

# Women Leadership in Complex Social Media and Social Networking Systems

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**Abstract** Social media and social network systems today have brought with them an unprecedented wave of change that threatens every aspect of human society. Accordingly, the major elements of every human undertaking are variety, flexibility, and customization. Leadership, which is one of the most important aspects in human development and perhaps the most influential social institution, thus becomes more challenging than ever before as it has to bear with the intricate nature and challenges posed by social media and social network systems. Subjected to women, the challenge gets even more intriguing and mouthwatering indeed since it obtains within the established gender debacle as well as perceptions of people towards women leaders. The challenges encountered and how women leaders can survive in a complex social media and social network world become matters of acute importance to educators, leaders and researchers alike. This paper positions itself as a deliberate attempt and initiative to explore, from a purely realistic angle, the challenge posed by social media and social network to leadership, especially women leadership and how women leaders can engage the said challenge. Premised on the literature gap gaming the world of research in view of the concept in question, an effort to dissect complexity as well as disengagement thereto of the plight of women leadership in the wake of social media and social network systems is neither only an urgent need nor a welcome boost but a groundbreaking accomplishment, so it is hoped.

**Keywords** Leadership • Social media • Social network systems • Complexity

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## 1 Introduction

The contemporary world in which we find ourselves today is born of networks. That is why many authors insist that we had better start viewing our environment as a networked environment. This is due to the massively “interconnected and interacting” components that make up our vital systems in today’s world (Antoniou and Pitsillides 2007). These systems can be classified as complex and indeed Antoniou and Pitsillides (2007) opine that a network is not, first of all, simply complicated. It is, before all, complex. They thus justify our world’s complexity in the following transitions:

- From the Internet to the global ecosystem,
- From the road traffic network to the stock markets, and
- From biological to social systems.

Just as the world we live in is networked, so are the jobs we do and the places where we work. Interesting to note is that there is also a clear relationship between work processes and communication. When the processes of our work change, so does the way we communicate (Asian social media report 2011; Mayfield 2008; Raposas 2002). Because companies have become more networked today, “emerging technologies” have found a way into many companies (this can be through employees or at times the company itself). Most interestingly, “virtual offices” have become a reality due to “globalisation” on the one hand and people working at home on the other. This poses a challenge to contemporary leaders whose response has to be re-inventing the way they perceive leadership and the practices they put across. Realistically, two major reasons stand out for this: first, acceptance of the leader on the part of employees and second, staying competitive within the leadership structures and corridors of power (Fajardo 2014).

The media however plays a critical role in determining the destiny of many processes. This is premised on the assumption that citizens need to have enough information at their disposal in order to make a range of “informed choices” in a supposedly “free market of ideas”. This explains why the media and press are conceived as a “watch dog” and more emphatically “the fourth estate”. To discharge this function however, there must be a number of variables are at play (Raposas 2002):

- critical reporting,
- information flow to citizens,
- intelligent decisions on public issues,
- adequate coverage,
- accuracy of reporting,
- contextualization of information,
- fair reporting,
- balanced reporting,
- proper documentation, and
- back grounding of ideas.

Meanwhile ethical issues should also be considered seriously as reflected in “sensationalism, corruption, trial by publicity, and invasion of privacy with different variations and gradations in each country” (Raposas 2002).

Social media on the other hand include different technologies (web-based and mobile technologies) to alter the communication process and enable the “production and distribution of user-generated content” (Mayfield 2008). In more detail, the characteristics of these technologies include: openness, participation, community, conversation, and connectedness (Mayfield 2008).

Mayfield (2008), and Fajardo (2014) contend that “social media” can be classified as follows:

- social networks like the case of Facebook,
- blogs, or wikis as represented by Wikipedia,
- podcasts as with iTunes,
- forums, or content communities like YouTube.
- microblogging as the in the case of Twitter.

Realistically thus, “Social media” according to Wikipedia is the “social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks”. Premised on the foregone analysis therefore, “social media” is just another face of human interactions. Although the terms “social media” and “social networking” have always been used interchangeably, “social networking” reflects the act of utilizing “social media” platforms (Fajardo 2014). Nevertheless, the definitions of both are rapidly evolving, and each is underpinned by interactive dialogue, collaboration, and making connections.

