

Leadership of Female School Principals in Improving School Quality Culture: Case Study at SMA Negeri 1 Selong, Indonesia

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Abstract. This research examines female school principals' leadership in improving the quality culture at SMA Negeri 1 Selong. Specifically, the study aims to 1) Describe the leadership style applied by the female principal in enhancing the quality of culture at SMA Negeri 1 Selong and 2) Identify the efforts made by the female principal to overcome obstacles in improving the quality of culture at Selong 1 Public High School. This study uses a qualitative approach with a single case study method. The researchers collected data through observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The study results show that the female principal at SMA Negeri 1 Selong implements a democratic leadership style with the flexibility to be authoritarian in certain situations. The strategies include student data input, personnel (teachers) and human resources, facilities and infrastructure, and communication. This research concludes that female school principals' leadership can significantly improve the quality of culture in schools.

Keywords: Female Leadership; School Principal; Quality Culture; Education; Leadership Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Education quality problems often occur due to complexities affecting various aspects of the educational process. The lack of equal access to education, especially between urban and rural areas, creates significant gaps in providing adequate facilities and infrastructure. In addition, the lack of quality teaching staff, involvement of parents and the community in supporting the educational process, and lack of focus on developing character and moral values all contribute to the overall lack of quality of education. Learning approaches that are less innovative and irrelevant to students' needs are also problems, as is inadequate evaluation of the learning process. This imbalance creates significant challenges in creating an inclusive, quality and competitive educational environment for all students.

School principals' role in improving education quality is vital and varied. They are responsible for developing the school's long-term vision and strategy, leading and motivating school staff, managing resources efficiently, monitoring and evaluating various aspects of school activities, fostering a positive school culture, building

partnerships with stakeholders, and leading innovation in the development of curriculum and learning methods. By playing these roles effectively, principals have great potential to become powerful agents of change in improving their schools' education quality and positively impacting students, staff and the community.

Female principals are an essential consideration in school leadership for several significant reasons. First, the presence of a female school principal can provide a positive role model for students, especially female students, in inspiring them to pursue their aspirations and achieve success in their careers and life. Female principals can also provide more inclusive representation and promote gender equality in schools, as well as help remove stereotypes about gender roles in leadership. Second, female principals often bring a unique perspective and sensitivity to the needs and issues faced by female students and other female staff, which male principals may not well represent; this can help create a more inclusive, safe and supportive school environment for all members. Third, female principals can also bring unique leadership qualities, such as empathy, collaboration, and transformational leadership,

often considered essential to leading successful and innovative schools. Therefore, considering female principals in school leadership can significantly benefit overall educational progress and the development of gender equality in education.

Comparisons between the leadership of female and male principals have been the subject of research interest for some time. Research has highlighted differences in leadership styles, managerial approaches, and performance outcomes between female and male principals. Several studies show that female school principals tend to apply a transformational leadership style that is more cooperative and participative. In contrast, male principals tend to use a transactional leadership style that is more authoritarian and task-oriented, according to the authors [1, 2]. Research also shows that female principals are often more effective at building strong interpersonal relationships with staff, students, and the school community, contributing to a more positive and cohesive school climate the authors [3, 4].

On the other hand, several studies have found that male principals focus more on quick decision-making and decisive action in facing challenges and crises by the authors [5, 6]. However, it is essential to remember that the influence of gender on school leadership can vary greatly depending on the particular cultural, social, and organisational context by the authors [7, 8]. Therefore, further research is needed to understand how these factors influence the school leadership performance of girls and boys in various educational contexts.

