Exploratory Sequential Analysis on the Factors Affecting the Leadership of Women in Local Governments

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive governance fosters opportunities for women to contribute to societal advancement by serving in government roles. This paper explores the factors influencing women's leadership within the context of local government. To achieve this objective, an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design was employed, with a particular focus on Exploratory Factor Analysis. Data were collected from women employees in second-level, permanent positions among the local government units in the Province of Davao del Norte, Philippines. The findings revealed five key factors influencing women's leadership: empowering leadership, leadership challenges, leadership motivation, leadership development support, and effective leadership communication. These factors offer valuable insights into how to advance women's leadership, thereby promoting an inclusive environment and enhancing public service delivery. By understanding and addressing these factors, policymakers and local government authorities can create more supportive and empowering conditions for women leaders, eventually leading to more effective and equitable governance.

KEYWORDS

inclusive governance, gender and development, women empowerment, local government, leadership, mixed-methods analysis

Introduction

Inclusive governance transforms societies, fostering responsiveness, equity, and resilience. Embracing inclusivity enables governments to tackle modern challenges effectively, paving the way for a fairer and more inclusive future for all citizens (Pouw & De Bruijne, 2015). However, women are often marginalized and are left out of the design and implementation of development decision systems (Gascon & McIntyre-Mills, 2018). In 2020, women accounted for just 21% of government ministers worldwide, and they were frequently given jobs in softer domains, such as health, social and family matters, as opposed to commanding roles in the economy or political power (Sabani & Romaniuk, 2023). This is due to the fact that in many cultures, traditional views about women's roles as caregivers and homemakers continue, limiting their opportunities to participate in development administration (Dugarova, 2018).

Inclusive governance ensures representation of all the people keeping in mind the development needs of different segments of society. The participation of women in governance helps to ensure their decision-making processes because they play a specific role. A more inclusive administration will more clearly reflect the demographic characteristics of society and be able to pull policy levers for the widest possible range of societal needs (Norris, 2011). Research also suggests that women make gender-specific policy choices, perhaps that underrepresented in male-dominated legislatures, for example, healthcare, education, and welfare to benefit families (Young, 2016).

The framework of this paper is based upon the Capability Approach Theory of Sen (1999). This theory highlights the need for people to be able to enhance their potential, by examining their existing capabilities—the real freedoms or opportunities to do and be what they value. In more specific cases of women, it is not as such a lack of resources enhancing their potentials but their un-ability to convert such resources into real opportunities. This is supported by the Intersectionality Theory of Crenshew (1989). This theory suggests that individual-level experience is the product of simultaneous intersections of multiple social identities and macro social-structural systems of privilege and oppression. This intersectionality affects the opportunities, challenges, and leadership experiences which people have.

Despite global advancements in promoting gender equality, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles, particularly in local governance. This underrepresentation limits the inclusivity and effectiveness of decision-making processes, as diverse perspectives are essential for addressing complex societal challenges (Sabani & Romaniuk, 2023). Research shows that women leaders often prioritize policies related to social welfare, education, and health, addressing critical gaps that male-dominated leadership structures may overlook (Young, 2016). However, barriers such as gender stereotypes, cultural biases, and systemic inequalities persist, creating significant obstacles for women seeking leadership

roles in local governments (Ridgeway, 2011). These barriers highlight the urgent need for research that examines the factors influencing women's leadership and identifies actionable strategies to support their development.

While existing studies on women's leadership have focused on corporate or national political settings, there is a noticeable gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by women in local governance (Ely & Rhode, 2010). Local governments are critical arenas for policymaking that directly affects communities; however, they often lack mechanisms to support women leaders. Programs aimed at promoting gender equality in leadership have largely focused on high-level political roles, neglecting the importance of fostering inclusivity at the local level (Dugarova, 2018). Furthermore, the intersectionality of social identities, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, remains underexplored in the context of women's leadership in local governance (Crenshaw, 1989). By addressing these gaps, the present study seeks to contribute to the development of inclusive governance structures that empower women leaders and enhance the overall effectiveness of local government operations.

Moreover, Alqahtani (2020) highlights the lack of gender-specific leadership strategies, particularly in local governance, as a persistent issue, emphasizing that women's unique leadership challenges are often overlooked in broader frameworks. Ely and Rhode (2010) critique the narrow focus of prior studies, which frequently examine women's leadership in corporate settings, leaving local governance underexplored. Similarly, Ridgeway (2011) underscores how gender stereotypes continue to marginalize women in leadership roles, yet little attention is given to how these dynamics manifest in local government contexts. Finally, Pick (2024) points out the absence of intersectional analysis in leadership studies, leaving unanswered questions about how overlapping identities, such as gender and socioeconomic status, shape women's leadership in local governance.

This synthesis of literature demonstrates the urgent need to investigate leadership factors specific to women in local government. Existing studies provide a foundation but fail to address the intersection of cultural, organizational, and personal barriers that uniquely affect women in these roles. By situating the research within these gaps, the study at hand contributes novel insights, particularly through its application of the Capability Approach Theory (Sen, 1999) and Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989), bridging existing theoretical and empirical deficiencies.

Figure 1 presents the paper's conceptual framework, which encompasses multiple observed factors that describe the latent variable of women's leadership. This framework illustrates that these variables have causal components or dimensions, currently represented as Factor 1, Factor 2, Factor 3, and so forth. These observed latent variables are provisional, as further investigation will refine and generate specific dimensions, tagging them according to thematic commonalities identified through deeper analysis.