A number of authors (Fajardo 2014; YouTube Statistics and Viewership 2013) have explored the concepts of “social media” and “social networking” and established them as the common effect that the availability and exploitation of network sites have not only “exploded” in the past decade, but have together caused a transformation in society, viewed in abrogation of “cultural divides” as well as providing information to people at all times and in all places.

A glance at these recent developments in “social media” and “social networking” would reveal the following information in Table 1.

Facebook has been found to be by far the most popular of all social network sites. This conclusion is premised on the revelations of “Pew”, a trusted research center based on a survey that was conducted in September 2014. Even though it is not growing that steadily anymore, “user engagement with the platform” has increased. A comparison of user rates across “social media” sites is presented in Table 2.

**Table 1** Flow of social media and networking sites use (2012)

Social media site	Role	Year founded	No. of users
Facebook	Social networking	2004	1.2 Billion
Twitter	Microblogging	2006	115 Million
YouTube	Video sharing	2005	1 Billion

Source Fajardo (2014), YouTube “Statistics and Viewership” (2013)

**Table 2** User rates for different “social media sites” (2014)

Site	Users (%)
Facebook	71
Twitter	23
Instagram	26
Pinterest	28
LinkedIn	28

*Source* Pew research center (2016): Note should be taken that the rates represent adult users online

Women have been very vibrant when it comes to internet use. Not only are they the majority of “online users” today but are also the most “efficient and effective users” thus far. And according to Engvig (2008) this has propelled them to rapid growth in political influence. Nevertheless, there have been attempts in the media to pigeonhole “women” thus rendering their “political involvement” and most importantly their activism that is rather complex and indeed largely insignificant. However, Dalton (2011) and Unger et al. (2010) posit that women have utilized “online communication” to launch a “powerful women movement” whose presence is being felt both online and in real situations.

Against this backdrop therefore, we set out to address some questions in this conceptual paper thus:

- Do women use social media differently than their male counterparts?
- Can social media provide distinctive opportunities for women in leadership?
- Does social media possess a telling negative draw-back to female leaders?
- Do social media network sites and social networking have a correlation to women’s leadership success?

To answer the above questions, we made a review of the “social science research” focusing on “women’s use of new media”. And in exploring the “connection between social media and women leadership success”, we focused on prevalent literature in the field of leadership.

## 2 Women’s Utilization of Social Media and Social Networks

It has often been said and lamented that “Men are from Mars, women are from Venus”. This no longer holds water since women have tested men in the realm of “social media” and used them to their very best (Haferkamp et al. 2012). While men use “social media for business reasons” more than women do, women on the other hand exploit “social media” for personal interest. Haferkamp et al. (2012) offers that “women are more vocal, expressive and willing to share. In other words, women are biologically wired for social networking”.

**Table 3** Key statistics on social media network use

Social media network	Women (%)	Men (%)
Facebook	58	42
Twitter	62	38
Instagram	53	47
LinkedIn	46	54
Myspace	50	50
Pinterest	70	30
YouTube	46	54
Google+	36	64
Text messaging	65	35
Social networking (overall)	76	72

Source Pew Research Centre (2016)

Haferkamp et al. (2012) conducted a study to “different uses of social media by gender” and found that women’s online behaviour is more “interpersonally oriented” while men are more “task and information oriented”. Women are the “low-hanging fruit” of social media today and deserve “closer attention” from marketers. Junco (2013) also found inequalities in Facebook use between men and women. Along the same line, young men and women use social network sites differently no matter the location (Aktaş et al. 2014).

Indeed an abundance of reports suggest that we see women “gravitating toward those applications” that allow them to connect with friends and share information with people they know. In addition, surveys indicate that women outnumber men on social networking sites. Even academic research shows that women’s “preferred styles of communication” auger well with “social media” (Gelber 2013).

