



THE INSTITUTE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN LAW

IAWL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP SERIES:

**Excellence in Law & Leadership
A Fireside Chat**



THE INSTITUTE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN LAW

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Table of Contents

Speakers and their affiliations	i
Executive Summary	ii
1. Introduction	1
2. Literature Review	2
3. Panel Discussions	5
3.1 Characteristics of a Leader	6
3.2 Panelist's Leadership Journey	7
3.3 Panelists' views on how to increase women leaders	9
4. Analysis	11
5. Recommendations	12
6. Conclusion	13
7. Appendix	14
References	16

Speakers and their Affiliations



Diana Asonaba Dapaah - Ghana

Deputy Attorney General
Republic of Ghana



Linda Kasonde - Zambia (Moderator)

Founder
Chapter One Foundation & LCK Chambers



Hlaleleni Kathleen Matolo-Dlepu - South Africa

Founder and Executive Director of Molefe Dlepu
(Black Women Owned law firm)



Dr. Jumoke Oduwole - Nigeria

Special Adviser to the President of Nigeria

Executive Summary

Over the years, there has been a gradual rise in the number of women assuming leadership roles across various institutions. This positive trend can be attributed to an early desire for leadership nurtured in schools. Research indicates that women equally possess leadership qualities and bring a valuable set of diverse skills to the table.

This is a report of a webinar themed “Women in Leadership” organized by The Institute of African Women in Law (IAWL) in conjunction with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). The webinar brought together four women leaders in various sectors: Diana Asonaba Dapaah, who is the Deputy Attorney General of Ghana, Linda Kasonde, the founder of chapter one foundation and LCK chambers and Moderator for the Webinar, Haleleni Kathleen Matolo-Dlepu, founder and executive director of Molefe Dlepu (A Black Women Owned law firm), and Dr. Jumoke Oduwale, the special advisor to the Nigerian President.

During the discussion, the panelists traced their journey to attaining their current leadership roles. Although the number of women leaders is gradually increasing, a significant gender gap still persists, with women being underrepresented compared to men in leadership. The panelists also shared their views on various ways of increasing the number of women leaders.

Leadership is not limited to men. Women leaders such as the panelists have proven and continue to prove to the world their exceptional capabilities, often surpassing those of their male counterparts. The literature analyzed in this report indicates the value women’s leadership brings to the table and how women leaders can help motivate and encourage the next generation of women leaders.

Experiences from panel members to a large extent, are in line with the literature analyzed in this report on the intricacies of the paucity of women in leadership. The ratio of women leaders, compared to their male counterparts, is steadily increasing. Initiatives such as mentorship, upskilling, self-development, the establishment of robust support systems, and networking opportunities have all contributed to increasing the representation of women leaders in various fields.

The insights shared by the literature analyzed in this report and panel members provide readers with significant recommendations to increase the number of women in leadership in law.



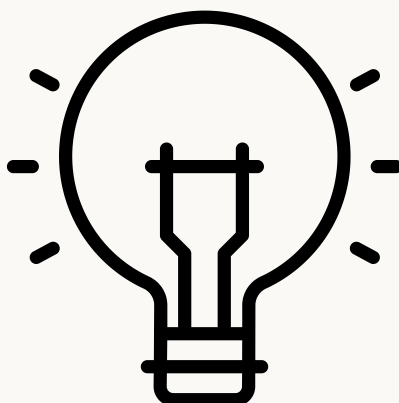
1. Introduction

Having had an African woman serve in the highest office in a country in Africa, such as the President of Liberia, one would assume that African women are being presented with more leadership roles today. However, women have consistently faced numerous hurdles that hinder their progress in attaining leadership.

Women are gradually taking up leadership roles they previously would not have dared to. Women bring a wide range of experiences and different viewpoints to leadership positions. The Institute of African Women in Law (IAWL), in conjunction with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), organized a webinar themed "Women in Leadership." The webinar provided a platform where women leaders with rich experience in leadership shared the challenges and hurdles they faced as they moved up the leadership ladder.

The panelists for this webinar shared their journeys to their current roles and explained how their desire to lead started and how they navigated their challenges.

