Social Media Shaping Youth's Perception of Moroccan Female Political Leaders

Nouhaila Bourass[1], Anoire El Attari[2], Hind Belaziz[3], Abderrahman Tenkoul[2], Abdelghanie Ennam[1]

[1]University Ibn Tofail, Kenitra, Morocco

[2]Euromed University of Fes, Morocco

[3]AbdelmalekEssaadi University, Tangier, Morocco

Correspondence: Anoire El Attari, Euromed University of Fes, Morocco.

Abstract

This paper addresses the role of social media consumption amongst youth and its implications in shaping their perceptions of Moroccan female political leaders. Based on examining previous scholarly works, this research investigates a large body of literature including how social media platforms impacts youth's engagement in political and civic activities. The role of social media in shaping perceptions about female political leaders is also discussed from a theoretical standpoint. Aiming to identify, the influence of a number of identified form the literature, this paper adopted a quantitative strategy utilizing a survey that was addressed to (N=309) participant targeted on both social media platforms and within university campus. Based on the descriptives, the correlation analysis and regression analysis of the data gathered, this study identified that the level of education, social media exposure, online interactions, political awareness, and cultural factors significantly influence youth's perceptions of female political leaders. These findings highlight the factors influencing young adults' perceptions about the Moroccan political landscape and the importance of media education and literacy to enhance critical thinking skills amongst Moroccan youth.

Keywords: perception, moroccan youth, female leadership, political leadership, social media consumption

1. Introduction

It is well-established that the spread of new media in the contemporary era is closely linked to the active engagement of youth (Keating & Melis, 2017). This demographic category is seen as the primary group that seeks to assert their voices through the hybrid and grassroots media platforms available today. In other words, new media platforms provide a conduit for today's politically active youth to voice their concerns and exert their influence (Kahne et al., 2012). However, academic research has recently focused on understanding how youth perceive this media environment as empowering, enabling them to exercise expressive and discursive influence within their localized cultural spheres (Evans, 2023; Harff & Schmuck, 2023). The academic focus is on elucidating how this media landscape empowers politically active youth to vocal their opinions on public matters, and how they are influenced by shaping their leadership and representation, particularly female political leaders.

The public's perception of youth, especially on women in political leadership roles is a vital component of modern political discourse. Young individuals who participate in media-based activities centered on political matters and public concerns frequently aim to reinvigorate and reframe the symbolic realm of the public sphere (Slavtcheva-Petkova, 2023). Their primary message typically emphasizes social justice, superseding personal agendas(Clay, 2012). Politically engaged youth often utilize diverse communicative methods to challenge established norms and traditions, thereby redefining the boundaries of political involvement and representation.

Having said that, studying how social media can sway or confirm youth opinions about different matters particularly women leadership has become an essential section of political discourse in a society. It attracts not only the youth who are active in politics but also aids in forming opinions for those who are not active participants in political issues and discussions; leading us to grasp a sense of political efficacy and interest.

Within the same framework, having to study youth perception and how much of influence social media has on it; has interested researchers worldwide. However, within the Moroccan context, not many studies have been done on how

youth's perception of female political leadership. Therefore, this study calls for the eagerness and the urgency to conduct research about such subject to fill in the existing literature gap on the matter.

This study came to identify the familiarity of youth with political leadership and examining whether gender and other social dimension have any impact on youth's perception about political leadership.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram and Tiktok have been seen as influential used as a place to share views among youths on the current issues. This study is essential as it allows the researchers to examine how the youth react to female political leadership and how they choose to engage or not with such issue circulating on Social media.

To address this research gap, the following research question needs to be addressed: How does the Moroccan youths' perceptions of female political leadership on social media relate to their demographics, social media exposure, online interactions, political awareness and cultural context?

To answer this research question, a number of hypotheses also had to be designed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Demographic factors, such as age, gender, and education level, influence the political affiliations of Moroccan youth.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The exposure and engagement to content related to female political leaders on social media significantly influences perception about female political leaders.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The belief that gender roles in society affect the perception of female political leaders significantly predicts positive feelings towards the representation of female political leaders.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The belief that gender roles in society affect the perception of female political leaders significantly predicts negative feelings towards the representation of female political leaders.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Higher political awareness is significantly associated with more varied opinions about the representation of female political leaders in Morocco.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Active engagement in discussions about female political leaders on social media influences the tone (positive, negative, or neutral) of these discussions.