Figure 1

Conceptual Paradigm of the Study
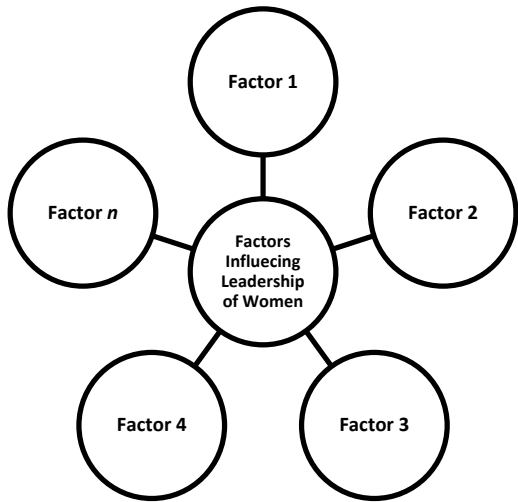
Note. Source: developed by the authors.

This paper explores the factors influencing the leadership of women in local governments, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and motivators they encounter. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: What are the common responses of women regarding the factors that affect their leadership? What factor structure can be developed based on these responses? By addressing these questions, the study aims to identify key elements that shape women's leadership experiences and inform strategies to support and enhance their roles in local governance.

The factor structure developed in this paper will provide significant input to higher authorities involved in the operations of local government on how to advance the leadership of women, thereby promoting a culture of inclusivity. Additionally, it will offer valuable insights to women leaders on how to effectively address and overcome the challenges and issues they encounter within their organizations. By highlighting these factors, the study aims to foster an environment where women's leadership can thrive, contributing to more equitable and dynamic local governance.

Methodology

Research Design

This scientific inquiry explored the factors influencing the leadership of women in local governments. This study employed a mixed-methods design that utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods. This is to determine the strictures for the determination of the extent and depth comprehension and validation of the phenomena (Bazeley, 2024). Specifically, the exploratory sequential mixed-methods

design wherein qualitative data is gathered and analyzed primarily as basis for the quantitative phase. With this, the researchers utilized the findings of the qualitative phase to design the quantitative phase by determining variables and developing an instrument (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The process of the study, depicted in Figure 2, illustrates the implementation of an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach as adopted from Hesse-Biber (2010). This methodology allowed for an initial qualitative exploration, which informed and shaped subsequent quantitative analysis, facilitating the development of a robust and comprehensive framework detailing the factors affecting women's leadership. Through this iterative process, the study was able to capture nuanced insights and validate them empirically, ensuring a thorough understanding of the complex dynamics at play in women's leadership within local governance contexts.

Figure 2

Exploratory Sequential Mixed-Methods Design
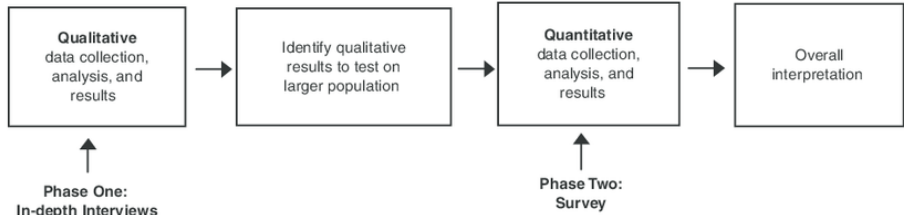
Note. Source: developed by the authors.

Firstly, the study employed qualitative methods to gather rich insights into the experiences and perspectives of women in leadership roles within local governments. This qualitative phase explored nuanced aspects of leadership, uncovering motivations, challenges, and contributing factors. Subsequently, quantitative data collection and analysis were conducted to systematically examine patterns and associations within the dataset. This phase involved the application of statistical techniques, such as factor analysis, to identify underlying factors and structures that define the leadership of women. Through this mixed-methods approach, the study was able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of women's leadership in local governance.

Mixing of the qualitative and quantitative findings resulted, enabling a holistic understanding of leadership of women. Through this iterative process, the framework emerged, synthesizing qualitative narratives with quantitative evidences to provide a comprehensive depiction of the phenomenon (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Furthermore, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed, a multivariate statistical technique aimed at identifying the underlying constructs, also known as factors, latent variables, synthetic variables, internal attributes, or dimensions, which adequately explain the observed covariation among a set of measured variables (Watkins, 2018). Through this process, the determination of

the communal elements that elucidate the structure and order of the assessed variables is achieved.

Participants and Sampling Method

The participants of this study were women holding at least "second level positions" in the local governments of Davao del Norte Province, Philippines. According to the Civil Service Policy in the Philippines, a "second level position" in the government refers to roles that typically require professional, technical, and scientific skills (Providing for the Organization, 1975). These positions are middle- to upper-level management roles demanding a higher level of expertise and involving supervisory responsibilities. For this study, five participants were purposively selected and interviewed through in-depth interviews (IDI). While the sample size may appear small, Hennink et al. (2017) argue that qualitative research within homogenous groups often requires fewer participants to reach data saturation due to shared experiences and perspectives. To ensure rigor, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established: participants must have held their positions for at least two years, ensuring adequate experience, and must be permanent (i.e., plantilla) employees, highlighting job stability and relevance to the study's focus. This aligns with Patton's (2014) emphasis on purposeful sampling to select participants with rich and relevant insights.