This report begins with an introduction, followed by a review of the literature on the subject matter, a brief summary of the panel discussion, and an analysis of the panel discussion in light of the reviewed literature. This is followed by several recommendations on how the number of women leaders can be increased at various institutions and levels and then concludes.



2. Literature Review

Despite women proving they can lead governments, some African societies continue to shun women's leadership. Despite successes in the top leadership positions in countries like Liberia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Senegal, Namibia, and Mozambique, there remains a large gap between the number of leadership roles men occupy as opposed to women.

Hoyt and Goethals (2017) suggest that women's leadership style tends to be more participative in comparison to men. The authors add that women lead differently and more effectively as they focus more on the welfare of their subjects than men. According to Hopkins and O'Neil (2015), the field of modern leadership studies is grounded in four fundamental perspectives. These perspectives are the trait theory, the behavioral theory, the contingency theory, and the contemporary theories, which encompass transformational and authentic leadership. The authors state that the trait theory focuses on identifying specific characteristics that distinguish high-achieving leaders from non-leaders. These characteristics encompass traits such as charisma, integrity, humility, and optimism. Behavioral leadership theory deals with the style of a leader, including democratic, laissez-faire, or autocratic styles. The contingency theory examines the leader and his situation, focusing on the situation the leader faces and their choices. It considers intervening variables that impact a leader's decision-making process. The final theory - the contemporary theory, seeks to challenge the three theories and calls for leaders to develop their followers into leaders. It leans toward the impact of leaders on their followers, including how the leader motivates and appreciates the values and tasks of his followers and pays attention to the collective goals.

In their article on exploring female students' quest for leadership and their experiential realities at the University of Education, Winneba, Attom, Adu -Boahen and Danso-Wiredu (2021) note that a significant number of female student leaders interviewed had developed their interest in leadership during their formative years in primary and secondary schools. During this period, they had actively taken on diverse leadership roles.

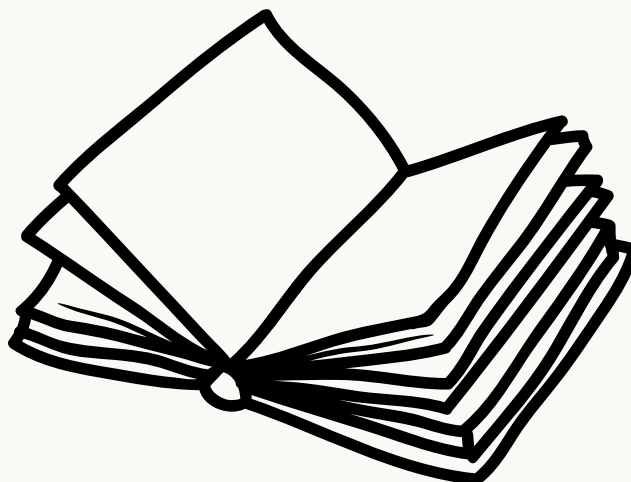
The authors further argued against the notion that religious beliefs acted as a barrier to female student leadership. The authors stated that their pursuit of leadership within the institution not only equipped them with valuable skills for future leadership roles but also provided opportunities to engage and network with the management and staff of their educational institutions.

As a leading global advocate championing gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women, Women Deliver holds that "women as leaders and decision-makers at all levels are critical to advancing gender justice and gender equality and furthering economic, social and political progress for all". Forbes reports on five significant ways of nurturing female chief executives of tomorrow. The first major way is to celebrate differences. It is essential for organizations to acknowledge that people are different and unique in their ways; therefore, each requires a different approach. The second way is to share the data highlighting the significant contributions and benefits of diversity brought forth by women. The authors hold that, for instance, a 2016 research indicates that women leaders bring in more profit. Forbes's third step is to encourage women to support each other. It is reported in the Harvard Business Review that women in support networks are more likely to succeed. The fourth way, according to Forbes, is to give women real models and not just role models. And finally, to champion whistle-blowers, which according to Gallop, is "to speak up about the harassers, refuse to be cowed by the system, and instead, blow the system wide open". This refers to applauding and encouraging women whistleblowers against senior women who enable sexual harassment in various organizations.