Following, a literature review was methodically constructed on the topic, and then we address the methodology used to answer the research question including the sampling strategy, the demographics of the sample. Followed by reporting the main results and a discussion.

2. The Role of Social Media in Influencing Youth Political Opinions

In today's era of digital empowerment, the proliferation of social networking sites has dramatically changed the way political discourse and opinions are delivered, especially among younger individuals. This study delves into the complex effects of social media on young people's political attitudes and behavior. By examining real-world cases and theoretical frameworks, this discussion aims to elucidate how social media platforms shape people's opinions shedding light on broader identities, democratic processes, and social discourse.

2.1 Understanding the Digital Landscape and the Shift of Human Interaction

The dominance of today's new media represents another transformative period (Kahne, 2014) the popularity of social media has grown rapidly, especially among young people in recent years. The widespread adoption of technologies has sparked interest, in these new communication tools and how humans can utilize them for their own purposes. Academic researchers worldwide continue to show interest, in these platforms exploring the implications, potentials and challenges they bring forth.

Meaningful social interactions and relationships are at the core of human wellbeing (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Kawachi and Berkman, 2001). The shifting towards the virtual world has brought with it a change on the way we interact, along with it changing our identities to digital citizens that project their real identity on the internet world, taking off our masks. This has been described by Jenkins et al (2006), by the term "participatory culture", because users are increasingly involved in creating web content, as well as consuming it, they are a part of the change.

The face-to-face interaction is absent, but people still consider social media as a bridge to connect with the world. Studies of geographically dispersed families' digital communication patterns (e.g., migrant families, persons in long distance relationships) have found that voice, particularly video conversations, provide a sense of co-presence, allowing people to feel connected even though they live apart (Baldassar, 2016; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016; Neustädter and Greenberg, 2012). To explain this more the friend request you send on Facebook, the like you leave on Instagram to someone, the tweet you write on twitter, the comment you leave on YouTube's comments section, and an endless number of other user-generated decisions are all a fuel to populate the use of social media that push media creators to invent more.

Within the same frame, without humans' digital socialization and interaction social media sites would turn into a ghost town, according to Boyd and Elisson (2008) '' the backbone of the social media service is the user profile''. Thomas and Brown (2011) argued that in the culture of new media, people learn through their interaction and participation with one another and share their interests and opinions.

3. The Importance of the Digital Sphere in Developing Political Discussions

The digital sphere has become an important site for promoting political discussion and shaping social discussions. Coleman and Blumler's (2009) study examine the transformative potential of the Internet to promote democratic citizenship, shedding light on how online forums facilitate political participation and discourse and Stromer-Galley's (2002) comparative analysis between people and in online political communication. Unveils Hindman's (2008) study provides important insights into the pseudo-digital democracies, which exacerbate persistent inequalities in access and participation despite the proliferation of online platforms. The following literature emphasizes the importance of the digital realm in fostering political dialogue, and amplifying voices.

3.1 Youth's Web Communities and Their Influence on Political Discussions

In the recent years, political conversation plays, alongside with the help of technology, an essential role in helping youth developing their own identities by engaging and participating in the political process. Their political participation is the spark that fueled the emergence of web communities where they get to discuss issues, learn information, and act upon them. This can be an enormous potential of fostering youth engagement in political discussions. Web communities are referred to as online communities or virtual communities; there are other reasonable definitions of web community. According to Howard Rheingold (1994). He wrote: "...virtual communities are cultural aggregations that emerge when enough people bump into each other often enough in cyberspace. A virtual community is a group of people [...] who exchanges words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks" (p.57).

Research by Gil de Zuñiga, Jung, and Valenzuela (2012) examines how participation in online communities can increase adolescents' social capital and political participation, and actively participate in political discussions. Similarly, Boyd (2007) discusses the role of social networking sites in promoting political expression among young people, emphasizing the importance of online platforms for amplifying, and politicizing their voices participation in the development is emphasized. This study highlights the impact of network communities in empowering young individuals to participate in political discussions and contribute to the democratic process.

4. Methodology

The present study uses a quantitative research approach to investigate Moroccan youth's perception of female political leadership. To do so, a survey was conceptualized integrating multiple choice questions, open-ended and close-ended questions.

