

## Women's Leadership Styles: Indonesian Context

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### Abstract

This study aimed to explore and describe the leadership styles of a female principal in one state senior high school in Indonesia, as well as how the perceptions of the school members about her leadership style. This study used qualitative method with a case study approach. The participants were six people, including the principal, vice principal (student affairs), vice principal (curriculum), head of administration, student council president and security guard. Interview data were analyzed using "within a case and cross-case analysis" between participants. The results showed that the leadership style of the female principal included masculine, feminine, transactional, and transformational leadership styles. The findings indicate that all of the styles can be applied simultaneously in accordance with the needs and conditions in the school. Furthermore, the school members support her leadership with appropriate managerial and leadership processes, which can provide motivation and encouragement to teachers in carrying out teaching and learning activities. The implementation, based on the social capacity of the principal's performance is quite good and is very much felt by the creation of a good organizational climate. School members argue that there is no significant difference between female and male leadership in managerial terms, with the criteria of the principal as a leader having a visionary ability, having the ability to see possibilities and opportunities in the future and be open to changing times.

**Keywords:** leadership style, principal, women's leadership

## Introduction

Every leader has her or his own style of leadership, both man and woman. Discussing woman's leadership means discussing gender issues. To understand the term gender needs to be matched with gender. Gender is an identity that distinguishes between men and women based on biological characteristics, while gender distinguishes women and men based on socio-cultural characteristics (social construction). Gender according to Doyle (1985) is a concept used to describe differences between men and women in a socio-cultural way. This difference refers to the emotional and psychological elements as social characteristics, where the relationship between men and women is constructed so that it varies between place and time. For example, women are known as gentle, beautiful, emotional, and motherly beings while men are considered strong, rational, male, and mighty.

Women's leadership is considered capable of solving several problems in the world of education. Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) explain that the road to leadership for women starts with education. Women who have higher education can choose a variety of alternative jobs that are now wide open for them, such as serving as president, chancellor, headmaster and so on. Women's leadership has become a public issue that has always been discussed and has provoked polemics and debate between the pros and cons of female leaders in a country, even though recognition of basic human rights seems to have increased significantly in various parts of the world. This recognition also applies to the rights of women who are equal to men. The stigma that women do not need to go to high school, eventually going to the kitchen is also often used as a tool to justify unfair actions against women. Patriarchal culture influences the formation of imbalanced structures and socio-politics in society so that women who are in a weak position can only survive in their domestic space (Usman, 2008; Wibowo, 2014).

Islamic teachings, through the Holy Qur'an, provide equal opportunities for men and women to show their performance and good deeds respectively. Rewards are given according to the performance shown, both for men and women. As stated in a verse: "Whoever does good deeds, both men and women in a state of faith, then indeed We will give him a good life" (Qur'an, surah an-nahl verse 97). In general, women's leadership style is divided into two, namely feminine-masculine leadership style and transformational-transactional leadership style. In reality, it is not always the two styles that female leaders have. It could be that a female leader has a combination of these two styles because it adjusts the characteristics or demands of the job (Gitosudarmo & Sudita, 2012; Situmorang, 2011).

Masculine leadership style has competitive characteristics, hierarchical authority, high control for leaders, is not emotional and analyzes the problem. While feminine leadership has cooperative characteristics, collaboration with managers and subordinates, low control for leaders and overcoming problems based on intuition and empathy. In accordance with a typical leadership style based on sex (Visser, 2002), also revealed that feminine style is inherent in family orientation while the masculine style is more career oriented. Bass (1985) argues that transactional leadership is a social approach to leadership that involves a reciprocal process between leaders and subordinates. Whereas transformational leadership describes the process of relations between superiors and subordinates based on values, beliefs, and assumptions regarding the organization's vision and mission. In general, existing studies show that women tend to have transformational leadership styles than men.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Muhyadi (2015) informed that female principals gave authority in decision-making to subordinates, careful in making decisions and obeying procedures, respect, respect, be open to input and suggestions from subordinates, prefer to work teams, prioritize interpersonal relationships and informal communication, awards are given to the development of subordinates, and maternal nature plays a role in giving warning and guidance to subordinates and more diplomatic.