According to Gumisai Mutume (2006), most women attribute their success in leadership positions to gaining access to education and work opportunities, benefiting from valuable mentorship from both women and men, receiving support from their family, supervisors, teachers, colleagues, and employers, as well as the effective advocacy efforts of gender activists.

In 2021, St. Catherine University, published a report on the barriers to female leadership and how to overcome them. This report postulated that sexism, gender bias and stereotyping, less assertive tactics when seeking promotions, and structural barriers such as limited access to established networks, less developed female leadership networks and family responsibilities contribute to the persistent underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. The authors further argue that strategies to address these challenges include creating female leadership programs to offer professional leadership training to women. In addition, mentorship and sponsorship programs play a crucial role in encouraging aspiring leaders by providing them with exposure to the complexities of leadership they aim to achieve. Additionally, strategically promoting equity through strategic initiatives, such as implementing universal paid family leave, subsidizing child care, and establishing family leave policies that avoid financial penalties, is crucial. Finally, it is essential for individuals to empower themselves to overcome the barriers to female leadership.

The existing literature indicates that leadership is not exclusive to men, especially considering the characteristics required to be a good leader. Women's leadership, compared to men, tends to be more participative, thereby suggesting that women lead in distinct and highly effective ways, even amid the challenges they face. Therefore, women are gradually taking up leadership roles and proving to the world how qualified and prepared they are to lead.



3. Panel Discussions

The panel discussions centered around the characteristics that make a leader, the panelist's testimonies on their journey to leadership, and recommendations on increasing the number of women in leadership.



3.1 Characteristics of a Leader

In line with Hopkins and O'Neil's (2015) four primary perspectives in leadership theory, Hlaleleni Kathleen Matolo-Dlepu, in addressing what characteristics makes a leader, identified self-confidence, assertiveness, and being a good listener as key characteristics that make a leader. To Diana Asonaba Dapaah, a good leader recognizes and values the fact that leadership entails serving and making a positive impact on the lives of the individuals they lead. She added that women also need strength, as leadership is not a walk in the park, regardless of the field. A leader to her is a servant, demonstrating perseverance and tenacity in all endeavors to ensure that the aspirations and vision of those they lead are accomplished. Additionally, she emphasizes the importance of having a learning spirit as a characteristic of a good leader. This learning spirit involves the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn. Related to that is the ability to listen, which helps leaders to sift through bad advice and dismantle personal ideologies and adopt best practices because there is always new knowledge coming up every day. Finally, a leader must be able to appreciate and value the support system that comes from even the people they lead. According to Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, the characteristics that make someone a good leader are the four "C"s, character, competence, capability, and courage.



3.2 Panelist's Leadership Journey

Women sharing their personal stories is often described as "a great way to start building a community and network of women helping women". Ms. Dapaah started her journey in High school, an all-female school, where she became the first assistant school prefect. From this background, she was trained to understand that leadership is about service. Upon entering the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), specifically the law faculty, Ms. Dapaah ran against four men to be elected president of the law students union in her third year. Making her the first female president of the law students union. She believes that, although it was not the only reason for her victory, her mantra, which reads, " We have tried the men, and it was time for us to try a woman", went a long way to convincing voters. Before this, she had involved herself in student politics, which she refers to as "student service". In addition, she held the title of head of programs and projects for the National Union of Ghana Students Chapter at her university. She maintains that these positions "helped to cut her teeth in leadership at that point of being in student politics". She further expressed that "the journey throughout has been about learning from role models up from high school where you were trained, you have allies, and within there, you will have old girls come to the school and give you inspiration of how to be a good leader". In her opinion, her leadership journey has spanned from High school to when she was appointed as the Deputy Attorney General. Ms. Dapaah's personal journey serves as an inspiration to empower and support the next generation of women leaders.

As an aide to the President of Nigeria, Dr. Jumoke's journey to leadership started with investment/commercial banking, volunteering at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) and Kuramo Foundation, then to the Hague (as the Prince Claus Chair holder). She was chosen based on the President's familiarity with her exceptional background, as they had previously worked together when he chaired a board of a non-profit organization she had run for a couple of years. She also interacted with the president during a prestigious visiting professorship in the Netherlands.