The structure of the questionnaire developed to collect data on various aspects related the research topic such as (e.g., social media exposure, political awareness etc.…).

Due to the targeted social category of this study "youth," the best fitting strategy to administer the survey was online platforms and social media. Indeed, we published our survey on Facebook groups, LinkedIn, and X (previously twitter) and sent via email to university students. To include a wider range of respondents, the same survey was also administered via in-person interviews on campus.

In total, 309 responses to survey were collected; Table 1 describes the main demographic characteristics of our sample. The data collected was then coded and analyzed on the statistic software SPSS version 25.

At first a descriptive analysis was conducted, providing an overview of the sample characteristics and behaviors. While chi-square and Monte Carlo tests, a correlation and a regression analysis were used to explore the relationships between variables and tests hypotheses.

5. Study Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Combined cross-tabulation of Age, Gender, and Education level with Political affiliation

Age Range	Left	Right	Centre	Not politically affiliated	Prefer not to say	Total
Under 18	1	0	0	2	2	5
19 to 24	12	12	28	101	56	209
25 to 35	5	3	4	71	9	92
36 and older	1	0	0	2	0	3
Total	19	15	32	176	67	309

Gender	Left	Right	Centre	Not politically affiliated	Prefer not to say	Total
Male	7	5	17	94	28	151
Female	12	10	15	82	39	158
Total	19	15	32	176	67	309

Education	Left	Right	Centre	Not politically affiliated	Prefer not to say	Total
High school graduate	4	1	8	21	19	53
Bachelor's degree	6	9	19	50	29	113
Master's degree	7	4	4	88	17	120
Masters and higher	2	1	1	17	2	23
Total	19	15	32	176	67	30

Table 1 is a cross tabulation that show the relationship between the sample's demographics such (Age, Gender, and Education) and their political affiliations. The distribution of these results varies across age groups, with the majority being between 19 and 24 years old with diverse political affiliations. However, the majority if the respondents are either not politically affiliated or prefers not to express their affiliations.

When it comes to the gender of the respondents, we can see males being slightly more politically disengaged. Depending on the educational level on the other hand, there is a clear tendency to not being politically affiliated with the respondents that have higher education degrees.

Table 2. Chi-square and Monte Carlo Simulation tests

Variable	Category	Chi-Square	df	Asymptotic Sig.	Monte Carlo Sig. (Bilat.)	Confidence Interval (Bilat.)	Monte Carlo Sig. (Unilat.)	Confidence Interval (Unilat.)
Age		32.486	15	.006	.053	.047 - .059		
Gender		5.666	5	.340	.347	.335 - .359		
Education		40.251	15	.000	.001	.000 - .002		

The results of table 2 indicate are a comparison between, the chi-square value and the Monte Carlo value for each variable tested. In the case of age, the p-value for the Pearson square (p-value=0,006) suggest that there is a significant difference between the age groups. However, the Monte Carlo test indicates a p-value of 0.53 suggesting that age does not significantly affect the political affiliations.

Similarly for the variable gender, the Monte Carlo p-value 0.340>0.05 suggests that there is not a significant association between gender and the political affiliation of the respondents, however for the variable education the results show a signification association p-value=0.000, indicating that the level of education does influence the political affiliation of Moroccan youth.

Based on the results suggesting that age and gender do not significantly influence political affiliation whereas education does influence their political affiliation. We can partially reject H1*: Demographic factors, such as age, gender, and education level, influence the political affiliations of Moroccan youth*.

5.2 Moroccan Youth Media Preferences: Traditional vs Social Media

Table 3. Media preferences of the surveyed sample

		Answers	
		N	Percentage
Media preferences	Social media	255	52,7%
	Radio	28	5,8%
	Television	135	27,9%
	Online websites	11	2,3%
	Newspapers	55	11,4%
Total		484	100,0%

When asked about their media preferences, social media emerges as the most preferred platform; indeed 52.7% of the respondents expressed their favoritism towards this medium. However, 27.9.5 % of the surveyed indicates that the television as the second most preferred media channel.

Despite the rise of social media amongst youth, "traditional media" is still considered as a source of news, entertainment for the population. In our case, the Radio 5.8%, and other media platforms such print media 11.4% or online websites 2.3 %, may not be as dominant but still they might hold certain relevance for the seniors that are not targeted in this research.