As women have been found to command perfection in utilization of social media network sites (Wilcox 2014), there is clear evidence of an “impending dominance” of the “social networking sites” by women in the near future, if not already. This is what Melissa (2009) has termed as ‘Answering the call’ by women. The variation in use of “social media” across the gender divide is illustrated in Table 3.

Realistically therefore, women’s influence on “Social Media” is viewed in terms of affecting brands, the way they share news as well as when they encourage and support one another. And given the way they actually utilize the media (establishing contacts and seeking opportunities), there is no gain-saying that the “women movement” is only but a delayed inevitability and indeed the “call has been answered” as rightly put by Melissa (2009).

### 3 Social Media Opportunities for Women

Theoretically and practically speaking there are limitations or weaknesses in “social media” sites. And for many years, the media has not been so friendly to women. However if women provide each other with enough information access and

maintain open communication lines, then there is every chance that they will turn “social media” into their greatest of allies (Raposas 2002). At times, media is seen as “indifferent to social causes” if not using story opportunities to arrive at sensational pieces meant for profit and marketing leverage, rather than for “social change and development”. Thus, what seems lacking is a clear program of leadership among women to transform systems. Burgess (2009) opines that social networking technologies should be conceived as vehicles of support for women while the Parliamentarian (2010) considers utilization of social network sites to enhance women participation in the decision making process.

Indeed “social media” creates a safe place for women to:

- Conduct research,
- Collect useful contacts,
- Gain experience,
- Improve on confidence to ask questions,
- Learn new things,
- Raise status in society,
- Challenge themselves to grow, evolve and aspire,
- Manage their time,
- Control the form and flow of relationships,
- Search for opportunities,
- Identify each other,
- Campaign and become organized activists.

Social media has the potential to be an “empowering and engaging tool for women”, whether in Politics (Bamberger 2011; Friedman 2005; Gelber 2013), Economics (Arab social media report 2011; Rubin 2012), Education (Burgess 2009; Gelber 2013), Leadership (Arab social media report 2011; Dalton 2011; Engvig 2008; Fajardo 2014; Lance 2013; Parliamentarian 2010; Schipani et al. 2009), Legal systems (Arab social media report 2011) and Social values (Aktaş et al. 2014; Arab social media report 2011; Carli 2001; Friedman 2005; Gelber 2013; Unger et al. 2010; Wilcox 2014) arenas.

De Vivo (2013) writes that while women have made huge strides in gender equality and perceptions, some stereotypes have come back to haunt us again in revised forms. According to one especially reductive “Mars and Venus” formula (Haferkamp et al. 2012), men use Facebook and LinkedIn to increase serious opportunities, as well as for purely social functions, while for women such media are just a way to share cheesecake recipes and coo over baby pictures. While we may delight in such activities, women are already using social media in ways that fly in the face of such simplifications.

Accordingly, women may enjoy the following opportunities out of social media:

*Building a voice* Largely as a function of gender-based socialization, women often don’t feel the confidence to assert themselves within the usually male-dominated milieu of face-to-face board meetings. Even for more seasoned

career women, it can be daunting to be a minority in such a high-pressure physical reality. Within the realm of social media, women in the workplace are building networks of mutual support that counteract the patterns of the past.

*Expanding opportunities to connect* Women in particular have often taken advantage of social forums to get things done, whether it be through PTA meetings or neighbourhood welcome wagon groups. Social media simply takes the already existing tendency of women to be socially engaged and expands it to a greater level.

*Gaining from the benefits of the virtual office* The 9-to-5, brick-and-mortar limitations of the workday are being undone by men and women alike, but women in particular are edging towards a preference of working fewer days in a physically-defined office. Not only that, women are shown to actually be more productive when working in a virtual office.

## 4 Complexity Vested Within Social Media Networks and Its Negative Returns

The era of the emergent technologies is the era of unexpected/radically new technologies coming to the forefront in all life systems. It is not simply an era of just new technologies as Twyman is thinking: this is because new and emerging technologies are those reflecting “current advances and innovation” in various fields and disciplines to which we indeed fully ascribe (Twyman 2011).