The combination of her various roles in investment banking, academia, working with non-profits, and then going into government built her experiences in leadership. The underlying theme that resonates throughout her journey is the desire to make an impact, staying true to your values and who you are, and knowing that integrity, excellence and hard work pay off. According to her, there is no shortcut to leadership. She believes that when you learn, you can teach others.

Hlaleleni Kathleen Matolo-Dlepu holds that a statement from one of her teachers stayed with her and impacted her drive toward leadership. It read, "whether you want to change attitudes, a political system of patriarchy, you must stand up and make it happen. Nobody will make it happen. Whether male or female, the only person who can liberate yourself is working with others, and you can integrate yourself". Her leadership journey began at the university, in a class of forty with only four women. She wanted to represent her class. She was first elected as a treasurer and subsequently as a student advisor and has never looked back. Ms. Matolo-Dlepu, "wanted to break the stereotype that women cannot lead and challenge themselves to be the best of the best". After her call to the bar, she decided with a colleague to have an all-female law firm. She holds that more women graduate from law school but do not get to the top of the legal profession to become owners or partners. And that was a situation she wanted to address.



3.3 Panelists' views on how to increase women leaders

Self - Development

According to Ms. Dapaah, women's leadership should be more about women's competence and efficiency rather than being a woman. Life is a continuous learning process; you learn, unlearn and relearn. According to Ms. Dapaah, "the strategies for increasing the pipeline of women in leadership positions behooves upon women to develop themselves". Therefore, within the space you find yourself in, whether a public or private office, new knowledge emerges daily, and it is essential to increase women in leadership positions. She added that "as women, we should be ready when the time is right," and we should be found ready, able, and capable. So when the bell strikes, as a woman, you should be ready. You can only be ready when you have developed yourself by learning, unlearning, and relearning.

Mentorship

Panel members also acknowledged building other women up to increase women in leadership. Dr. Jumoke stated that access to mentorship and the role of sponsorship opportunities can efficiently increase the number of women in leadership positions.

Ms. Dapaah further explained that "If we are advocating for more women in leadership positions, then we need to bear each other. We need to hold each other". Women, therefore, need to be good role models for other women, whether below or above them. This can help change the narrative and mindset of the community, dispelling the notion that women advocate for equality solely based on their gender. It reinforces the idea that women have indeed proved their competence and worthiness, challenging any misconceptions or biases that may exist. Hlaleleni Kathleen Matolo-Dlepu expressed that, as women, we need to be very confident and comfortable in our skin, and we should "look for mentors who are reachable, look at what other women are doing and try to change that narrative".

Support System and Networking

Ms. Dapaah also acknowledges that a good support system is crucial to becoming a great leader. She holds that positive energy from the people around you can never be overemphasized. There is value in having people who do not patronize you but who, even though it's difficult, will tell you it is achievable.

Hlaleleni Kathleen Matolo-Dlepu also advocates for women to embrace other women's organizations whenever there is an opportunity to advance the quest for women's leadership. She firmly believes in actively participating and taking the initiative. According to her, once you are present and engaged, you have the potential to be a leader. Whether it means leading from the trenches or starting with small steps, she emphasizes that this is how you can build your confidence and develop leadership skills.

During the panel discussion, another avenue discussed for increasing the representation of women in leadership positions was through education. Dr. Jumoke stated that formal and informal education empowers the girl child. She added that "we need to build a girl from the inside, let her know she is worthy, and equip her to be the captain of her ship and that she is not a damsel in distress".



4. Analysis

Ms. Dapaah's above-mentioned journey to leadership aligns with the findings of Attom, Adu -Boahen and Danso-Wiredu's (2021), who assert that women's interest in leadership begins from the level of basic education and the quest for leadership positions in the institution. This assists in preparing them for higher leadership roles in the future. Similarly, Hlaleleni Kathleen Matolo-Dlepu also embarked on her leadership journey during her tertiary institution.

It is also essential to note that the panelists' description of the character of a leader syncs with Hopkins and O'Neil's (2015) four primary perspectives in leadership theory, which are the root of modern leadership studies. The panelists mentioned characteristics such as self-confidence, assertiveness, good listening skills, service, perseverance, tenacity, learning spirit, and the ability to value the support system from the people you lead.