From the results of observations at the research site, during the leadership of a female school principal, many achievements and awards were achieved in various race events attended by teachers, education staff and students. Achievements and awards were achieved from various levels of implementation, both at the city level to the national level. Some of the achievements and awards that have been achieved during her leadership are the environment ambassadors' competition, German language competition, and many other achievements in the fields of sports, science, and the arts. This is what underlies the interest of researchers to conduct this research. This study especially aimed to find out and analyze leadership styles, and the perceptions of school members towards the leadership of a female principal in senior high school.

## Literature Review

Leadership according to Nawawi and Hadari (2004) is an ability or intelligence encouraging a number of people (two or more people) to work together in carrying out activities directed at a common goal. Whereas Mulyasa (2008) defines leadership as the ability to move, influence, motivate, invite, direct, advise, guide, instruct, govern, prohibit, and even punish (if necessary), and foster with the intention that humans as management media want to work in order to achieve administrative objectives effectively and efficiently. Leadership has the characteristics, temperament habits, character and personality that are unique so that their behavior and style distinguish themselves from others. This style will definitely color the behavior and type of leadership so that several types of leadership emerge. Leadership style is one of the factors that influence the work of employees or teachers. The leadership style used by the principal in dealing with subordinates is a task-oriented style and an employee or teacher-oriented style (Gibson, 2003). The principal is task oriented, meaning directing, supervising his subordinates to ensure that the tasks carried out are satisfactory. The subordinate-oriented headmaster tries to motivate and not control, encouraging subordinates to carry out the task by letting them participate in decisions that affect them, forming friendships of mutual trust and mutual respect between members of the school organization.

Leadership style is an embodiment of behavior of a leader concerning his ability to lead, where the embodiment usually forms a certain pattern or form (Bastian, 2014). There are several leadership styles according to Lippit and White (as cited in Winardi, 2000, p .35), which can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Style of leadership

<u>Style</u>	<u>Elaboration</u>
Authoritarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determination of policy and decision making is carried out by the leader.</li> <li>• The steps in carrying out an organization's activities or activities are determined by the leader.</li> </ul>

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leader usually dictates the work tasks that must be done and the co-workers of each member.</li> <li>• "Dominator", tends to be personal in praise and criticism of the work of each member and does not actively participate in group participation unless he gives a demonstration.</li> </ul> |   |
| Democratic  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A policy is a matter of discussion of members and in organizational decision making involves the participation of members who are stimulated and assisted by leaders.</li> <li>• The plan or design of activities achieved during the discussion takes place which is illustrated through general steps towards organizational goals. If technical advice is needed, the leader will suggest alternatives that can be chosen.</li> <li>• Members are free to work with whom they want and the division of tasks is left to groups formed directly by members of the organization.</li> <li>• The leader is objective in praise and criticism of his subordinates, where the leader jumps in directly as a member of the organization but without doing too much work done by his members.</li> </ul> |
| Laissez-Faire   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete freedom for group or individual decisions with minimal leader participation.</li> <li>• All needs are provided by the leader, where it shows that the leader will provide information if there is a request, and the leader does not take part in group discussions.</li> <li>• There is no leader's participation at all.</li> </ul>   |
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Normatively, women have the same right to be leaders as men, as long as they have the criteria as leaders. There are many factors that contribute to strengthening and weakening women's engagement in public areas, including opportunities to become leaders (Wahjosumidjo, 2010). Factors that strengthen women's leadership potential are as follows: 1. Policies that provide opportunities for women to take part as a result of struggles from people who are concerned about elevating the fate, dignity, degree and dignity of women, even though they have not yet reached an optimal level, for example, 30% quota for women's representation in the legislature, 2. The advancement of technology that is very instrumental in helping alleviate domestic tasks and women's public duties, so that women involved in it do not need to rely too much on muscles and exert excessive energy as before, 3. There is an increase in awareness of the potential and existence of women gradually in some men and women, which provides a conducive atmosphere for women to be able to engage more broadly in the community, 4. There is gradual state recognition of the potential of women in various fields, 5. The urgency of world ideology that continues to roll out the enforcement of human rights and democratization, 6. The development of mass media that exposes the success of women in development, so that a

positive impact encourages and motivates women to develop their abilities through school education and outside of school, 7. Success in controlling reproductive functions with family planning programs, so that there are many times women are involved in development, 8. There is a successful female model that motivates women to follow in the footsteps of their success.