Social Media are deeply related to “Emergent Technologies”. If we accept that “social media” unexpectedly coins an exploitation of “web-based and mobile technologies” that convert “communication into interactive dialogue” (Collins 2011), then we have to also accept that “social media is emerging technology” which has become vital for our future (Leikas et al. 2011). Social Media bring back the appurtenance to a community where we live.

Issuing from the above therefore, “social networking” is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighbourhood subdivision, if you will. Although social networking is possible in person, especially in the workplace, universities, and high schools, it is most popular online” (<http://Whatissocialnetworking.com>). “Social networking” brings the complexity of a community in the human relationships kingdom.

As complex systems the “emerging/emergent technologies” of our age of surprise, the so-called NBIC, are highly unpredictable. Nobody could predict, when the Internet was born several decades ago, how communities would use it nowadays.

Social media are complex systems. It has been written that “complex systems are composed of a very large number of different elements with non-linear interactions; furthermore the interaction structure, a network, comprises many entangled loops” (Weisbuch and Solomon 2007).

Social Media have the characteristics of a complex system. “Four properties stand out, each of which adds complexity to a system” (Guckenheimer and Ottino 2008). These can be viewed within “social media” as follows:

- It has an internal structure based on interacting components especially individuals and information relayed from person to person and from time to time.
- It harbours behaviours that are not easy to comprehend including both social and anti-social.
- It also adapts to information inputs and evolves over time.
- It is hard to quantify and determine how it propagates throughout the key aspects of people’s lives. This makes it elusive to prediction as well as control.

Accordingly, “Social media” contain mixed opportunities for users, especially women. The nature of freedom vested within “social media” turns people to negativity, hostility, and general unpleasant behavior. This is because clear “normal social sanctions” are not in place (Gelber 2013). He thus continues that “Social media”, especially in the blogosphere, not only have unlimited potential to reach out to scores of people, but also obtains in a vile factor. This makes it worse and even intense for both users and non-users.

One of the key aspects in improving women prospects in the media world is being in control of the media themselves. However, key studies have equally contended that, despite a global increase in women working in the media, they still have not captured the top and more viable positions. Positions such as producers, top-executives, chief media editors as well as publishers are still largely male dominated (Aktaş et al. 2014; Junco 2013; Mayfield 2008). In Africa, this disparity is crystal clear due to various forms of “cultural impediments” to women’s involvement in life spheres (Myers 2009). The Global Media Monitoring Project reports that throughout the world, “female journalists are more likely to be assigned ‘soft’ subjects such as family, lifestyle, fashion and arts”. What is termed as ‘hard’ news, or politics and issues relating to the economy, is much likely to be written or covered by men.

Thus it becomes imperative to explore the negative returns to women attached to “social media” given that not all is rosy. These negative aspects are the following:

1. Any mistake online is likely to dent a person’s reputation and image to the community.
2. Self-exposure is another challenge since the more people know about someone the more they look for acquaintances with that particular person. Some women have fallen victim to society’s lawless nature through “social media” antics.
3. Women have ended up wasting a lot of their valuable time on “social media”. This has affected their other life tasks in the process.
4. In order to get social media’s full effect, you need to understand how it works, when and how to use it and what channels to focus on depending on your end goal of using social media.



5. Social media has also been used to attack the person of women. Indeed online attacks have become a common feature of late.
6. Some women who use “social media” excessively also risk “serious detrimental outcomes on both mental and even physical health of individuals”.

Price-Mitchell (2014) meanwhile weighs in with ten disadvantages of “Social Networking” and according to him, these are as follows:

- lacks emotional connection
- gives people a license to be hurtful
- decreases face-to-face communication skills
- conveys inauthentic expression of feelings
- diminishes understanding and thoughtfulness
- causes face-to-face interactions to feel disconnected
- facilitates laziness
- creates a skewed self-image
- reduces family closeness
- causes distractions.

