

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN VARIOUS SECTORS: STYLES, CONSTRAINTS, AND SOLUTION APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT This study aims to analyze how women leaders adopt various leadership styles, such as transformational, democratic, transactional, and a combination of masculine and feminine, in order to adapt to complex organizational dynamics. The method used in this study is a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving in-depth interviews with women leaders in various sectors as well as participatory observation to understand their leadership strategies. The results of the study show that women's leadership tends to be oriented towards collaboration, open communication, and innovation in decision-making and organizational management. The main challenges they face include internal and external conflicts, the pressure of an organizational culture that is still dominated by masculine values, and the balance between professional and personal life. To overcome these obstacles, women leaders implement transparent communication strategies, human resource empowerment, and flexibility in the work system. The study concludes that women's leadership has a significant contribution to creating a more inclusive and innovative work environment, with a combination of empathy and assertiveness that allows for more adaptive and effective decision-making in a variety of organizational situations. The recommendations of this study are the need for policy support and changes in organizational culture that are more inclusive to increase women's participation and leadership effectiveness in various sectors.

KEYWORDS: *Women's Leadership, Leadership Styles, Organizational Challenges, Leadership Strategies, Inclusivity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's leadership has become an increasingly relevant topic in various sectors (Habibah S, 2015), reflecting social change and more inclusive organizational dynamics (Baharun et al., 2021; Hazani, 2022). Although many women leaders have shown significant contributions in various fields, there are still challenges that limit their role in leadership (Malihah et al., 2024; Rizal et al., 2023). Factors such as gender stereotypes, the dominance of masculine organizational cultures, and inequality in promotion opportunities are often obstacles for women to achieve leadership positions (Artisa, 2014; Wigati, 2024). This phenomenon requires a more in-depth study of how women lead, the challenges they face, and the strategies implemented to overcome these obstacles.

Several previous studies have addressed various aspects of women's leadership, including the leadership styles adopted as well as how women manage teams and organizations in different contexts. A study by Amelia and Mulyono (2024) suggests that transformational leadership is often identified in women's leadership, where they are oriented towards individual development and organizational innovation (Amelia, S. W., & Mulyono, 2024). Meanwhile, research by Cahyati et al. (2023) highlights how women often have to navigate the "leadership labyrinth," facing challenges that are not only structural but also cultural (Kahyati, T., Vinanti, M. B., Indriyani, D., Narimavati, U., & Sunarsi, 2023). Furthermore, a study by Umar (2021) and Nasution et al. (2024) confirms that a combination of masculine and feminine leadership styles can create more flexible and adaptive leadership in a dynamic environment (Umar, 2021). Thus, this research is expected to provide comprehensive insights into women's leadership patterns and provide recommendations for organizations in creating a more inclusive and supportive work environment for women leaders.

The results of this research are expected to be the basis for the formation of policies and practices that are more supportive of women's leadership, both in the public and private sectors, as well as provide new insights into the importance of balancing masculine and feminine leadership styles in creating more adaptive and innovative organizations.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with case study design to understand women's leadership styles in various sectors and the challenges they face. This study focuses on an in-depth exploration of the experiences of women leaders with descriptive-analytical methods. The data in this study was obtained through in-depth interviews with women leaders in the education and non-education sectors to get a first-hand perspective on leadership styles, challenges, and strategies implemented (Sobian, 2023). In addition, participatory observations were conducted to observe the work environment and interactions of women leaders with their teams as well as documentation

using secondary data such as organizational reports, leadership policies, and related journals and scientific articles.

The research subjects consisted of 20 female leaders who worked as school principals, managers, and other organizational leaders. The selection of participants is carried out by purposive sampling based on certain criteria, namely having a minimum of five years of experience in leadership, having a significant role in organizational decision-making, and coming from various sectors, both educational and non-educational. The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which involved the steps of transcription of interview data, identification of key themes based on leadership styles, challenges, and strategies used, and data interpretation with reference to transformational, democratic, transactional, and masculine-feminine balance leadership theories.

To increase the validity and reliability of the research, several steps were taken, including member checking by confirming the results of interviews with participants to ensure the suitability of interpretation, triangulating sources by comparing data from various collection methods to obtain more objective results, and peer debriefing through discussions with leadership experts and academics to avoid bias in data analysis. With this method, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of women's leadership, how they overcome challenges, and how their leadership styles contribute to an inclusive and innovative work environment.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals a variety of women's leadership styles that reflect their adaptability to diverse organizational challenges and needs. Female leaders tend to combine transformational, democratic, masculine-feminine, to transactional leadership styles, which reflects flexibility in dealing with complex situations.