To ensure that the interview informants were suitably qualified to provide insightful responses, the study applied the following inclusion criteria: participants must have served in their respective positions for a minimum of two years, ensuring they had sufficient experience and familiarity with their roles. Additionally, they were required to hold plantilla permanent positions, which are regular, indicating job stability and a deeper engagement with their responsibilities. Lastly, participants needed to be biologically female to align with the study's focus on women's leadership experiences in local government.

In the quantitative phase of this study, the instrument was developed based on the thematic findings derived from the qualitative inquiry. These identified themes were translated into statements to construct the survey questionnaire. During the survey, 193 samples were collected, which is confirmed by the data of Hair et al. (2010). In addition, MacCallum et al. (1999) recommend a minimum of 100–200 participants for EFA, making 193 participants a reasonable number. These samples were different from the participants of the qualitative phase (interview) and were randomly selected from various local government units across the Province of Davao del Norte. Random sampling ensures that each local government unit has an equal chance of being represented in the study, helping to reduce bias and increase the generalizability of the findings (Emerson, 2015).

To ensure the reliability of the instrument used for EFA, a pilot test was conducted among selected municipal governments in Davao de Oro. Thirty women leaders participated in the pilot testing, which revealed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .855, surpassing the required threshold of .70 for reliability. This indicates that the survey instrument effectively measured the study's variables. Additionally, the study employed a five-point Likert attitudinal scale, allowing respondents to express their

agreement or disagreement with given statements, as suggested by Jebb et al. (2021), thereby facilitating nuanced responses and comprehensive data collection.

The study employed data reduction via EFA to determine the pertinent domain structures characterizing the factors of leadership of women. The dimensionality of the constructs was determined using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method, selecting an eigenvalue threshold of at least 1.0. Coefficients exceeding +0.50 were considered significant upon factor rotation utilizing Promax rotation by Corner (2009). This method assists in identifying common factors elucidating the order and structure among measured variables (Brown, 2015).

The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods was guided by principles of methodological triangulation, which enhances validity through multiple data sources and analytical approaches (Fetters et al., 2013). The qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, allowing for systematic identification of 38 core ideas that informed the quantitative phase. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was then employed, consistent with Watkins' (2018) recommendation for using factor analysis to validate and structure thematic insights. By connecting qualitative themes with quantitative constructs, this design ensures coherence and alignment with best practices in mixed-methods research. The methodological rigor demonstrated in this study strengthens its capacity to address the research problem comprehensively.

Results

Qualitative Findings

The study utilized a developed and validated interview guide questionnaire to conduct in-depth interviews with the five women leaders during the initial phase. Additionally, data gathered from this phase were transcribed and evaluated to identify potential topics for the survey questions to be developed in the quantitative phase. These themes were meticulously developed to align with the requirements of the survey instrument, resulting in the generation of 38 core ideas, as summarized in Table 1. This iterative process ensured that the survey questions effectively captured the breadth and depth of insights gathered during the qualitative phase, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the factors influencing women's leadership in the local government context.

The qualitative phase of this study employed thematic analysis to derive core ideas, which later informed the development of the quantitative scale. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework guided the process, ensuring a systematic and transparent identification of patterns within the data. This approach is well-suited for exploratory mixed-methods research as it allows the qualitative insights to directly inform subsequent quantitative phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Transcriptions of the in-depth interviews were iteratively coded, and 38 core ideas were identified. These ideas were then grouped into thematic categories, which were used to construct items for the quantitative instrument, reflecting the nuances and lived experiences of the participants.

Table 1

Core Ideas Derived From the Interview Responses

No.	Core Ideas
1	Women leaders should prioritize understanding and considering the well-being of their colleagues
2	Traits like kindness, attentiveness, and nurturing can be effective assets in female leadership
3	Women leaders need to be decisive, make informed choices, and inspire confidence through their actions
4	Women face challenges in male-dominated workplaces: Bias against female leadership exists, leading to women being doubted or overlooked
5	Authenticity and good listening are important: Leaders, especially women, should be genuine, approachable, and actively listen to their team's ideas
6	Effective leaders foster a collaborative environment, value input from others, and encourage their team members' potential
7	There's a perception that women lack the skills or experience to handle leadership roles, leading to skepticism about their abilities
8	Challenges can be opportunities for growth, doubts can motivate women leaders to persevere and prove their capabilities
9	Leadership effectiveness goes beyond gender, effective leadership depends on management style and ability, not gender
10	Internal struggles like low self-esteem or fear of public speaking can hold women back from leadership opportunities
11	Non-gender-related challenges also exist in leadership, leaders, regardless of gender, face challenges like implementing changes, navigating office politics, and communication issues
12	Trust and encouragement from colleagues and family are strong motivators for women leaders
13	The desire to learn, grow, and contribute to a greater vision motivates some women leaders
14	Earning trust and fostering open communication is a motivator that can lead to effective leadership of women
15	Age, family needs, and the potential impact of decisions can influence how women leaders approach their roles
16	Personal experiences, a desire to help others, and even external circumstances can all push women into leadership roles
17	Gender and Development programs provide opportunities. These programs equip women with skills and knowledge to be effective leaders
18	Empowerment from superiors fosters confidence. Leaders who are trusted and given autonomy in their roles feel empowered and motivated
19	When colleagues don't fully understand or support an initiative, it can be challenging for a leader to implement it
20	Leaders who openly communicate with superiors can work through roadblocks and find solutions
21	Local government units with a high number of female leaders and supportive policies create an environment where women can thrive
22	Programs that provide learning and development opportunities empower women to become more effective leaders