While the factors that weaken women's leadership potential are as follows: 1. There is still stiffness in interpreting religious texts relating to women's leadership that is only textual based so often conflict contextually, 2. There is still strong public confidence in the stereotypes of women socialized in hereditary care, 3. There are fears that men are rivaled by women, 4. There are feelings of doubt and confidence in some women, 5. There are negative excesses of women acting in the public arena, especially women who are married, 6. Women's access has limited position and employment, 7. Male dominance in a historical and political manner, 8. Ideology and working atmosphere that is in favor of the interests of men, 9. Historical tradition, lack or lack of experience and involvement of women in past leadership, 10. The strong myth is that leaders must be strong, namely men, 11. The lack of support for female candidates, even from women themselves, 12. Communities and women themselves find it difficult to separate career and public areas and traditional roles in the family environment and social environment, especially in high-level leadership (Wahjosumidjo, 2010). The phenomenon often finds an endless apology, that women will not be leaders in the public arena because they have no lead experience, but how can experienced women be leaders if the opportunity to lead is never obtained.

## Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative method with a case study approach with a historical background to explore, explain and describe the phenomenon of the leadership style of a female principal in one senior high school in Jambi. Samples and research participants are planned to cover some various parties involved (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Demographic information

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Educational qualification</u>	<u>Sex</u>
Participant 1	Principal	51 Tahun	Master	Female
Participant 2	Vice principal (students' affair)	53 Tahun	Master	Female
Participant 3	Vice principal (Curriculum)	50 Tahun	Bachelor	Male
Participant 4	Teacher	53 Tahun	Bachelor	Male
Participant 5	Student	16 Tahun	Student	Male
Participant 6	Security	53 Tahun	High school	Male

In general, in qualitative research, there are four main tools for collecting data, namely interviews, observation, document review, and audiovisuals (Creswell, 2007). In this study,

researchers used observations, interviews and document review as data collection techniques; demographic questions were used to record participants' professional data. To make it easier to describe the results, we divided the questions into a number of theme and sub-themes (see Table 3).

**Tabel 3.** Theme dan sub-themes

Topic	Themes	Sub-themes
Leadership styles in the research site.	• Masculine leadership style	1. <i>Assertive</i> 2. <i>Task Oriented</i>
	• Feminine leadership style	1. <i>Charismatik or value</i> 2. <i>Team Oriented</i> 3. <i>Self Protective</i>
	• Transactional Leadership Style	1. <i>Contingent reward</i> 2. <i>Active Management by exception</i> 3. <i>Passive management by exception.</i>
	• Transformational Leadership Style	1. <i>Indelized influence</i> 2. <i>Intellectual Stimulation</i> 3. <i>Individualizet xonsuderation</i> 4. <i>Inspritional motivation</i>

We also used documentation as data collection method. According to Merriam (1998), documents are matters relating to various written, visual, and physical material. In this study, researchers collected documents relating to the leadership style of female principals. Efforts to analyze qualitative research data was done by conducting some steps: *Data management*. All data collected; interview, document and demographic questionnaire data were input into a computer database in the form of files for analysis. Using this database aimed to ease the process of data analysis so that when needed, the data in the database is easily accessed in the analysis process. *Coding and making Themes*. Johnson and Christensen (2008) explained that "coding is a process of marking segments of data (usually text data) with symbols, descriptive words, or categories" (p. 534). Coding is the process of analysis by marking certain parts of data with symbols, descriptive words and categories. In this study, the interview data were analyzed by way of individual transcription. Data from interviews after being transcribed were coded. Besides, the data in this study were read intensely and repeatedly with the following objectives: 1) to search for and register any significant statements from each research participant related to the research problem, 2) to create a grouping of significant data from each study participant, 3) to dispose of and reduce the same data which appeared repeatedly and, 4) to create and categorize the data according to research questions.

