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory (1990), Gumbonzvanda's language performs leadership identity, constructing her as a leader

who prioritizes women's empowerment and collective action. The emphasis on working together highlights the importance of partnerships and collective action in promoting gender equality, aligning with research on the importance of collaboration in achieving social change (Ansell & Gash, 2008). This tweet addresses the research question, "How do female politicians/leaders construct leadership identities on Twitter?" Gumbonzvanda's tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform leadership, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. Research by Kabeer (2012) and the World Bank (2012) highlights the impact of empowering women and girls on economic growth, education, health, and peace. Emphasizing the need for collective action, her tweet demonstrates how leaders can promote positive change and contribute to a more equitable society.

SELECTED TWEET 5. *Melinda French Gates* **(Philanthropist**): *March 8, 2025: "Empowering women and girls is essential for achieving a more equal world. Let's invest in their education, health, and economic opportunities #InternationalWomensDay"*

ANALYSIS: Melinda French Gates's tweet on International Women's Day in 2025 exemplifies how influential figures can perform gender equality and women's empowerment through language and action. Her statement, "Empowering women and girls is essential for achieving a more equal world. Let's invest in their education, health, and economic opportunities," performs a call to action, emphasizing the importance of strategic investments in promoting women's empowerment. This performative language can be seen as a manifestation of leadership, where Gates inspires and motivates others to work towards a shared vision of gender equality (Butler, 1990; Bass, 1985).

Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory (1990), Gates's language performs leadership identity, constructing her as a leader who prioritizes women's empowerment. The emphasis on investing in women's education, health, and economic opportunities aligns with research highlighting the critical role of these areas in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (Kabeer, 2012; World Bank, 2012).

This tweet addresses the research question, "How do influential figures construct leadership identities on Twitter?" Gates's tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform leadership, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. The use of the hashtag #InternationalWomensDay further illustrates the role of language in constructing gender equality, aligning with global movements towards gender equality and reinforcing the significance of this issue. Research by Sen and Östlin (2008) highlights the importance of

addressing the social determinants of health and education in promoting gender equality. Gates's tweet emphasizes the need for investment in these areas, demonstrating how influential figures can promote positive change and contribute to a more equitable society.

MEN'S TWEETS

CALL TO ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY SELECTED TWEET 6. *António Guterres (**UN Secretary-General**) (March 8, 2025): "On International Women's Day, let's reaffirm our commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. We must work together to create a world where women and girls can thrive #IWD2025"*

ANALYSIS: António Guterres's tweet on International Women's Day in 2025 exemplifies how leaders can perform gender equality and women's empowerment through language. His statement, "On International Women's Day, let's reaffirm our commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. We must work together to create a world where women and girls can thrive," performs a call to action, emphasizing the importance of collective effort in promoting gender equality. This performative language can be seen as a manifestation of leadership, where Guterres inspires and motivates others to work towards a shared vision of gender equality (Butler, 1990; Bass, 1985).

Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory (1990), Guterres's language performs leadership identity, constructing him as a leader who prioritizes women's empowerment. The emphasis on collective action highlights the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility in promoting gender equality, aligning with research on the role of partnerships in achieving social change (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

This tweet addresses the research question, "How do leaders construct leadership identities on Twitter?" Guterres's tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform leadership, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. Research by Kabeer (2012) and the World Bank (2012) highlights the impact of empowering women and girls on economic growth, education, health, and peace. Emphasizing the need for collective action, Guterres's tweet demonstrates how leaders can promote positive change and contribute to a more equitable society.

The use of the hashtag #IWD2025 further illustrates the role of language in constructing gender equality, aligning with global movements towards gender equality and reinforcing the significance of this issue. This performance of leadership inspires others to join the effort to promote gender equality, contributing to a broader discourse around women's

empowerment.

SELECTED TWEET 7. *Western Australian Government (**Australia**) (March 8, 2025): "March Forward: For ALL Women and Girls. Let's demonstrate our commitment to gender equality and celebrate the contributions women make to our communities #InternationalWomensDay"*

ANALYSIS: The Western Australian Government's tweet on International Women's Day in 2025 exemplifies how governments can perform gender equality and women's empowerment through language and action. Stating "March Forward: For ALL Women and Girls. Let's demonstrate our commitment to gender equality and celebrate the contributions women make to our communities," the government performs a call to action, emphasizing the importance of collective effort in promoting gender equality. This performative language can be seen as a manifestation of leadership, where the government inspires and motivates others to work towards a shared vision of gender equality (Butler, 1990; Bass, 1985).

Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory (1990), the government's language performs leadership identity, constructing it as a leader who prioritizes women's empowerment. The theme "March Forward: For ALL Women and Girls" highlights the importance of forward momentum in achieving gender equality, emphasizing the need to turn commitments into action. Research shows that empowering women and girls can have a profound impact on economic growth, education, health, and peace (Kabeer, 2012; World Bank, 2012). Celebrating the contributions women make to communities acknowledges the value and impact of women's work.

This tweet addresses the research question, "How do governments construct leadership identities on Twitter?" The government's tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform leadership, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. The use of the hashtag #InternationalWomensDay further illustrates the role of language in constructing gender equality, positioning the government as a leader prioritizing women's empowerment.

The government's emphasis on collective action and celebrating women's contributions demonstrates how leaders can promote positive change and contribute to a more equitable society. Research by Ely and Meyerson (2000) highlights the importance of challenging and changing organizational cultures to promote gender equality. The government's language and actions can be seen as a step towards creating a more inclusive and equitable culture.

SELECTED TWEET 8. *IWMI Events Team (**Sri Lanka**) (March 8, 2025): "This year's theme 'Accelerate Action' hopes to speed up progress worldwide to achieve gender parity. Let's celebrate the*

achievements of women and marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality #IWD2025"

ANALYSIS: The IWMI Events Team's tweet on International Women's Day in 2025 exemplifies how organizations can promote gender equality and women's empowerment through language and action. The tweet states, "This year's theme 'Accelerate Action' hopes to speed up progress worldwide to achieve gender parity. Let's celebrate the achievements of women and marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality #IWD2025." This performative language can be seen as a manifestation of leadership, where the organization inspires and motivates others to work towards a shared vision of gender equality (Butler, 1990; Bass, 1985).

Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory (1990), the organization's language performs leadership identity, constructing it as a leader who prioritizes women's empowerment. The theme "Accelerate Action" highlights the importance of swift progress in achieving gender parity, emphasizing the need for collective effort to address existing gaps. Research suggests that accelerating action for gender equality requires a multifaceted approach, including policy changes, education, and community engagement (Kabeer, 2012; World Bank, 2012).

This tweet addresses the research question, "How do organizations construct leadership identities on Twitter?" The organization's tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform leadership, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. The use of the hashtag #IWD2025 further illustrates the role of language in constructing gender equality, positioning the organization as a leader prioritizing women's empowerment.

The organization's call to action for accelerating women's equality aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5, which focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (United Nations, 2015). Research by Cornwall (2016) highlights the importance of critically examining existing power structures and social norms that perpetuate inequality to accelerate action for gender equality.

SELECTED TWEET 9. *Justin Trudeau (**Canada**) (March 8, 2025): "On International Women's Day, we recognize the incredible contributions of women and girls to our society. Let's continue to work towards a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive #IWD2025"*

ANALYSIS: Justin Trudeau's tweet on International Women's Day in 2025 exemplifies how leaders can promote gender equality and women's empowerment through language. The tweet states, "On International Women's Day, we recognize the incredible contributions of women and girls to our society. Let's continue to work towards a world where everyone has the

opportunity to thrive #IWD2025." This performative language can be seen as a manifestation of leadership, where Trudeau acknowledges and values the contributions of women and girls, inspiring others to work towards a shared vision of gender equality (Butler, 1990; Bass, 1985).

Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory (1990), Trudeau's language performs leadership identity, constructing him as a leader who prioritizes women's empowerment. The call to action "Let's continue to work towards a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive" emphasizes the importance of collective effort in achieving gender equality. Research suggests that collective action can lead to significant progress in promoting women's empowerment and addressing existing inequalities (Kabeer, 2012; World Bank, 2012).

The tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform leadership, promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. The use of #IWD2025 positions Trudeau as a leader prioritizing women's empowerment. Recognizing women's contributions constructs a narrative of appreciation and inclusivity. Leaders' public statements shape societal attitudes towards women's empowerment (Lovenduski, 2016).

MEN'S TWEETS

PERSONAL TRIBUTE

SELECTED TWEET 10. *Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal) (March 8, 2025): "To the incredible women in my life — Gio, my daughters, my mother and my sisters —thank you for your strength and love. You inspire me every day. Happy International Women's Day!"*

ANALYSIS: Cristiano Ronaldo's tweet on International Women's Day in 2025 exemplifies how public figures can perform appreciation and admiration for women through language. The tweet states, "To the incredible women in my life — Gio, my daughters, my mother and my sisters —thank you for your strength and love. You inspire me every day. Happy International Women's Day!" This performative language can be seen as a manifestation of emotional expression, where Ronaldo acknowledges and values the women in his life, constructing a narrative of gratitude and admiration (Butler, 1990).

Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory (1990), Ronaldo's language performs a personal and emotional identity, constructing him as a figure who values and respects women. The tweet's emphasis on the strength and love of the women in his life serves as a form of performative utterance, reinforcing a narrative of appreciation and respect. Research suggests that positive relationships with women can influence men's attitudes and behaviors towards gender equality (Connell, 2005).

This tweet addresses the research question, "How do public figures construct identities on Twitter?" Ronaldo's tweet demonstrates how language is used to perform appreciation and admiration, promoting a positive narrative around women's empowerment. The personal nature of the tweet adds an emotional dimension to the tribute, highlighting the importance of recognizing and valuing the contributions of women in personal and public spheres.

The emphasis on specific women in his life, such as his mother and sisters, adds a personal touch to the tribute, demonstrating how personal relationships can shape attitudes towards women's empowerment. Research by Kabeer (2012) highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing women's contributions in all spheres of life.

DISCUSSION

This study's findings reveal three emerging themes in the tweets of men and women politicians on International Women's Day: Empowering Women and Girls (Women), Call to Action for Gender Equality (Men and Organizations), and Personal Tribute (Men). These themes provide insight into the discursive strategies employed by politicians to construct and perform leadership identities on Twitter.

The theme of Empowering Women and Girls, predominantly featured in women's tweets, highlights the importance of promoting women's empowerment and challenging patriarchal norms. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the need for women in leadership positions to prioritize women's empowerment and challenge existing power structures (Ross, 2010). The use of empowering language and hashtags by women politicians on Twitter serves as a form of performative utterance, constructing a narrative of appreciation and inclusivity (Butler, 1990).

The Call to Action for Gender Equality theme, prominent in men's and organizations' tweets, underscores the significance of collective action in achieving gender equality. This finding supports existing research highlighting the importance of men's involvement in promoting gender equality and challenging patriarchal norms (Kabeer, 2012). The use of collective language and calls to action by men and organizations on Twitter demonstrates how leaders can promote positive change and contribute to a more equitable society.

The Personal Tribute theme, exclusively featured in men's tweets, reveals a distinct discursive strategy employed by men politicians to construct and perform leadership identities on Twitter. By paying tribute to women in their personal lives, men politicians construct a narrative of appreciation and respect, aligning with previous research on the importance of

personal relationships in shaping attitudes towards women's empowerment (Connell, 2005).

This study's findings contribute to a deeper understanding of leadership, identity, and power dynamics in the digital age. The use of performativity theory provides a valuable lens for examining how politicians construct and negotiate leadership identities on Twitter. The study highlights the importance of considering the complex interplay between identity, power, and performance in the digital age.

The findings of this study have implications for future research on leadership identity construction in the digital age. Further studies could explore the discursive strategies employed by politicians on other social media platforms, or examine the impact of Twitter on leadership identity construction in different contexts.

RESULTS

The results of this study reveal the following findings:

RQ 1. Female politicians utilize Twitter to construct and perform leadership identities through discourse by emphasizing themes of Empowering Women and Girls. They employ discursive strategies such as using empowering language and hashtags to promote women's empowerment and challenge patriarchal norms. This finding suggests that female politicians use Twitter to perform leadership identities that prioritize women's empowerment and inclusivity.

RQ 2. Female politicians employ discursive strategies such as using empowering language and hashtags to negotiate and reinforce their leadership personas on Twitter. These strategies enable them to construct a narrative of appreciation and inclusivity, challenging existing power structures and promoting positive change. The use of Twitter by female politicians provides a platform for them to perform leadership identities that are authentic and empowering.

The study's findings also reveal that male politicians employ different discursive strategies, such as paying Personal Tribute to women in their lives and issuing Calls to Action for Gender Equality. These findings provide insight into the complex interplay between identity, power, and performance in the digital age. Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of leadership identity construction and performance on Twitter, highlighting the importance of considering the complex interplay between identity, power, and performance in the digital age.

KEY FINDINGS

- Female politicians use Twitter to construct and perform leadership identities that prioritize women's empowerment and inclusivity. They employ discursive strategies like

empowering language and hashtags to promote women's empowerment and challenge patriarchal norms.

- Male politicians, in contrast, focus on paying Personal Tribute to women in their lives and issuing Calls to Action for Gender Equality.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

This study's findings suggest several avenues for future research, including conducting a longitudinal study to examine how politicians' Twitter discourse evolves over time, comparing Twitter discourse across different social media platforms, investigating how politicians from diverse backgrounds construct and perform leadership identities on Twitter, examining the impact of politicians' Twitter discourse on public opinion, policy, and social change, comparing Twitter discourse of politicians across different cultural contexts, and exploring the role of hashtags in promoting social change and constructing leadership identities on Twitter.

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