Table 1 Continued

No.	Core Ideas
23	Mentorship provides opportunities for both mentors and mentees to learn and grow from each other's experiences
24	Understanding one's role and responsibilities, along with a strong work ethic, are crucial ingredients for success in government work
25	Supportive mentors who believe in an individual's potential can play a significant role in their growth and development
26	Early work experiences can be a valuable training ground, shaping a person's work ethic, leadership style, and understanding of office dynamics
27	Regardless of gender, a shared vision and understanding of each other's roles are essential for effective collaboration
28	Some women leaders feel a sense of camaraderie and easier communication with other women due to shared experiences or communication styles
29	Gender stereotypes can create hesitancy, particularly for men working with women leaders, hindering open communication and feedback
30	Strong leaders can collaborate effectively with anyone, regardless of gender, by focusing on open communication and mutual respect
31	Frequent change in administration can lead to changes in priorities, making it difficult to implement long-term programs for women's development
32	Women leaders may face challenges if a new administration's focus areas do not align with women's programs, requiring them to advocate for continued support
33	Some women leaders may find it difficult to have their ideas heard or implemented, especially if they encounter resistance or a lack of openness to change from colleagues
34	Budget constraints can be a barrier for women leaders who want to implement new programs or systems to improve efficiency
35	Women leaders can counter doubts about their abilities by exceeding expectations and demonstrating strong performance
36	Persistence and a commitment to equal opportunity can empower women leaders to break down barriers in traditionally male-dominated roles
37	Active listening and clear communication are essential for building trust and leading effectively
38	Women leaders should value their unique perspectives and have confidence in their ability to contribute positively to their local government

The process of translating qualitative findings into a quantitative scale aligns with the recommendations of DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011), who emphasize the importance of maintaining fidelity to the original qualitative themes when operationalizing them into measurable constructs. To ensure this, a structured process of theme refinement was employed. First, key themes were reviewed by an expert panel to validate their relevance and clarity, consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2022) approach to collaborative thematic refinement. Next, these validated themes were transformed into survey items using a Likert-scale format, guided by principles outlined by Clark and Watson (2016) for scale development. This iterative process ensured that the core ideas retained their contextual meaning while becoming accessible for statistical analysis.

Quantitative Findings

In order to explore the factors affecting women's leadership in local government context, a series of assessments including the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test, Bartlett's test, and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) were conducted. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Index of Sampling Adequacy, employed to gauge the sample's adequacy, ranges from 0 to 1, with a suggested minimum threshold of 0.6 for satisfactory factor analysis continuation; values closer to 1 indicate better adequacy. The results of this criterion are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test for Measure of Sample Adequacy (MSA)

Item	MSA	Item	MSA
Overall MSA	0.906	Overall MSA	0.906
1	0.966	20	0.943
2	0.904	21	0.922
3	0.922	22	0.913
4	0.821	23	0.921
5	0.876	24	0.866
6	0.898	25	0.954
7	0.901	26	0.923
8	0.888	27	0.932
9	0.919	28	0.919
10	0.911	29	0.943
11	0.976	30	0.832
12	0.932	31	0.932
13	0.943	32	0.916
14	0.903	33	0.821
15	0.912	34	0.934
16	0.843	35	0.936
17	0.911	36	0.877
18	0.856	37	0.893
19	0.904	38	0.898

According to the results presented in Table 2, the overall test outcome for this criterion is 0.906. This figure indicates that the sample size surpasses the recommended threshold of 0.6, as advocated by Nkansah (2018), signifying adequacy and excellence. This overarching index serves to affirm that the dataset is conducive to employing EFA, suggesting the potential to condense the data into smaller sets of underlying causal dimensions. Consequently, these findings validate the suitability of

the dataset for factor analysis, indicating its capacity to effectively explore and identify underlying factors or dimensions within the dataset.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity stands as a pivotal statistical measure within EFA, gauging the suitability of conducting factor analysis on a dataset. Its primary function lies in assessing whether the correlations between variables are substantial enough to warrant the application of EFA. A significant outcome in Bartlett's test signals notable correlations among variables, affirming the dataset's appropriateness for factor analysis. Therefore, Bartlett's test plays a critical role in guaranteeing the validity and reliability of the ensuing factor analysis outcomes. The specific result for this test is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity on the Variables for Women Leadership

χ^2	df	p
2493.622	527.000	< .001

The test results revealed a substantial Chi-square value of 2493.622 (χ^2) with 527.000 degrees of freedom (*df*) and a *p*-value of < .001 (Table 3), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This outcome indicates that the dataset is indeed suitable for factor analysis. As per Hair et al. (2010), Bartlett's test of sphericity necessitates a significance value below .05 to reject the null hypothesis, further confirming the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis.

The Latent Roots Criterion holds significant importance in EFA, offering valuable insights into the significance of the results. It evaluates the overall value of the variances explained, with higher explained variances indicating more meaningful outcomes. This assessment is achieved by analyzing the eigenvalues of the factors and the variance attributed to each individual dimension, thereby elucidating the structure and significance of the factors identified through the analysis.