## 5 Effect of Social Media on Women Leadership

There has been an increasing explosion of “social media network” sites and their reach is unbelievable. Leaders thus ought to create leverage for integration of “social networking” within the leadership structure (Burgess 2009; Dalton 2011; Engvig 2008; Fajardo 2014; Parliamentarian 2010). Based on this action, leaders would find an improvement in communication, as well as extension of influence beyond the chain of command, which will help in developing others.

If the leader(s) are open to the possibilities of social media and the general ethos of what social media represents—open dialogue with stakeholders, awareness of the risks and rewards that social media brings, seeing the whole picture of how social media fits within an organization and understanding the resources a successful social media effort requires, then it is inevitable that social media will have an impact on how someone chooses to lead (Griffin 2013).

Social media, according to research, influence leadership attributes, although it possesses chances as well as threats at the same time. Table 4 shows the various leadership traits as well as the chances and threats attached to each based on social media.

A number of authors have looked at the “social media and social network systems” in relation to women, most crucially, women leadership (Aktaş 2014; Burgess 2009; Dalton 2011; Engvig 2008; Fajardo 2014; Feldt et al. 2014; Gelber 2013; Haferkamp et al. 2012; Junco 2013; Parliamentarian 2010; Schein 2004; Schipani et al. 2009; Tuten 2008; Wilcox 2014) and many others. The explorations and views indicate that there is a considerable level of attachment of women to

**Table 4** Influence of social media on leadership attributes

Leadership attribute	Chance	Threat
Integrity	Ideas and meetings preparation	Continuous protocol
Vision	Followers empowerment is measurable	Employees can critique the system
Communication	No hierarchy; easier to reach employees	Bad or false information can spread
Decision taking	Facts are available and searchable	Inability to see or influence reactions
Innovation	Natural teams form; leader catalyses development	Ideas may not be thought through
Professional knowledge	Follow discussion with new insights from employees despite level	Information overload

Adopted from Werfs (2012): Influence of leadership attributes by social media

social media and this has influenced their modus operandi in various spheres. However, this paper explored the position of women leadership within the “social media” dispensation: thus bringing out key prospects for transformation of women leadership via “social media and social networking”. Their views are thus reflected in the following analysis:

*Shaping perceptions* Suffice it to say, the media have been at the forefront of exposing women, indeed the writings have been detrimental to women’s rise to the top. But that was before social media network sites took centre-stage. Now women can use these sites to change and shape people’s perceptions for the better. Collaboration skills that are critical for women leadership that are key to “modern leadership” can be empowered by “social media” (Feldt et al. 2014). That way the focus will be shifted from the “person of the leader to the personality of the leader” premised on competence than gender values.

*Assertiveness* In our day to day lives, we encounter situations where people disrespect women, like the case where a woman leader summons someone to their office to give instructions. This can make a woman feel a little uncomfortable issuing directives and may thus “beat around or about the bush” instead of getting to the point. With “Social media networks”, women can feel free to write their messages or to issue their instructions in a more assertive and straight-forward way (Gelber 2013). Some people of either gender detest being summoned by leaders, but especially women appreciate the virtual form and effectively solves the “jig-saw” puzzle. Haferkamp et al. (2012) meanwhile opines that social media and social networking improve women’s self-representation and self-confidence.

*Authenticity* An ideal and authentic leader isn’t easy to portray. The use of “social media” has helped women perfect their ability to lead, since they are free of emotions and an inferiority complex (Gelber 2013). When faced with challenges, women often fail to speak the truth due to a given emotional attachment. However when they use social media they become largely rational and sound authentic. This ultimately wins them a large amount of respect from a leadership perspective.

*Enhanced decision making* social media and social networking enhances participation of women in the decision making process (Parliamentarian 2010). This lays a firm background for effective leadership traits and habits among women. Melissa (2009) contends that this decision-making prowess has been the basis for efficient gender leadership.

*Perfection of communication* leadership dwells on effective communication skills on the part of a leader. For many years now, greater communication skills have been lauded as a key to leadership. Wilcox (2014) adopts the old adage ‘practice makes perfect’ to insist that women benefit from social media a lot by perfecting communication which later obtains in effective leadership.