a. Women's Leadership Style

- 1) Transformational Leadership. Transformational leadership styles become dominant among female leaders, where they create organizational innovation through intrinsic motivation, strategic vision, and team commitment. Women leaders are often oriented towards inspiration and empowerment, as explained in Bass and Avolio's (1994) theory that transformational leaders are able to drive significant change through inspiration and empowerment (Akbar, 2017; Haryani et al., 2022)
- 2) Democratic Leadership. Women leaders also show a preference for a democratic approach, which involves team members in decision-making. This approach creates a collaborative work environment, increases team members' sense of belonging, and

encourages productivity. The theory of Lewin et al. (1939) supports that democratic styles result in more active team involvement and more inclusive decision-making (Affandi et al., 2022; Musoli, 2021)

- 3) **Masculine and Feminine Combination.** One of the uniqueness of women's leadership styles is the ability to synergize masculine characteristics, such as firmness and courage, with feminine characteristics, such as empathy and gentleness. This allows for strategic decision-making without neglecting interpersonal relationships. The "Leadership Labyrinth" theory by Eagly and Carli (2007) explains that this combination helps women face structural barriers, including gender stereotypes that consider women to be less assertive than men (Jopanda, 2021)

b. Challenges Faced by Women Leaders

- 1) **Internal and External Conflicts.** Women leaders often face internal conflicts with staff and stakeholders as well as gender stereotypes that hinder their leadership.
- 2) **Masculine Organizational Cultural Pressure.** The pressure of organizational culture that is still dominated by masculine values is a challenge for female leaders (Maggara & Frinaldi, 2024)
- 3) **Balancing Personal and Professional Life.** Women leaders are required to balance work responsibilities and personal lives. Flexibility in work is one of the strategies implemented (Hermawan & Sulastri, 2023)

c. Strategies for Facing Challenges

- 1) **Transparent two-way communication:** Women leaders rely on open and participatory communication in decision-making.
- 2) **Human Resource Empowerment and Development:** Using training and mentoring strategies to improve staff competencies (Prasinta et al., 2023; Suryani et al., 2023)

Women leaders adopt a variety of flexible leadership styles, incorporating transformational, democratic elements, and a balance between assertiveness and empathy. They face challenges such as gender stereotypes, masculine cultural pressures, and professional-personal life balance. However, with transparent communication strategies, staff empowerment, and work flexibility, they are able to create a more inclusive and innovative work environment.

Table 1. Women's Leadership Styles in the Education Sector

It	Name	Profession	Leadership Style	Challenge	What's New	Similarities with Women's Leadership Styles
1	L.	Principal	Masculine-Feminine, Transactional	Conflict with the student's guardian	Focus on collaboration and emotional management	Prioritizing empathy, a balance between firmness and gentleness
3	J.	Public Relations Manager at Rumah Tahfidz	Masculine Slightly Feminine, Democratic	Emotions dominate when facing problems	Collective decision-making process and focus on healthy competition	Actively listen to the team, build collaborative working relationships
4	K.	Principal	Transformational	Facing the dominant guardian of the student	Innovative tahfidz program: inter-class competitions and regular evaluations	Demonstrate fairness, professionalism, and effective communication
6	Y.	Principal	Transformational	Dealing with conflicts with teachers and guardians, delegating responsibilities	Providing training and mentoring to teachers	Participatory and collaborative leadership style
7	N.	Principal	Feminim-Demokratis	Handle conflicts with compromise, maintain a balance of relationships within the team	Two-way communication with teachers, priority on achieving academic targets	A supportive, collaborative, and supportive approach
8	E.	Principal	Transformational-Transactional	Divide time between work and family, build communication with parents	Developing a culture of discipline through example	A style that puts relationships and empowerment first
9	F.	Principal	Masculine-Transactional-Transformational	Gender stereotypes, choosing a workforce with superior quality	Implementing an inclusive curriculum, instilling monotheistic and moral values	Prioritizing collaboration, open communication, and women's empowerment
10	Y.	Principal	Collaborative-Feminism	Gender stereotypes, masculine organizational culture	Data-driven decision-making, involving the school community	Emphasize transparent communication, build positive relationships, and create a school culture
12	U.	Principal of Tahfidz School	Transformational-Masculine-Democratic	The team is not solution-oriented, parents are less supportive	Strict rules on the use of smartphones, tahfidz events	A combination of assertiveness, empathy, and deliberation
13	F.	Principal of An-Naba IT Kindergarten	Democratic	Internal conflicts, staff motivation	Provide leadership training	Balance of masculine and feminine traits
14	R.	Principal of SDN 10	Masculine-Democratic	Implementation of the new	Discussion with teachers, strict	Respect for team opinions