Table 4 offers comprehensive insights into the outcomes of the latent root criterion, a fundamental component of EFA. The criterion suggests that the dataset is conducive to extracting five distinct factors from the set of items utilized for factor analysis, representing underlying constructs or patterns within the data. Moreover, the collective explanation of 99.10% of the data variations by these five factors indicates their ability to capture a substantial portion of the variability present in the dataset. This suggests that the identified factors effectively encapsulate the key characteristics and structure of the dataset, providing valuable insights into the underlying relationships among the variables examined in the study.

The Rotated Component Matrix represents the outcome of principal component analysis, aimed at discerning the underlying factor structure within the data. Through PCA, the assessment focuses on determining whether specific items measure common factors. Additionally, factor rotation serves to streamline the rows and columns of the factor matrix, optimizing a variable's loading onto a single dimension to enhance interpretability (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 4

Latent Roots Criterion Analysis

Factors	Eigenvalues	Variance	Cumulative Variance
1	15.298	0.197	0.197
2	18.116	0.226	0.423
3	14.671	0.185	0.608
4	14.574	0.182	0.790
5	16.681	0.201	0.991

Table 5 presents the rotation results, demonstrating that all five factors for women's leadership exhibit significant loadings above ±0.50, meeting the standard coefficient value criteria when utilizing the Promax method. A total of 38 items were included in the analysis, resulting in the identification of five distinct factor structures or attributes. Subsequently, these five factors were labeled based on the nature of the items within each particular structure. This categorization reflects the underlying themes or constructs represented by the items within each factor, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of women's leadership in local governments captured by the survey instrument.

Table 5

Factor Loadings

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Uniqueness
1	0.952					0.074
2	0.916					0.106
3	0.911					0.162
6	0.898					0.052
9	0.896					0.104
35	0.879					0.079
36	0.871					0.036
4		0.908				0.240
7		0.864				0.018
10		0.861				0.013
11		0.852				0.033
29		0.849				0.059
31		0.812				0.020
32		0.784				0.028
33		0.767				0.014

Table 5 Continued

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Uniqueness
34		0.759				0.039
8			0.922			0.034
12			0.914			0.067
13			0.873			0.022
15			0.855			0.029
16			0.788			0.074
26			0.762			0.108
38			0.749			0.163
17				0.854		0.056
18				0.821		0.101
21				0.819		0.074
22				0.805		0.037
23				0.767		0.241
25				0.746		0.020
27				0.702		0.019
5					0.881	0.033
14					0.827	0.052
19					0.784	0.028
20					0.762	0.025
24					0.749	0.015
28					0.738	0.032
30					0.712	0.038
37					0.698	0.064

Note. Applied rotation method is Promax.

Table 6 reveals that Factor 1 extracted seven items, with coefficient patterns ranging from 0.871 to 0.952. Item 36, which states "Persistence and a commitment to equal opportunity can empower women leaders to break down barriers in traditionally male-dominated roles," had the lowest coefficient value at 0.871. Conversely, item 1, which states "Women leaders should prioritize understanding and considering the well-being of their colleagues," had the highest coefficient value at 0.952. All items in this factor exceed the minimum requirement of ±0.50, indicating their strong contributions to this factor.

Table 6

Constructs and Loadings Under Factor 1

Item	Constructs	Loadings
1	Women leaders should prioritize understanding and considering the well-being of their colleagues	0.952
2	Traits like kindness, attentiveness, and nurturing can be effective assets in female leadership	0.916
3	Women leaders need to be decisive, make informed choices, and inspire confidence through their actions	0.911
6	Effective leaders foster a collaborative environment, value input from others, and encourage their team members' potential	0.898
9	Leadership effectiveness goes beyond gender, effective leadership depends on management style and ability, not gender	0.896
35	Women leaders can counter doubts about their abilities by exceeding expectations and demonstrating strong performance	0.879
36	Persistence and a commitment to equal opportunity can empower women leaders to break down barriers in traditionally male-dominated roles	0.871

By examining the shared characteristics among the seven items, which include embodying traits such as kindness, attentiveness, and nurturing while also being decisive, making informed choices, and inspiring confidence, it is evident that effective leadership transcends gender. This effectiveness relies on management style and ability, fostering collaboration, valuing team input, and overcoming doubts and barriers through strong performance and a commitment to equal opportunity. Thus, this factor is suitably labeled as *empowering leadership*.

Table 7 reveals that Factor 2 extracted nine items, with coefficient patterns ranging from 0.759 to 0.908. Item 34, stating "Budget constraints can be a barrier for women leaders who want to implement new programs or systems to improve efficiency," had the lowest coefficient value at 0.759. Conversely, item 4, which states "Women face challenges in male-dominated workplaces: Bias against female leadership exists, leading to women being doubted or overlooked," had the highest coefficient value at 0.908. All the items in this factor exceed the minimum requirement of ±0.50. These nine items share a common theme centered on the challenges and biases women face in leadership roles, both internal (e.g., low self-esteem, fear of public speaking) and external (e.g., gender stereotypes, administrative changes). Additionally, women leaders must navigate non-gender-specific challenges, advocate for continued support amidst shifting priorities, and overcome budget constraints that hinder their ability to implement new programs. Thus, this factor is labelled, *leadership challenges*.