*Increased participation* There is also a considerable body of emerging literature about the potential of the internet to increase “participation in leadership systems” (Friedman 2005). This highlights the potential of the internet to make a positive contribution to democracy through: (1) increased access, (2) transparency and (3) opportunity for participation.

*Improved level of trust* “Trust is the feeling that members of a team can depend on one another and their contributions are valued”. With social media, women’s leadership nuances will not be determined by other people since direct and physical contact would be abrogated (Fajardo 2014). This is premised on the assumption that there is a veil hiding the true identity of the “leader” in this case and followers work on messages received than based on the person directly.

*Abrogation of gender stereotypes* With social media being adopted in leadership, gender perceptions attached to women shall be abrogated. People will deal with leaders in the realm of positions not individuals and thus, crucially, gender aspects would not crop up (Melissa 2009). In most cases it is these gender stereotypes that erode prospects of “effective women leadership”.

*Perfection of referent power* It is pure truth that “social media” has profound power to reach and influence. Recalling the bases of power, “leaders can build referent power through social media” (Fajardo 2014). Also, people begin to build “referent power by association” even if they are largely inconsequential if they are engaged in a good form of conversation by a leader (Tuten 2008). This is no exception to women leaders. For example, if a woman leader used a Facebook ‘LIKE’ comment, everyone can see that on the page and would have a bigger impact than walking up to a person and saying thank you.

*Demonstration of competence and expertise* If people do not see leaders often, it gives leaders an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency as well as expertise through use of photos, videos, or even dialogue on “social media”. It is usually contended that “if leaders actively participate in the social media community and submit high quality or original content, members may see the leader as an expert in their particular field over time” (Fajardo 2014; Tuten 2008). Yet if they were to see the leader often and in person, they may develop reservations here and there.

*Honest evaluative feedback* “Social networking” aids “instant feedback” from people compared to physical dealings. Nevertheless not all feedback from different levels will always be positive. However, that makes it even the more valuable to leadership. Members will voice their opinions, put across telling views all of which

will be crucial to leaders seeking betterment of their organizations (Fajardo 2014). Interestingly, the conversation itself serves to increase member participation and engagement, which lead to a buy-in syndrome no matter what decisions may result from the dialogue. Important to note is that, in most cases people may fear to tell a woman leader how they feel about her face-to-face and thus, social media solve the conundrum.

*Collaboration and training* The various “social media sites” command tools that cabs use for training of people on various aspects of life without having to utilize all their available resources. The same can be used to initiate and sustain collaboration within communities (Schein 2004). For example, “educational and instructive videos for various tasks”. This can be exploited to great effect by women especially those in the enclaves of power. Dalton (2011) indeed contends that women now use the social media network sites to train themselves in leadership skills applicable to contemporary society.

*Mentorship and coaching* Defined as a voluntary and largely “reciprocal developmental relationship” between a person of “greater experience” and a person of “lesser experience”, mentorship is composed of “mutual trust and respect” (Schein 2004). Since there are women in the enclaves of power already, the social media network has offered them a priceless platform to reach out to other largely marginalized women for mentorship. The mentorship creates a network of women leadership which like a fractal simply keeps on expanding.

*Abrogating the culture divide* This is very true in situations where cultural constraints are prevalent. Women leaders in a predominantly Muslim or Islamic setting would find it hard to institute a sharing and interaction culture within the organisation (Arab social media report 2011). Social media can effectively render a solution to such instincts. “Social media and social networking” possesses a powerful (though simple) tool that can be used to foster unity and build effective teams (Schein 2004). Women leaders should thus look to “social media sites” to transform leadership and societies in general. This is based on building “networking teams or groups” (Engvig 2008), professional networking and gender platforms.

*Internationalization of sexist norms* Social network ideology can help women leaders cause generational change and abrogate feminism (Unger 2010). This is done with a global touch by getting all women across the world on board. Support is given to all women undergoing sexist challenges online and with this kind of priceless motivation and support, women become more willing to take up leadership challenges while those in leadership positions will feel free to handle the challenges that come their way from time to time.