Likewise, the data were described in each document by following the interview data analysis pattern. While the results of the demographic data were described individually, the themes of the analysis followed by significant questions from the research participants were used to narrate the results of this study. *Presentation of the findings*. According to Merriam (1998), qualitative research methods are methods that prioritize process, meaning, and understanding because the product of qualitative research is 'richly description' (P. 8). In other words, the

products or results of data analysis in this study that are generated from coding and thematic processes were presented in the form, words, statements, and descriptions of the research participants. We narrated the results of the study accompanied by the presentation of examples of statements from research participants regarding the leadership style of the female participant.

## Findings

These results are interpreted based on what the participants said and felt. From the results of data analysis using the "within-case and cross-case analysis" method (Miles & Huberman, 1994) where first obtained interview data were individual and then cross-checked with the results of interviews with other participants. This qualitative research with a case study approach aimed to see how women's leadership style at senior high school of Jambi. This research is a research on how to implement the leadership style of the principal of one state senior high school in Indonesia. We found data related to this through interviews and document review where discussions were the interpretation.

### *Women's leadership description*

We emphasized the aspect of women's leadership and from the results of interviews almost, all respondents said that there were no problems with female leaders. This means that school members supported women's leadership in their schools. The principal stated in the interview,

“If women are good leaders, in the religion the Apostle also gives an example of the figure of Siti Aisyah as a leader, so that means it does not become a problem for women to be leaders”, (Participant 1)

The opinion from the vice principal (students' affair) also supported women's leadership,

“I have no problems with her leadership as she is capable of doing her job leading this school. But if there are two options, yes, obviously we choose males because there are women whose moods are affected by menstruation or psychology. But if she can control herself, it is not a problem, because women are more focused than men, so there is no problem in my opinion”. (Participant 2)

It was also supported by the vice principal (curriculum) who saw the concept of women's involvement in the democratic process in Indonesia and the emancipation of women in Indonesia is a not an issue in a currently democratic era.

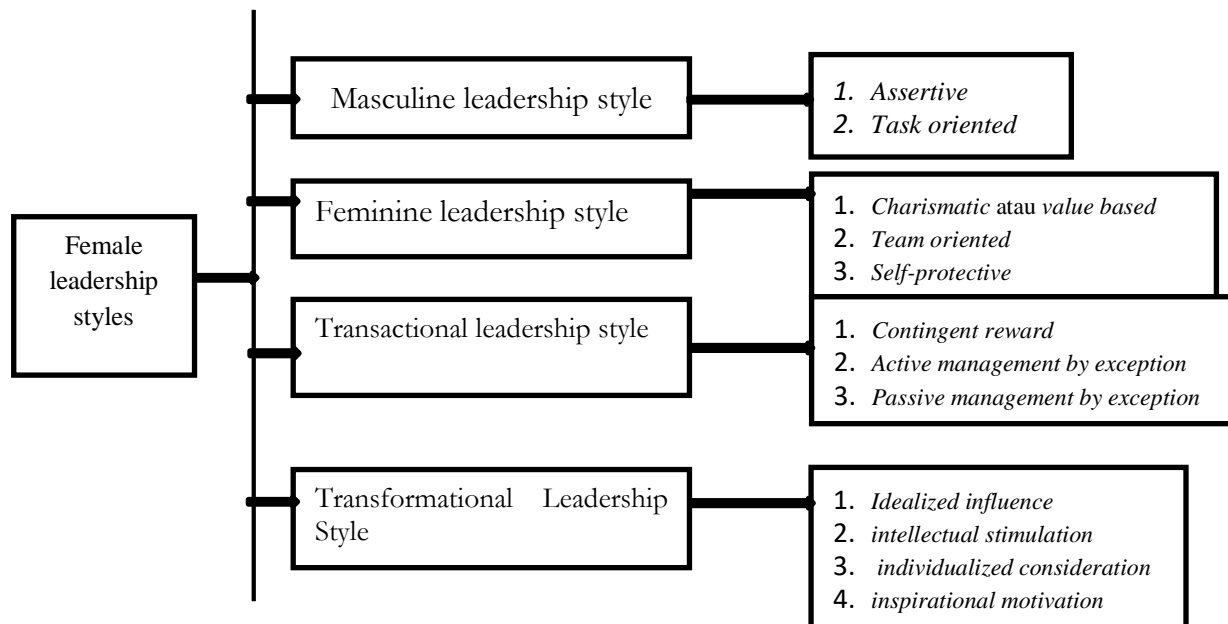
“As long as the process is legal and democratic, I don't think it is a problem. We have to support our leader to make a better school and students”. (Participant 3)

Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that women's involvement in education leadership in Indonesia is a strategy to achieve gender equality. In addition, women's leadership can also be accepted and be another alternative related to leadership activities in schools, especially in the research site where the female leadership was acceptable and supported by most school members from teachers to students in the school.

Based on the results of interviews, there are several sections that become benchmarks of what and how the leadership style of female principals in the research site that was emphasized by the vice principal (students' affair) wherein implementing the leadership, styles of the female principal were similar to male leaders'. The female leadership is certainly no different from male leadership because they are top managers so they must be assertive. However, there are advantages of women's leadership such as prioritizing the beauty of the school environment.

“In the aspect of school performance, women's leadership is more selective in determining priorities. Female leaders prioritize the performance of the school such as supporting field, nice canteen, and flower gardens”. (Participant 3)

Furthermore, in terms of responsibility and how managerial leadership, the managerial process ran well and there was no distinction between the leadership of women and men in terms of managerial matters. The leadership styles of the female principal in this study can be seen from Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Principal leadership styles

### *Masculine leadership style*

Masculine leadership is a leadership that has a nuanced power which means that its leadership style emphasizes the power to lead the subordinates. According to Engen, Rien, and Willemsen (2001), masculine leadership style has two most prominent dimensions, namely assertive and task-oriented. In this case, women's leadership do always not mean feminine but also had a masculine leadership style including assertive dimensions where the leader could express her feelings, understand her rights, control her emotions, compromise with others and establish beneficial relationships with subordinates.



“She is responsive if there are complaints. If she does not like something, she will discuss it in a good way and does not make people offended”, (Participant 4)

It was also supported by the opinion of one of the school staff informing that the principal could always compromise with the vice principals, teachers, staff and students.

“The principal in carrying out activities that are principally related to the progress of the school always conducts meetings and coordinates with us subordinates of examples in meetings related to student affairs yesterday who want the O2SN competition”. (Participant 6)

In addition, the principal was also able to establish cooperation and relations with the school staff. One of the participants (5) stated that social relations were good. She usually went around to check teachers’ attendance in class, the neatness of the children, the class cleanliness and the environment. Another opinion supported this fact,

“She usually would go around the school every morning, interact with some teachers and students, then check the cleanliness of the canteen”. (Participant 2)

### *Feminine leadership style*

Feminine leadership is a form of active leadership. This kind of leadership is a process in which leaders are administrators for other people, responsible for activities or bearers of experience. According to Fusun and Altintas (2008) feminine leadership consists of several elements; charismatic or value-based team oriented. Characteristics of this kind of leadership are when the principal as a leader has a visionary ability where leaders have the ability to see the possibilities and opportunities in the future. In this case, from the interview results, it can be explained that the leadership of the principal at the research site had an inspirational view as stated by the vice principal (students’ affair).

“In my opinion, she always invites and guides us as our duty must be oriented towards the standard procedure. We must improve things in accordance with our school’s vision and mission”, (Participant 2)

Besides being as a visionary leader who had a charismatic style, she also had good team-oriented skills, the female leader at the school acted more democratically and collaboratively than male leaders.