Table 7

Constructs and Loadings Under Factor 2

Item	Constructs	Loadings
4	Women face challenges in male-dominated workplaces: Bias against female leadership exists, leading to women being doubted or overlooked	0.908
7	There's a perception that women lack the skills or experience to handle leadership roles, leading to skepticism about their abilities	0.864
10	Internal struggles like low self-esteem or fear of public speaking can hold women back from leadership opportunities	0.861
11	Non-gender-related challenges also exist in leadership, leaders, regardless of gender, face challenges like implementing changes, navigating office politics, and communication issues	0.852
29	Gender stereotypes can create hesitancy, particularly for men working with women leaders, hindering open communication and feedback	0.849
31	Frequent change in administration can lead to changes in priorities, making it difficult to implement long-term programs for women's development	0.812
32	Women leaders may face challenges if a new administration's focus areas don't align with women's programs, requiring them to advocate for continued support	0.784
33	Some women leaders may find it difficult to have their ideas heard or implemented, especially if they encounter resistance or a lack of openness to change from colleagues	0.767
34	Budget constraints can be a barrier for women leaders who want to implement new programs or systems to improve efficiency	0.759

Table 8 indicates that Factor 3 encompasses seven items, with coefficient values ranging from 0.749 to 0.922. Item 38, which states "Women leaders should value their unique perspectives and have confidence in their ability to contribute positively to their local government," had the lowest coefficient value at 0.749. In contrast, item 8, which asserts "Challenges can be opportunities for growth, doubts can motivate women leaders to persevere and prove their capabilities," had the highest coefficient value at 0.922. All items within this factor surpass the minimum threshold of ±0.50. These seven items collectively emphasize the positive motivations and personal influences that propel women leaders, such as the drive for growth and the support and encouragement from others. They highlight the significance of personal experiences, family considerations, and confidence in their unique perspectives, which shape how women approach and succeed in leadership roles. Therefore, this factor is labeled *leadership motivation*.

Table 8

Constructs and Loadings Under Factor 3

Item	Constructs	Loadings
8	Challenges can be opportunities for growth, doubts can motivate women leaders to persevere and prove their capabilities	0.922
12	Trust and encouragement from colleagues and family are strong motivators for women leaders	0.914
13	The desire to learn, grow, and contribute to a greater vision motivates some women leaders	0.873
15	Age, family needs, and the potential impact of decisions can influence how women leaders approach their roles	0.855
16	Personal experiences, a desire to help others, and even external circumstances can all push women into leadership roles	0.788
26	Early work experiences can be a valuable training ground, shaping a person's work ethic, leadership style, and understanding of office dynamics	0.762
38	Women leaders should value their unique perspectives and have confidence in their ability to contribute positively to their local government	0.749

Table 9 indicates that Factor 4 comprehends seven items, with coefficient values ranging from 0.702 to 0. 854. Item 27, which states "Regardless of gender, a shared vision and understanding of each other's roles are essential for effective collaboration," had the lowest coefficient value at 0.702. In contrast, item 17, which asserts "Gender and Development programs provide opportunities. These programs equip women with skills and knowledge to be effective leaders," had the highest coefficient value at 0.854. All items within this factor exceed the minimum threshold of ±0.50.

Table 9

Constructs and Loadings Under Factor 4

Item	Constructs	Loadings
17	Gender and Development programs provide opportunities. These programs equip women with skills and knowledge to be effective leaders	0.854
18	Empowerment from superiors fosters confidence. Leaders who are trusted and given autonomy in their roles feel empowered and motivated	0.821
21	Local government units with a high number of female leaders and supportive policies create an environment where women can thrive	0.819
22	Programs that provide learning and development opportunities empower women to become more effective leaders	0.805
23	Mentorship provides opportunities for both mentors and mentees to learn and grow from each other's experiences	0.767

Table 9 Continued

Item	Constructs	Loadings
25	Supportive mentors who believe in an individual's potential can play a significant role in their growth and development	0.746
27	Regardless of gender, a shared vision and understanding of each other's roles are essential for effective collaboration	0.702

These seven items mutually highlight the empowerment and development through structured programs, mentorship, and supportive environments. These elements collectively foster confidence, enhance leadership skills, and create thriving conditions for women leaders by providing opportunities for growth, learning, and effective collaboration. Hence, this factor is labeled *leadership development support*.

Table 10 presents Factor 5, which includes eight items with coefficients ranging from 0.698 to 0.881. Item 37, which states "Active listening and clear communication are essential for building trust and leading effectively," had the lowest coefficient value at 0.698. In contrast, item 5, which states "Authenticity and good listening are important: Leaders, especially women, should be genuine, approachable, and actively listen to their team's ideas," had the highest coefficient value at 0.881. All items within this factor exceed the minimum threshold of ±0.50. These eight items revolve around the importance of authenticity, open communication, and effective leadership practices. These highlight the significance of actively listening to team members, fostering trust, navigating challenges through communication, understanding roles and responsibilities, fostering camaraderie, and promoting collaboration and mutual respect. Therefore, this factor is labeled *effective leadership communication*.