*Creation of social capital* The social network is a form of social support, comprising personal contacts who help members build social capital by offering one another access to information and resources (Preece and Houghton 2000 cited by Burgess 2009). The social capital according to Burgess (2009) is conceived in three distinct categories: (1) bonding capital, which is associated with “family, kinship, and frequent interactions” with existent contacts; (2) bridging capital, which is associated with “mobility and infrequent interactions” with new contacts; and

(3) linking capital, which ties patrons and clients together in a “leveraging relationship”. With this in focus, leadership and coming together of women becomes realistic. And once women are together, forging ahead becomes only a delayed reality.

*Leadership profile building* what has challenged women for so many years has been a severe and acute lack of a clear profile of leadership that reflects a woman. This explains why women leaders are always judged the wrong way. Social media networks help women build their own profiles which would allow them be seen and understood as women. Dalton (2011) argues that such a woman leadership profile would reflect leadership functions and roles in a woman friendly and appropriate setting. Issues like financial management, conflict management, supervision, decision making, planning etc. and how they ascribe to a woman would be fully explored by such a profile. The leadership profile in question according to Dalton (2011), Unger (2010) and Burgess (2009) would reach out to all women and this would build their capacity as a consequence.

This conceptual paper thus dwells on the view that a leadership profile built in the image of a woman would be the ideal and right step in the direction of transforming women leadership. Not only will it aid women involvement in leadership processes but will also strengthen their stronghold on leadership while rendering a regular and impeccable system of checks and balances to male leadership as well in order to promote (what the whole world craves for) a gender sensitive leadership paradigm.

Burgess (2009) makes a clear analysis of the “role of social networking technologies as vehicles of support for women in learning communities”. In the analysis, the researcher shows how social network systems can enhance women leadership. This is in the following ways:

- Coping with struggles
- Education and empowerment
- Engaging broader social movements
- Building international advocacy
- Developing social support systems
- Expansion of social networking opportunities
- Realisation of better and satisfying learning experiences
- Building social capital.

## 6 Conclusion

What is known and clearly at that is the fact that “social media” is not concrete, neither is it a “bed of roses” nor a sure “blessing”. Indeed social networking is not an end in itself either because at the end of the day it has to be used. The way leaders utilize the sites would have a huge bearing on trust, effective communication, development of self and others, extension of influence: which all enable

augmentation of leadership in view of “traditional communication techniques”. It has thus been largely argued that “Social media will not make a bad leader good, just like email or cell phones will not make bad leaders good (Burgess 2013 cited by Fajardo 2014). So what “social media and social networking” can aid is the ability to galvanize leadership influence with extra tools that provide a leader with a leverage to succeed in a “complex geographical setting” born of dispersion, rapid changes and resource constraints.

Although it is felt that social media could, in fact, enhance women’s participation in the legal, political, economic, social and civic arenas, there is some ambivalence as to whether the empowering effects of social media are limited in the absence of actual changes in gender equality legislation and rights on the ground. Meanwhile, some women leaders are less likely to use social media to perfection because of the societal and cultural constraints directed to women in general. Equally, there are suggestions that technology in itself will not necessarily overcome issues of low interest, lack of leadership skills, opportunities and other factors which affect women performance in leadership.

The strength of this conceptual paper therefore, lies in the fact that it has steered clear of these fears by proposing “effective utilization of social media network sites” as well as subsequent “social networking activities” to develop and promote a “women leadership profile” that fits within an ideal “gender sensitive paradigm”. It is this leadership profile that can be used to dissect leadership from a purely woman perspective, insulate women leadership against gender stereotypes, abrogate negative perceptions about women leaders, erode fears among women to engage the leadership terrain and challenge men to rise to the occasion.

The authors feel that either way, leadership would be transformed for the better; women can either institute a system of checks or balances within a male leadership setting or take up the leadership mantle themselves. Premised on this, therefore, the authors argue, and rightly so, that social media network sites as well as social networking activities have been long overdue in turning the prospects of women leadership.

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