

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATORS AT UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SUMATERA UTARA

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Abstract: *Leadership is the ability to influence others to achieve a goal. Leadership has always been identified with the role of men, even in the world of education. However, as times have changed, women have also gained equal rights and capabilities. Female school principals are capable of matching men in leading educational institutions, ensuring that these institutions maintain high quality and remain competitive in the market. The focus of this study is on how women's leadership styles contribute to the development of educational quality at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara. This study employs a qualitative research method using a case study design. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. The findings of this study on women's leadership in educational quality development at Muhammadiyah University have provided valuable insights, thereby helping to produce students of noble character who possess high-quality educational knowledge.*

Keywords: *Leadership, Women, and Educational Quality*

Introduction

Leadership is the ability a person possesses to influence others to work toward achieving goals and objectives. Thus, leadership is a quality possessed by an individual due to the responsibilities they hold, as they strive to influence their followers by ensuring they comply with the instructions of the person leading them.

Speaking of leadership. Allah the Almighty says, which means: "And We have made among them leaders who guide by Our command to those who are patient. And they are those who believe in Our verses." (Surah As-Sajdah: 24). This verse explains to us that a leader must encourage the members of his group to work with a strong sense of responsibility and to cooperate in order to achieve the organization's established goals. Various situations, problems, and environments are considered important components that can shape a leader's style.

Leadership is a key element in an organization's success, and while the role of women in leadership positions is increasingly recognized across various sectors, gender disparities in global leadership remain significant despite various initiatives to promote gender equality. This phenomenon is often linked to the concept of the glass ceiling the structural and cultural barriers that prevent women from reaching the highest levels within organizations (Dilmaghani et al., 2024).

Previous studies have identified barriers women face in leadership, such as organizational bias, a lack of professional networks, and harmful gender stereotypes (Bich & Jones, 2023; Khushal, 2022) Research in developing countries indicates that these barriers are exacerbated by

conservative cultural norms and limited access to higher education (Hofstede, 2001). Women leaders possess a number of strengths, such as high emotional intelligence, a democratic leadership style, and the ability to adapt in complex situations (Hilal et al., 2024; Vong et al., 2019).

Although several studies have been conducted, research on women's leadership remains largely fragmented (Ali & Rasheed, 2021; Areiqat, 2024; Kamberidou, 2020; Rinjani & Pertiwi, 2022). This research is dominated by studies from developed countries, for instance, researchers (Yahya et al., 2024) explain that developed countries are more open regarding gender equality in leadership within both educational and social contexts, while the context in developing countries is often overlooked. This is also consistent with research (Gandhi & Sen, 2021) conducted in Asian countries, which states that the lack of female leadership in the world of education, such as in universities, is partly due to cultural factors in the local environment that highly value men as leaders.

In the sense that a leader can be a good leader in one situation, but conversely can also act as a follower in another. This is because, within an organization, leadership arises solely due to varying situations that require different approaches. A leader's authority is not derived from their appointment to the role, but rather from others' acceptance of their leadership.

In Islam, leadership is a trust and a responsibility for which one is accountable not only to those being led, but also before Allah SWT. Regarding leadership, there are no distinctions between men and women; both have an equal right to be leaders. Women are required to continue learning and improving themselves so that they can influence others with scientific and logical arguments. If women can achieve this, they will possess two very powerful "weapons": first, a sensitivity that can touch the heart, and second, strong arguments that appeal to reason. The ability to appeal to emotion without appealing to reason is not sufficient to achieve healthy leadership.

Literature Review

1. Definition of Leadership

Definition of Leadership Leadership is the translation of the word "leadership," which derives from the word "leader." A leader is a person who leads, while leadership refers to the role or position of a leader. In another sense, etymologically, the term leadership comes from the root word "pimpin," which means to guide or lead. From "pimpin" comes the verb "memimpin," which means to guide and lead (St. Rodliyah, 2015).

Leadership is the application of skills in managing others, managing human resources, and managing organizations in a general sense. Therefore, every leader must possess managerial skills that significantly influence the authority they hold. Consequently, the primary skill of leadership is the ability to effectively manage organizational situations and conditions by defining the organization's future direction through a visionary framework. The delegation of tasks to subordinates is an integral part of leadership, enabling the establishment of communication and interaction, as well as the assessment of their mindset and performance, so that they can collaborate effectively and efficiently in achieving the organization's goals (Siti Farikhah, 2015).

Marno and Triyo Supriyanto cite Mar'at's view in Browr, stating that a leader is someone who holds a position with high potential in the field, while Kartini Kartono argues that a leader is an individual who possesses special skills without formal appointment to influence the group they lead to work together toward specific goals. Furthermore, Terry also states that leadership is a relationship in which one person the leader-influences others to cooperate in efforts to achieve specific goals. From the definitions above, it can be understood that a leader interacts with a

group of people known as subordinates to achieve a specific goal (Marmo and Triyo Supriyanto, 2013).

The term "style" is often associated with words like "model," "type," "style," or "attitude." Leadership style in a public office is a common and essential element of the governmental system; without various leadership styles, a leader would always come across as monotonous if they lack a leadership style tailored to their own approach. Leadership always makes an appealing impression, as it requires a style suited to the situation and conditions of the organization or institution. However, fundamentally, leadership is not merely about the style a leader displays, since no single style should be consistently applied across diverse organizational situations and conditions. Women's leadership is always a public issue frequently discussed, as it remains a hot topic in leadership roles.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach. Specifically, the method used is phenomenological qualitative research. The phenomenological approach is oriented toward understanding, exploring, and interpreting the meaning of events, phenomena, and relationships among people in specific situations. (Iskandar, 2009)

Qualitative-phenomenological research attempts to explain or at least reveal the meaning of concepts or experiential phenomena based on the consciousness of several individuals. Phenomenology is conducted in natural settings, so there are no limitations on interpreting or understanding the phenomena under study, and the researcher is free to analyze the data obtained.