Table 10

Constructs and Loadings Under Factor 5

Item	Constructs	Loadings
5	Authenticity and good listening are important: Leaders, especially women, should be genuine, approachable, and actively listen to their team's ideas	0.881
14	Earning trust and fostering open communication is a motivator that can lead to effective leadership of women	0.827
19	When colleagues do not fully understand or support an initiative, it can be challenging for a leader to implement it	0.784
20	Leaders who openly communicate with superiors can work through roadblocks and find solutions	0.762
24	Understanding one's role and responsibilities, along with a strong work ethic, are crucial ingredients for success in government work	0.749
28	Some women leaders feel a sense of camaraderie and easier communication with other women due to shared experiences or communication styles	0.738

Table 10 Continued

Item	Constructs	Loadings
30	Strong leaders can collaborate effectively with anyone, regardless of gender, by focusing on open communication and mutual respect	0.712
37	Active listening and clear communication are essential for building trust and leading effectively	0.698

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore five critical factors influencing women's leadership in local governments: empowering leadership, leadership challenges, leadership motivation, leadership development support, and effective leadership communication. These factors provide a nuanced understanding of the barriers and opportunities women face, contributing to a broader discourse on gender-inclusive governance.

Empowering leadership is characterized by fostering an environment where women leaders can thrive through inclusivity and support. This approach aligns with the transformational leadership style, which emphasizes motivating and inspiring followers by appealing to their values and encouraging innovation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Women often adopt transformational leadership traits such as empathy, attentiveness, and collaboration, which have been shown to improve organizational outcomes, particularly in environments that value equity (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These traits also align with the Capability Approach Theory (Sen, 1999), as they enable leaders to maximize their potential by transforming available resources into meaningful opportunities. Moreover, Northouse (2022) highlights the importance of empowering leadership styles that focus on valuing individual contributions and fostering a sense of collective purpose, further reinforcing the importance of this factor.

Additionally, research suggests that organizations benefit significantly from women leaders who exhibit empowering leadership traits. Morrison et al. (2011) found that companies with a higher proportion of women in leadership roles experience improved collaboration and increased employee satisfaction. Moreover, inclusive leadership practices have been linked to innovation, as diverse perspectives often foster creative problem-solving (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). However, to fully leverage the potential of empowering leadership, organizations must create cultures that prioritize gender equity by addressing structural barriers and biases. The development of mentorship programs and leadership training tailored to women is one effective strategy for fostering empowering leadership styles among female leaders (Ibarra et al., 2013).

Leadership Challenges: women in leadership roles often face systemic challenges, including institutional biases, limited resources, and persistent gender stereotypes. These issues significantly impede their ability to lead effectively and are often exacerbated by societal expectations that undervalue women's leadership

potential (Ridgeway, 2011). Research by Kanter (1977) highlights how women often face "tokenism," which isolates them in male-dominated environments, further limiting their access to informal networks and decision-making processes. Administrative challenges, such as budget constraints and frequent changes in priorities, further hinder the ability of women leaders to implement long-term programs (Sabani & Romaniuk, 2023). Additionally, internal struggles such as self-doubt and imposter syndrome reduce confidence and contribute to workplace inequalities (Dugarova, 2018).

Addressing these challenges requires systemic changes to organizational culture and governance structures. For instance, initiatives aimed at promoting gender equity within leadership pipelines have proven effective in reducing biases and providing women with equal opportunities to succeed (Ely & Rhode, 2010). Furthermore, studies by Eby et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of mentoring relationships in helping women navigate professional barriers and build resilience against systemic obstacles. Interventions must also address cultural norms that perpetuate stereotypes, such as training programs to combat unconscious bias and promote inclusivity. By tackling these barriers, organizations can create environments that support women's leadership aspirations and enable them to overcome challenges.

Leadership Motivation: Motivation is a critical driver of women's leadership aspirations, often rooted in intrinsic factors such as the desire for personal growth and social impact. Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that intrinsic motivations are essential for sustaining leadership development, as they foster resilience and long-term commitment. Women leaders often cite family support, encouragement from colleagues, and a desire to address societal inequities as key motivators (Young, 2016). These motivations align with Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989), which highlights how overlapping social identities shape individual experiences. External motivators, such as the opportunity to contribute to community development, also play a significant role in shaping women's leadership trajectories, particularly in local governance contexts (Ely & Rhode, 2010).

To sustain leadership motivation, organizations and policymakers must create environments that recognize and support women's unique aspirations. Mentorship programs, for example, provide critical encouragement and guidance, reinforcing intrinsic motivations while offering practical tools for career advancement (Ibarra et al., 2013). Moreover, leadership development initiatives tailored to women should emphasize the alignment of individual values with organizational goals, as this enhances engagement and satisfaction (Pick, 2024). By fostering motivational pathways that address both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, local governments can support women leaders in realizing their potential and achieving long-term success.

Leadership Development Support: Leadership development is an essential factor in empowering women to navigate the complexities of local governance. Programs that focus on mentorship, training, and skill development provide women with the tools they need to succeed in leadership roles (Gascon & McIntyre-Mills, 2018). Mentorship, in particular, has been shown to play a pivotal role in fostering confidence and enhancing leadership capacity (Eby et al., 2008). Gender and Development

programs, which address structural barriers and offer targeted training, are especially effective in equipping women with the skills needed to overcome systemic challenges (Pick, 2024). Additionally, public service motivation has been linked to leadership efficacy, emphasizing the importance of aligning individual aspirations with the broader goals of local governance (Dagohoy & Dura, 2022).

Effective leadership development programs must address both individual and systemic barriers to ensure long-term impact. For instance, Ibarra et al. (2013) suggest that programs tailored to women's unique challenges—such as balancing professional and personal responsibilities—are more likely to yield positive outcomes. Organizational support, such as flexible work policies and access to networking opportunities, further enhances the effectiveness of these programs (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). By investing in comprehensive leadership development initiatives, local governments can create a pipeline of skilled women leaders equipped to address the complex challenges of governance.