5.3 Social Media Preferences Amongst Moroccan Youth

Table 4. Cross tabulation between social media platforms preferences by age groups

		Which social media do you use the most?							
		Instagram	Facebook	Tiktok	LinkedIn	X	Youtube	Other	Total
Age	Under 18	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	5
	19 to 24	116	15	22	6	12	31	7	209
	25 to 35	65	12	1	4	0	8	2	92
	36 and older	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
	Total	183	28	25	11	13	40	9	309

With social media being the most preferred amongst youth, it was important for us to analyze which platform (Facebook, Tiktok, Instagram, YouTube, etc.,) the respondents used. Table 3 shows that Instagram emerges as the most popular social media platform (N=183) followed by YouTube (N=40), Facebook (N=28), Tiktok as new emerging platform (N=25) and the rest shared between X (N=13), LinkedIn (N=11) and other (N=9).

However, when comparing these preferences based on the age group of the respondents, it is clear that there is a significant difference in the social media consumption between the younger generations (19 to 24) and (25 to 35) are more inclined to the use of social media (N=209; N=92) compared to the young adults (36 and older) with (N=3).

This suggests that even within social media platforms, there are significant differences that may depend on the type and nature of content that can be found, e.g. the audiovisual nature of the content found on Instagram being more attractive to Moroccan youth more than the text-based content which characterizes X (Twitter previously).

5.4 Frequency of Encounter and Perception

Table 5. Cross-tabulation of frequency of encountering Female Leadership content and their portrayal

	Positively	Negatively	Neutral	Not sure	Total
Rarely	21	9	34	27	91
Occasionally	41	23	75	11	150
Frequently	20	7	19	9	55
Very frequently	2	3	4	4	13
Total	84	42	132	51	309

Table 4 Shows, how the respondents perceive the portrayal of Moroccan female leadership, in this case: (Positively / Negatively / Neutral / Not sure) but also each response was categorized based on the frequency of encounter of this type of content.

The results show different distributions of responses within our sample. Respondents who encounter content related to female leadership more often tend to have a positive view of it, and from the other hand a negative portrayal is perceived when the of consumption of this content is less frequent. Also, considerable number of respondents (N = 132, N=51), are either perceiving neutral or not sure about how to respond.

These results, indicate that also the frequency of encountering content related to female leadership influences the perception that the respondents have about them, but the fact that most of the respondents do not have a clear position about it suggests that other factors may influence these decisions. Based on these results, H2 can be accepted as of media consumption preferences influence perceptions of female political leaders.

5.5 Active Engagement in Shaping the General Tone of Political Discussions about Female Leaders

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of engagement in online-discussion about female leaders and the tone of the discussion

Do you actively engage in discussions about female political leaders on social media?	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Not engaged	Total
Yes	36	12	37	5	90
No	42	43	60	74	219
Total	78	55	97	79	309

As shown in Table 6, many respondents that actively engage in discussions on social media about their female leaders tend to perceive these discussions as neutral (N=37), followed by positive (N=36) and negative (N=12). However, in the case of non-engagement in political discussions, the perception of those discussion is noticed to be more negatively (N=43).

These findings also suggest the choice of engaging/not engaging in political discussions online also participates in shaping the perception of the respondents about their female leaders. Moreover, the high number of respondents who are not engaged (N=79) also raises the question about the reasons behind this disengagement.

6. Correlation Analysis

Table 7. Correlation matrix between the use of social media, content exposure and perceptions of female political leaders

		Use of social media	Frequency of encountering content about female political leaders	Perception of female political leaders	Engagement in discussions about female political leaders online
Use of social media	Coefficient	1	-,115*	-0,011	,136*
	p-value		0,044	0,846	0,016
	N	309	309	309	309
Frequency of encountering content about female political leaders	Coefficient	-,115*	1	-0,072	-,222**
	p-value	0,044		0,209	0,000
	N	309	309	309	309
Perception of female political leaders	Coefficient	-0,011	-0,072	1	0,084
	p-value	0,846	0,209		0,139
	N	309	309	309	309
Engagement in discussions about female political leaders online	Coefficient	,136*	-,222**	0,084	1
	p-value	0,016	0,000	0,139	
	N	309	309	309	309

Results of the correlation analysis in Table 7 showed, shows that the use of social media negatively correlates with perceptions of female political leaders (Coefficient=-0.011) however p-value=0.846>0.05 suggests that this correlation does not have a significant influence. Also in the case of the frequency of exposure to content related female political leaders, results show that even though the negative correlation (Coefficient=-0.072) the association is not significant p-value>0.05. The same result, is shown in the case of active engagement with a positive coefficient Coefficient=0.084 that suggests that active engagement positively influences perceptions about female political leaders, however the association is also not significant p-value=0,139>0.05.