Qualitative research also employs a phenomenological approach. This means that researchers go into the field to observe phenomena as they naturally occur. However, what ultimately distinguishes each type of research is its focus-whether it centers on culture, phenomena, specific cases, and so on.

Result and Discussion

1. Women's Leadership to Improve Education

Several studies have found that the characteristics of women's leadership possess certain unique qualities and differ from those of men's leadership. For example, when it comes to decision-making, women tend to adopt a more democratic and participatory style than men. Women are considered to be more interpersonal and better listeners skills that can make others feel comfortable and valued.

In addition, the most important thing is that women have a stronger commitment to the values of equality. Women also tend to be more cooperative and supportive; they are less likely to seek the spotlight or be competitive. They avoid conflict, are relatively patient, more meticulous, and pay closer attention to small and complex details, and they are more collegial.

Such leadership qualities are particularly relevant to the world of education, which is expected to produce critical, innovative, and responsible individuals who remain firmly committed to spiritual values people who view all human beings as God's creatures endowed with dignity and deserving of respect. Perhaps this is why, in many developed countries, women dominate leadership roles in higher education.

To that end, the researcher explains that at least three things must be done. First, efforts to reconstruct culture through education in the broadest sense, starting with education within the family. Second, there is a need to reform all discriminatory public policies. The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) has identified as many as 354 local regulations (Perda) that discriminate against women. Third, there must be efforts to

reinterpret religious teachings that marginalize women so that only accommodating religious interpretations that align with humanistic values and are women-friendly are disseminated.

We need to promote the development of higher education institutions that demonstrate a strong commitment to gender equality. We must increase both the quantity and quality of women's leadership in the field of education. We must provide stronger support so that women can overcome various barriers-whether stemming from traditional values, structural constraints, cultural norms, or personal challenges that hinder their personal and professional growth. Democratic leadership traits must be cultivated to encourage both women and men to become high-quality leaders in the future. Finally, may more women become leaders in higher education.

Advancing education at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara can be achieved through a comprehensive approach that integrates academic excellence, technology, internationalization, and Islamic values. Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara has already demonstrated significant achievements as one of the leading private universities in Sumatra, even securing a place in international rankings.

Furthermore, the quality of education can be improved if women's leadership continues to be exercised by implementing strategies designed to advance Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, such as: enhancing academic quality and accreditation, promoting internationalization and global reputation, fostering research innovation and community service, developing facilities and infrastructure, and strengthening Islamic and Muhammadiyah values.

The researchers then observed that in advancing education at Muhammadiyah University, female leaders exhibit several distinctive characteristics, namely: a high ability to persuade, the ability to adapt and learn quickly; the potential for strong teamwork; a determination that is no less than that of male leaders; and a willingness to take risks.

Women in higher education are more interested in academic leadership than in managerial leadership. This suggests that women are not particularly interested in participating in leadership structures. However, on the other hand, when women are given leadership responsibilities, they strive to accept and fulfill those responsibilities effectively (Hidayah & Munastiwi, 2019).

Furthermore, it is noted that women are numerically underrepresented in both managerial and academic leadership roles. For instance, in the position of full professor, men dominate. Another example is the percentage of women holding managerial leadership positions, such as the role of university president, which remains very low.

2. The Strength of Women's Leadership

The presence of women in leadership positions is not merely the result of policies or external drivers, but also stems from the unique and valuable leadership qualities that women possess (Areiqat, 2024). One of the key strengths women bring to leadership is high emotional intelligence. Women tend to be better able to manage their own emotions as well as understand and respond to the emotions of others in ways that foster better interpersonal relationships (Areiqat, 2024). This emotional intelligence strengthens team collaboration and creates a more harmonious work environment.

The democratic leadership style often practiced by women also plays a role in creating more inclusive and innovative organizations (Badiozaman et al., 2023). Female leaders tend to be more open to input from their teams and place greater value on diverse perspectives, which ultimately enhances overall team performance. Women's success in adapting to complex and stressful situations also demonstrates their ability to be effective leaders, particularly in navigating the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

3. Geographic and Field of Study Trends

Research on women's leadership is more prevalent in developed countries, where gender equality has become a top priority. However, in developing countries, although attention to this issue is beginning to grow, research on women's leadership remains limited (Banker, 2023). Countries such as India, Brazil, and several African nations are beginning to recognize the importance of women's roles in leadership for driving economic and social growth (Gaikwad & Pandey, 2022).

4. Weaknesses of Women's Leadership

Behind these strengths, women also face a number of challenges that can affect their performance in leadership roles. One of the greatest challenges women face is the difficulty of maintaining a work-life balance (Babic & Hansez, 2021). The dual pressures of being a leader at work and the primary caregiver in their personal lives can lead to excessive stress and burnout (Wardatun et al., 2023). Women often feel the need to work harder than their male counterparts to prove their competence, which can negatively impact their well-being.

Conclusion

Leaders must motivate and inspire their communities by helping them understand their potential, which can then be transformed into concrete actions aimed at fulfilling the institution's core tasks and functions. Through the " " initiative-led by women who are committed to educational quality it is hoped that the education provided to students will produce a new generation of citizens who are faithful and morally upright.

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