		Mesuji Timur		curriculum, decrease in exam results	monitoring	
15	S.	Principal of Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten	Democratic-Transformational	Balancing family and school commitments	Deliberations with parents at the beginning of the school year	Direct jumping, guiding staff
16	I.	Principal of Amal Mulia Kindergarten	Democratic-Transformational-Feminism	Saturated with old positions, heavy duty	Involvement in workshops and weekly evaluations	Open communication, respect for the team
17	S.	Principal	Democratic	Dealing with complex conflicts and challenges	Forming a collaborative team	Inclusive, creative, solution-oriented
18	R.	Principal of SDN 10 Mesuji Timur	Masculine-Democratic	Implementation of the new curriculum, decrease in exam results	Discussion with teachers, strict monitoring	Prioritizing team-based engagement and decision-making
19	F.	Principal of An-Naba IT Kindergarten	Democratic	Internal conflicts, staff motivation	Provide leadership training, form project teams	The balance between masculine assertiveness and feminine empathy

Table 2. Women's Leadership Styles in the Non-Education Sector

It	Name	Profession	Leadership Style	Challenge	What's New	Similarities with Women's Leadership Styles
1.	N.	Head of Detention Center	Masculine, Transactional, Democratic	Conflict between inmates and public pressure	Focus on a vision of equitable leadership and strengthening staff relationships	Be firm in making decisions, give appreciation to the team
2.	M.	Restaurant Owner	Masculine - Transformational	Field conflicts, quick decision-making	Consultative style with employees, focus on innovation in decision-making	Using creativity and motivation to motivate staff
3.	E.	Chief Manager of PT Indomarco	Feminism-Transformational	Balancing time between work and family	Get used to getting work done on time	Empathy, prioritizing team comfort

d. Dominant Leadership Style

Various combinations of leadership styles used by women in various professions:

- 1) Transformational: This style often appears in leadership in the education sector, suggesting that women leaders tend to be oriented towards change, innovation, and individual development.
- 2) Democratic: Some leaders adopt a democratic approach, which means they are more inclusive and open to discussion and collaboration with the team.
- 3) Transactional: This style is seen in professions that require strictness and compliance with rules, such as in the security sector (detention houses) or formal institutions.
- 4) Masculine-Feminine: Some leaders use an approach that combines assertiveness (masculine) with empathy and collaboration (feminine).

e. Challenges Faced

- 1) Interpersonal conflict: Many leaders face conflicts with parents, staff, or the surrounding community.
- 2) Gender stereotypes: Some leaders face cultural and organizational barriers that are still masculine.
- 3) Quick decision-making: Leaders in the business and education sectors must be able to make decisions quickly and accurately.
- 4) Balancing work and family: The main challenge for many women leaders is how they manage the time between their professional and personal lives.

f. New Things Applied

- 1) Focus on collaboration and emotional management: Shows that women's leadership tends to be more cooperative and based on interpersonal relationships.
- 2) Staff and community empowerment: Many leaders provide training and mentoring to their teams.
- 3) Data-driven decision-making: There is a growing trend towards the use of data in the decision-making process.
- 4) Balance between firmness and gentleness: Female leaders show flexibility in handling situations with a balance between a masculine (firmness) and feminine (empathy) approach.

g. Similarities with Women's Leadership Styles

- 1) Empathy and Collaboration: Almost all female leaders demonstrate a supportive, open, and collaborative approach.
- 2) Professionalism and Effective Communication: They focus on open communication and strengthening relationships with the team.
- 3) Empowerment and Motivation: Women's leadership is often driven by the motivation to develop a team, whether through training, mentoring, or involvement in decision-making.

Based on the above analysis, there are several key findings related to women's leadership styles:

- a. Women's leadership is more likely to be transformational and democratic, with a more collaboration-oriented approach, open communication, and innovation.
- b. The biggest challenges they face are interpersonal conflicts, gender stereotypes, and the balance between professional and personal life.
- c. Female leaders tend to prioritize empathy, flexibility, and team empowerment, which distinguishes them from more authoritarian and individualistic masculine leadership styles.
- d. They combine firmness with gentleness, showing that effective leadership is not just about strength and authority, but also about building healthy relationships within the team.

With these findings, it can be concluded that women's leadership leads to a more collaborative, adaptive, and values-based approach that balances professionalism and empathy, which makes it an increasingly relevant leadership model in various sectors.

4. CONCLUSION

This research highlights the flexibility and adaptability of women's leadership styles in various sectors, which include transformational, democratic, transactional, and masculine-feminine combinations. Key findings show that women leaders tend to be more collaborative and innovative in decision-making and organizational management, despite challenges such as internal and external conflicts, gender stereotypes, and organizational cultural pressures that are still masculine-dominated. In addition, balancing professional responsibilities and personal life becomes an important aspect of their leadership journey. To overcome these challenges, women leaders implement transparent communication strategies, human resource empowerment, and flexibility in the work system. By combining empathy and assertiveness, women's leadership contributes significantly to creating an inclusive and innovative work environment, developing the organization holistically, increasing team motivation, and overcoming existing structural constraints, thereby

reinforcing the understanding that a team engagement and empowerment-based approach is an effective leadership model in the modern era.

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