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis and the correlation analysis, we can conclude that H2 stating that: *The exposure and engagement to content related to female political leaders on social media significantly influences perception about female political leaders.*

7. Regression Analysis

7.1 Positive Perceptions of Female Political Leaders

Table 8. Parameter estimates for multinomial logistic regression predicting positive perception of female political leadership

Predictor	B	SE	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp(B)
Constant	-1.765	0.524	11.362	1	0.001	-	-
Social media influence (Not influential)	0.215	0.487	0.194	1	0.660	1.239	[0.477, 3.222]
Social media influence (Slightly influential)	0.531	0.386	1.892	1	0.169	1.700	[0.798, 3.622]
Social media influence (Moderately influential)	0.059	0.408	0.021	1	0.886	1.060	[0.476, 2.360]
Social media influence (Very influential)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Engage in discussions (Yes)	0.606	0.310	3.826	1	0.050	1.832	[0.999, 3.361]
Engage in discussions (No)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cultural norms (Not at all)	-0.133	0.510	0.068	1	0.795	0.876	[0.323, 2.378]
Cultural norms (Somewhat)	0.418	0.324	1.669	1	0.196	1.520	[0.806, 2.867]
Cultural norms (Strongly)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Media literacy (Low)	0.559	0.560	0.998	1	0.318	1.749	[0.584, 5.239]
Media literacy (Moderate)	0.364	0.339	1.152	1	0.283	1.439	[0.740, 2.795]
Media literacy (High)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender roles (Yes)	1.157	0.321	13.015	1	0.000	3.180	[1.696, 5.961]
Gender roles (No)	0.333	0.511	0.427	1	0.514	1.396	[0.513, 3.797]
Gender roles (Not sure)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-

As found in Table 8, the perceived social media influence does not significantly change the odds of having a positive perception of female political leaders. The categories "Not influential at all" (B=0.215, p=0660), "Slightly influential" (B=0.531, p=0.169), "Moderately influential" (B=0.059, p=0.886) do not vary from the reference group "Very influential".

In the case of the variable "Engagement in discussion" however, the answer "Yes" (B=0.606, p=0.050, Exp(B)= 1.832) shows that it's a significant predictor suggesting that respondents who engage in political discussion online are more likely to have a positive perception female political leaders up to a 83% probability.

Cultural norms also do not show significant effect, indeed "Not at all" (B= -0.133, p=0.795) and "Somewhat" (B=0.418, p=0.196) do not differ when compared with the reference "Strongly". This indicates that in our case the perception of the influence of cultural norms does not intervene in the likelihood of adopting a positive perception of female political leadership.

The perceived media literacy skill of the respondents also does not show significant effect on the positive perception of FL indicating that self-rated media literacy in all categories "Low," "Moderate" and "High" do not predict a positive perception.

However, individuals who acknowledge that gender roles influence perceptions are three times more likely to perceive female leaders positively ("Yes" (B=1.157, p=0.000, Exp(B) = 3.180)). Combining the p value and the certainty interval together show a robust relationship (p=0.000, [1.696, 5.961] but also the results of the other categories "No" and "Not sure" indicate that neither uncertainty nor denial can predict a positive perception of Moroccan female political leaders

7.2 Negative Perceptions of Female Political Leaders

Table 9. Parameter estimates for multinomial logistic regression predicting negative perception of female political leadership