More importantly, the recommendations proposed by panel members on increasing women leaders are in line with the ways of nurturing the next leaders as postulated by Forbes. These recommendations range from mentorship and sponsorship to self-development through learning, relearning, and unlearning to be efficient and ready when the bell for leadership strikes and the need for women leaders to be role models for other women. The dual positive effect of education on the development of women in leadership, as espoused by panel members, confirms Gumisai Mutume, (2006)'s view that the success of women leaders can be attributed to access to education and work opportunities.

Finally, a simple read of the various practical recommendations by panel members in increasing women's participation in leadership positions, such as self-development, mentoring other women by being role models, and embracing women's organizations, among others, confirms the possible recommendations by 2021, St. Catherine University, which includes mentorship and sponsorship programs, strategically promoting equity and the need to empower oneself to overcome the barriers to female leadership.

5. Recommendations

Reading through the literature analyzed above and the experiences of panel members, the following recommendations may help increase the number of women leaders:

a. The need to upskill.

Women need to continue to learn, irrespective of their status and where they are. This could be formal or informal. Due to the changing nature of the world today, through upskilling, women are always ready and prepared to be efficient leaders when the bell for leadership strikes.

b. The need for mentorship and sponsorship.

Panelists indicated the need to hold each other up. They sought to show how women leaders have proven themselves capable and can, therefore, train younger women to take up leadership roles. Mentorship and sponsorship need not only begin at high schools and tertiary institutions. It can be done at young ages by emphasizing the need to nurture young girls to embrace leadership skills from a tender age. Furthermore, they push for young women to engage in various women's organizations to have access to these women in leadership roles for mentorship or sponsorship.

c. The need to create female leadership programs.

These programs offer professional leadership training for women in various institutions at various levels.

d. The need for women to be more daring.

Women need to dare to be different and innovative and change the status quo. Although it is not a competition, women need to take up opportunities when they arise to prove their capability, so leadership roles are not appointed to them out of pity but based on merits.

6. Conclusion

The role of leadership is not limited to men. Women leaders, including our panel members, have proven and continue to prove to the world how capable, if not more capable than men, women can lead. The literature analyzed in this report indicates the value women's leadership brings to the table and how women leaders can help motivate and encourage the next generation of women leaders. Therefore, carefully applying and adopting the above recommendations will go a long way in bridging the gap between leadership roles for men and women.



7. Appendix (Q&A)

Q: How can one acquire emotional intelligence while doing the LLB and acquire legal skills generally, whilst studying?

A: Diana Asonaba Dapaah - most traditional LLB programs do not have programs on emotional intelligence. It is something you would have to acquire through additional training, and it's very important, particularly for law students, considering the stress, the distractions, and the challenges that come with legal education. So it depends on the faculty in which you are enrolled; I would say, you know, ordinarily, some may have student affairs within the university, which runs some of these pieces of training, but I mean, you put it quite right that how do you acquire emotional intelligence, first of all, you identify the importance of emotional intelligence in Law Education and pick it from there.

Q: How does one choose which area of law best suits them?

A: Dr. Jumoke - It's an excellent background because the law is life. So it depends on who you are and getting to know yourself, what inspires you, motivates you, and what you're passionate about. So I know lawyers who are real sports enthusiasts, and they either have a legal career in sports, or they pivoted into another direction entirely.

Q: How does a woman position themselves for leadership opportunities, considering the legal fraternity is widely dominated by men, and at what time? When do you start branding yourself?

A: Hlaleleni Kathleen Matolo-Dlepu - attend webinars like this to meet role models, start at the universities, join women's associations, like that in South African Universities, attend our meetings, we attend their meetings, we teach them all the skills. So by the time they complete, they've already identified who they want as a candidate, I think, because of their activism and their confidence. So it helps to go out there, attend webinars, be part of your collective, attend women groups, you know, and also, you must mean who have already crossed the Rubicon, make them feel guilty to teach you, you know, and, and seeing it happen to me because I always say, you know, I need to be there, and men have always been there going to teach me because you believe in women empowerment.



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REPORT

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