Effective leadership communication is critical for fostering trust, collaboration, and team cohesion. Women leaders who exhibit strong communication skills—such as active listening, empathy, and transparency—are better equipped to navigate workplace challenges and build strong relationships with their teams (Goleman, 2004). Emotional intelligence, which encompasses these skills, has been shown to enhance leadership effectiveness, particularly in diverse and dynamic organizational contexts (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). Authenticity and open communication further enable women leaders to foster trust and mutual respect, which are essential for successful collaboration (Vella, 2022).

Moreover, organizations that prioritize inclusive communication strategies benefit from improved employee engagement and innovation. Studies by Groysberg and Slind (2012) reveal that transparent communication practices not only enhance team performance but also create environments where diverse perspectives are valued. Training programs aimed at improving interpersonal skills, such as conflict resolution and negotiation, can further support women leaders in developing effective communication strategies (Northouse, 2022). By emphasizing the importance of communication in leadership development, local governments can empower women leaders to build stronger, more inclusive teams and foster a culture of collaboration.

Conclusion

The study's findings on the factors influencing women's leadership in local governments strongly align with its theoretical foundations, specifically the Capability Approach Theory of Amartya Sen and the Intersectionality Theory of Kimberlé Crenshaw.

Capability Approach Theory: This theory emphasizes the importance of individuals having the freedom to achieve their desired outcomes by converting available resources into real opportunities (Sen, 1999). The study's findings on empowering leadership underscore that when women leaders embody traits such as kindness, attentiveness, and decisiveness, they are effectively utilizing their capabilities to foster inclusive and supportive work environments. This reflects the core idea of

Sen's theory that providing individuals with the right environment and support enables them to realize their potential. The research highlights that effective leadership is not inherently gender-specific but relies on the ability to convert capabilities into effective leadership practices.

Intersectionality Theory: Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory posits that individual experiences are shaped by the intersection of multiple social identities and systemic structures of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). The study's findings on leadership challenges reveal that women face both internal and external obstacles, including gender biases, administrative changes, and internal struggles such as low self-esteem. These challenges are compounded by the intersection of gender with other social identities and systemic barriers, highlighting the complexity of women's leadership experiences. The study confirms Crenshaw's theory by illustrating how multiple, overlapping identities and structures influence women's opportunities and challenges in leadership roles.

The theoretical frameworks also support the findings on leadership motivation, development support, and communication. Leadership Motivation emphasizes the role of personal motivations and support networks, aligning with the Capability Approach by highlighting the need for environments that foster personal growth and confidence. Leadership Development Support focuses on programs and policies that provide learning opportunities and mentorship, reflecting the importance of systemic support in enabling women to convert their capabilities into effective leadership. Effective Leadership Communication underscores the importance of interpersonal skills such as authenticity and active listening, aligning with both theories by showing how individual capabilities and social contexts interact to shape leadership practices.

Overall, the study demonstrates that by understanding and addressing the multifaceted factors influencing women's leadership, as illuminated by these theoretical foundations, local governments can create more supportive and empowering conditions. This, in turn, leads to more effective and equitable governance, allowing women leaders to thrive and contribute significantly to societal advancement.

Recommendations

For the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), it is recommended to develop and implement policies that specifically target the reduction of gender biases within local governments. This could include mandatory training programs on gender sensitivity and leadership for all employees. Additionally, the DILG should establish and fund comprehensive support programs that focus on leadership development for women. These programs should include mentorship, professional development workshops, and networking opportunities to empower women leaders and create a more inclusive governance environment.

For local government units, it is essential to implement regular leadership training sessions that emphasize inclusivity, empathy, and effective communication skills for all leaders. Local governments should create and enforce policies that support women leaders, such as flexible working hours, parental leave, and safe reporting

mechanisms for discrimination or bias. By fostering a supportive environment, local governments can help women leaders overcome challenges and thrive in their roles, contributing to more effective and equitable governance.

For women leaders, engaging in continuous learning and professional development opportunities is crucial to enhance leadership skills. Women leaders should actively seek out mentorship and peer support networks to navigate challenges and share best practices. Additionally, they should advocate for and support the implementation of policies that promote gender equality within their organizations. Using their positions to mentor and empower aspiring women leaders within their teams will also help create a culture of inclusivity and support.

For employees in general, participation in training programs focused on gender sensitivity and the importance of inclusive leadership is recommended. Supporting and respecting women leaders and colleagues by fostering an environment of mutual respect and collaboration is essential. Employees should provide constructive feedback and support to women leaders and aspiring leaders, promoting an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives and contributions.

For aspiring women leaders, proactively seeking opportunities for skill development and leadership training is key. Participation in programs offered by local governments or external organizations that focus on building leadership capabilities will be beneficial. Building a strong professional network of mentors, peers, and other women leaders who can provide guidance, support, and opportunities for growth is also crucial for aspiring women leaders to succeed in their career paths.

For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct further studies to explore the nuances of women's leadership in different cultural and organizational contexts. Investigating the long-term impact of leadership development programs on women's career trajectories will provide valuable insights. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach to understand the intersectionality of gender, culture, and leadership, and collaborating with policymakers and practitioners to ensure research findings are translated into actionable strategies, will enhance the effectiveness of future research efforts in supporting women in leadership roles.

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