Predictor	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp(B)
Constant	-1.575	0.629	6.273	1	0.012	-	-
Social media influence (Not influential)	-0.616	0.655	0.885	1	0.347	0.540	[0.150, 1.949]
Social media influence (Slightly influential)	0.053	0.451	0.014	1	0.907	1.054	[0.436, 2.549]
Social media influence (Moderately influential)	-0.559	0.496	1.272	1	0.259	0.572	[0.217, 1.510]
Social media influence (Very influential)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Engage in discussions (Yes)	1.057	0.373	8.035	1	0.005	2.879	[1.386, 5.980]
Engage in discussions (No)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cultural norms (Not at all)	-0.414	0.568	0.530	1	0.466	0.661	[0.217, 2.013]
Cultural norms (Somewhat)	-0.998	0.383	6.782	1	0.009	0.369	[0.174, 0.781]
Cultural norms (Strongly)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Media literacy (Low)	1.120	0.678	2.725	1	0.099	3.064	[0.811, 11.577]
Media literacy (Moderate)	0.656	0.444	2.185	1	0.139	1.928	[0.807, 4.603]
Media literacy (High)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender roles (Yes)	0.944	0.429	4.849	1	0.028	2.570	[1.109, 5.952]
Gender roles (No)	0.192	0.697	0.076	1	0.783	1.212	[0.309, 4.751]
Gender roles (Not sure)	0 (reference)	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 9 also examines the factors influencing negative perception of female political leaders. The belief of the influence of social media in all categories reveals as statistically non alternating of negative perceptions (all p-values> 0.05).

Again, engaging in discussions about female leadership on social media is a significant predictor of negative perception. There are 2.88 times more chances of having negative perceptions for individuals who do engage in political discussions online compared to those who are passive to online discussions.

Concerning cultural norms, participate in either heightening of lowering negative perceptions about female political leaders. Indeed, "Somewhat" (p=0.009) believing in cultural norms affecting their perception, interestingly reduces the odds of having negative beliefs compared to those who strongly believe in the power of cultural norms.

In our case, media literacy skills, do not significantly predict negative perceptions. We could argue that the category "Low" may increase the odds (Exp(B) = 3.064), however the results are not statistically significant (p-value>0.05).

Also, as shown in Table 9 people believing in gender roles affecting their perception of female leaders may have higher odds (2.57 compared to those who do not) of having negative perceptions (p-value = 0.028<0.05). Indicating that indeed believing in gender roles can be a predictor of negative perceptions. In the case of people that are not sure about how gender roles may impact their perception the regression analysis shows that it is not a significant predictor.

Overall, based on the results of the regression analysis H3, H4 are accepted because respectively (Exp(B) = 3.180, p < 0.001), (Exp(B) = 2.570, p = 0.028) indicate that the belief in gender roles significantly predicts both positive and negative perceptions.

Also from the data analysis, we may accept H5 because as shown in the results higher political awareness amongst youth is associated with more varied opinions. Table 6 also highlights that youth who actively engage in discussion online tend to perceive them more positively or neutrally compared to the ones who are not engaged which leads us to accepts also H6.

All these findings answer our research question showing a complex dynamic of variables that influence youth perceptions about their female political leader such as their demographics, social media exposure, online interactions, cultural context, and political awareness.

8. Discussion

This research investigated the role of social media in shaping youth's perception of Moroccan female political leaders. Through a quantitative approach, a survey was administered to students both online and in-person collecting (N=309) responses. The data was collected then coded and statistically analyzed using SPSS version 2.5. The results of this study, delve into how variables like, demographic factors, media consumption behaviors and perceptions of cultural norms, political awareness and online engagement affect (positively, negatively) perceptions of female political leaders.

8.1 Demographic Influence

The statistical data analysis indicated that the level of education does influence political affiliations among Moroccan youth whereas age and gender do not have a significant impact. However, as shown by the descriptive statistics in Table 1, the majority of the respondents are either politically disengaged or prefer not to state their political affiliations. (Zyad, 2023) in his research also, discussed the role of demographics with youth online civic engagement and indicated a significant association between demographics and political orientation. Also, (Keating & Melis, 2017) show even with exponential growth of social media, they highlight that youth do not use these platforms for political use.

Gender as a variable also shows differences in distribution, with males showing slightly higher political disengagement than females; agreeing with previous research proving that women in developing counties are becoming more politically active (Prillaman, 2023; Rosen, 2017; Tripp, 2023). Aligning with theories of political efficacy(Craig & Maggiotto, 1982), the results show that individual with higher educational level show higher political disengagement behaviors. It reflects that growing disillusionment and disagreements with the existing political structures may result in higher tendencies to political disengagement among Moroccan youth. Similar results were found by (Snell, 2010) that worked on emerging adults civic and political disengagement highlighting that moral beliefs are a significant predictors of political engagement.