“In implementing both as a manager and as a leader of the school principal, the principal is good enough to routinely organize the educational process by giving good delegates to subordinates. The principal regularly reports the results of the supervision of both academic and teaching. (Participant 3)

### *Transactional leadership style*

According to Koh, Steers and Terborg (1995), transactional leadership is a leadership style in which a leader focuses his attention on interpersonal transactions between leaders and

employees involving exchange relationships. The exchange is based on the agreement regarding the classification of objectives, work standards, work assignments, and awards.

In this case, based on the results of interviews, participants concluded that the leadership style of the principal had also been a transactional leadership style in which, according to experts, one element of transactional leadership style is the role of contingent reward proven from her being appreciative her subordinates by giving awards to those with achievement.

“She usually gives praise and rewards to acknowledge good achievements. She also frequently addresses bonuses for students with extraordinary achievement”.  
(Participant 2)

### ***Transformational Leadership Style***

According to Lensuffie (2010), transformational leadership has an understanding of leadership who embraces changes. The intended change is assumed to be a change towards a better direction, opposing the status quo and being active.

“The leadership style shown by the principal in performing his leadership functions is very good as the principal gives direction and reprimand. She never gets angry in front of students. The teacher is always called personally. (Participant 5)

This indicates that the principal had a charismatic personality and enthusiasm and this was also opined by one of the school members,

“Yes, as I have seen so far, the principal gives input and instructions and not to give orders. We respect her so much even though there were complaints about her”,  
(Participant 6)

The principal also has the ability to motivate teachers, which is demonstrated by the principal in carrying out the process of teaching and learning activities. This is a manifestation of transformational leadership. Many school members are happy with her leadership. With the occurrence of such an interaction process, it results in a positive attitude shown by the principal. This will certainly add excitement in carrying out the teaching and learning process in the classroom and other activities for teachers.

### **Discussion**

Leadership refers to the process of moving a group of people towards a predetermined goal by encouraging them to act in a non-compelling way. Rivai and Mulyadi (2012) stated that leadership is an essential art that influences and directs people to achieve goals. Many statements of this research show that leadership is similar to one's abilities or competencies. If it is associated with leadership in education, then what is meant by educational leadership is the process of influencing and guiding a leader, a school principal in particular to educators and education staff to carry out educational tasks, provide services to students so that the educational goals are achieved effectively and efficiently. From the findings of the study, most participants informed that they had no problems with women's leadership. It indicates that as a developing country, Indonesian respects leaders who are women. Some other previous studies have also

revealed that most participants had no worries of women leadership (Bastian, 2014; Gibson, 2003).

There are four styles of women's leadership revealed in this research; masculine leadership, feminine leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership. This study informs that women's leadership has a masculine leadership style. The principal expresses her feeling and understands his right as a leader in the research site. Additionally, she can control her emotion to produce good relationships with her subordinates and students (Wahjosumidjo, 2010). In addition to masculine leadership, the principal also gets her nature in leadership (Feminine) including several elements; charismatic or value based-team oriented. The principal has a vision to make her school a better place to study. Besides being a good leader with vision, the female principal has a great team workability and can do collaborative actions Transactional leadership style in this study, was shown by the act of the principal in rewarding teachers with achievement (Engen, Rien, & Willemsen, 2001). The exchange is based on agreement regarding the classification of objectives, work standards, work assignments, and awards. Lastly, the principal is also known as having transformational leadership style where she embraces reformation in her leadership. These changes are intended to make a better impact for education in the school. The principal also possesses the ability for teachers' motivation. This is a manifestation of transformational leadership where members of the school feel happy with her leadership. It therefore causes a positive attitude (Fusun & Altintas, 2008).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership styles of a female principal in one state senior high school in Indonesia. Our findings indicate that the leadership style of the female principal covers masculine, feminine, transactional, and transformational leadership styles. More specifically, our findings indicate that the four leadership styles could be applied concurrently in accordance with the needs and conditions in the school. Also, the school members supported her leadership with the appropriate managerial and leadership processes, which could provide motivation and encouragement to teachers in carrying out teaching and learning activities. However, in this study, the members of school argued that there was no significant difference between female and male leadership in managerial terms, with the criteria of the principal as a leader having a visionary ability, having the ability to see possibilities and opportunities in the future and be open to changing times.

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