8.2 Media Consumption Behaviors and Perceptions of Female Leaders

Media consumption patterns also show an emerging preference for youth and young adults towards social media, favoring it over traditional media channels. This growing trend in media consumption behaviors was observed also in other studies conducted in various parts of the globe. For example, (Dahle, 2022) analyzed adolescents YouTube consumption patterns in the Norwegian case, and (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022) studied the reasons behind the growing preference towards Tiktok. In our case, the growing preference for Instagram suggests that the visual and interactive nature of the content found on the preference is more appealing, offering a more dynamic way to engage with political content. (Parmelee et al., 2023) study also explains that the heavy use of Instagram in political discussions is due to visual and verbal elements of politicians' posts on the platform.

Our study also shows the importance of frequently encountering content related to female political leaders amongst youth. Frequent exposure to female politicians' content on social media correlates with a positive perception towards them, compared with those who are less likely to be exposed to it. These results converge with (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014) who found that the interaction with political content on social media has a direct effect on offline political participation and an indirect effect on online and offline political expression.

Furthermore, the belief in gender role in shaping perceptions of female political leaders is to be seen as a significant predictor of both positive and negative feeling in our study. This suggests that Moroccan youth are inclined to have strong positive/negative standpoints on their female leaders when they believe that gender roles are important. These results further support the role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002)that discusses the role of perceived incongruity of female gender role an leadership roles.

On the question of the role of engagement in political discussions about female leaders, this study found that active engagement significantly affects the tone of these discussions. Those who participated in online discussions express stronger (Positive/ Negative) opinions compared to those who are not engaged. Similar results were found in the South Korean case where (Kim, 2023) agrees that online engagement in political discussions deepens civic and political engagement and shaping political perceptions.

Other variables were also assessed in this study such as media literacy skills. However, the low statistical significance suggests that it not a significant predictor of positive/negative perceptions of female political leaders.

9. Limitations

This study has potential limitations. There are two major limitations in this study that could be addressed in future research. First, the study focused on a limited sample size leading us to a sample biased. The study only focused on online and social media platforms to conduct it, which may have resulted in giving us only a partial representation of the vast Moroccan youth population. Those without internet access or social media may have been under-represented in the study due to time constraints.

Second, lack of qualitative data and insights; this study primarily focused more on the quantitative aspect with limited open-ended questions. Covering more qualitative methods such as in depth-interviews or focused group could have provided more insights on Moroccan youth's perceptions and experiences concerning political female leadership.

Despite the limitations, the study provides useful insights into Moroccan youth perception about female political leadership. The results add to the expanding corpus of research on youth's participation in political processes and the influence of social media in molding these attitudes. Future study should corroborate these findings with larger-scale studies and more inclusivity, in addition to incorporating qualitative methodologies and taking contextual elements into account while studying young political views and actions.

10. Conclusion

Morocco is, might be slowly facing a new era of youth actively engaging in discussions about different political matters; and they are finding more and more their position in forming political views and voicing them out through social media.

This study attempted to examine specific youth's perception on female political leadership; the research aimed to explore the political engagement (mostly youth in nature) and identify how their discursive practices and engagement in an overall context of social phenomena reveal specific implications, potentials, and challenges. This research is particularly interested in how todays media landscape influences youth and contributes to impacting their perception on political matters. As a result, we attempted to fathom how social media is being used to stimulate youth's political thinking and call into question its direct and indirect impact on their perception.

By investigating social media consumption, we hope to learn more about its underlying patterns, potentials in context, and the types of issues it poses and implies in a specific context of active or passive youths' political participation.

This study considers the full potential of the type of participatory culture undertaken and inhibited by today's media landscape; and strives to address some understanding regarding the continuous rise of a digital culture.

In summary, the purpose of this research is to investigate social media impact on youth's perception about political leadership within the framework of gender, focusing more on female leadership, to understand the intersection in context and to evaluate it using the working theoretical framework at hand.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used ChatGPT 4.0 by OpenAI to proofread and improve readability. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Redfame Publishing.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Copyrights

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