Women's leadership is engaging in research for various important reasons. First, in the context of gender equality, research on women's leadership helps understand the extent to which progress has been made in overcoming gender barriers in various fields, including education. Second, women's leadership is often considered an attractive alternative to enrich diversity in leadership styles and approaches, so this research helps develop a more comprehensive understanding of effective leadership practices. Third, research on women's leadership can provide valuable insight into the factors of leadership and strategies that can be used to support and strengthen women's leadership in the future. Fourth, understanding the dynamics of women's leadership is essential in developing

inclusive and sustainable educational policies, which can help create a more equal and competitive environment for all individuals. Thus, research on women's leadership makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the role of gender in leadership but also has significant implications in efforts to promote gender equality and improve the overall quality of education.

SMA Negeri 1 Selong is interested in researching female principals' leadership in improving a quality culture for several reasons. First, as a leading school in East Lombok Regency, SMA Negeri 1 Selong may have innovative and effective leadership practices that can be identified and studied. Female principals at these high schools could be exciting research subjects to understand their role in creating a quality learning environment and a school culture conducive to student growth and learning. Second, SMA Negeri 1 Selong has a strong track record of achieving high academic and non-academic achievements, which may be related to the leadership style of the female principal.

Through this research, we can understand more deeply how women's leadership has contributed to school achievement and improved the culture of quality within it. Third, the unique geographical and social context of East Lombok Regency can provide valuable insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by women's leadership in improving the quality of education, especially in overcoming cultural norms and gender expectations that may exist. Thus, research on the leadership of female principals at SMA Negeri 1 Selong can provide valuable and practical insights for developing inclusive and quality-oriented educational leadership practices.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as perceptions, behaviour, and problems related to humans, which the author is investigating [9]. In case studies in qualitative research, researchers collect data through various sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents. The data analysis procedures used in this research are data collection, organisation, reduction, display, verification, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions [10]. Meanwhile, checking the validity of the data uses

a credibility test, transferability test, dependability test, and conformity test [11].

In this research, there are primary and secondary data sources; where the primary data source is obtained from interview transcripts with informants (teachers, students and school principals) about the school principal's leadership style, field notes or observations (observation of the school environment and observation of student activities) and original documents relevant matters such as teacher and student absences, monthly reports, KOSP documents, teacher teaching administration and teacher council meeting notes. Researchers collected data from school policy documents, such as disciplinary and anti-bullying rules, annual school reports, academic and extracurricular reports, and news about school activities or achievements from electronic media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the author [12] stated, the leadership style of female school principals positively impacts teacher performance and student achievement. The following describes the leadership style the female principal applied and the female principal's efforts in resolving obstacles in improving the school quality culture at SMA Negeri 1 Selong.

Leadership style applied by the female principal at SMA Negeri 1 Selong. Based on previous theoretical understanding, the leadership style of school principals in the educational environment has a significant impact. Likewise, the leadership of female school principals plays a vital strategic role in determining the success of established programs. According to authors [13], "Women tend to take or use a more democratic leadership style. They encourage participation, share power and information and seek to increase the self-esteem of their followers. They prefer to lead through involvement and rely on their charisma, expertise, contacts and interpersonal skills to influence others".

Both men and women can have the same leadership style, but of course, several things will show the male and female sides when leading an institution or group. As noted above, the research results also indicate conformity with these views regarding the leadership style of female school principals. This finding is reflected in the research results, which state that the female prin-

cipal of SMAN 1 Selong has a democratic, authoritarian, and situational leadership style.

Leaders demonstrate a democratic leadership style when they encourage discussion and exchange of opinions in meetings. The principal provides space for everyone to express their respective views. Apart from conversations between staff and teachers, the principal also held open discussions with students' parents. So that there is collaboration between the school and students in achieving school goals.

The authors [12] reveal that female school principals' efforts in establishing communication and enforcing discipline are considered positive. Female school principals demonstrate their leadership impact by improving school facilities, welfare, and the discipline of stakeholders. Good communication refers to a democratic leadership style because it allows everyone to express their thoughts. The female principal of SMAN 1, Selong, defines her democratic leadership style as one that provides opportunities for all parties involved in achieving educational goals to express their aspirations, ideas, and criticism when making decisions.

In its application, this leadership style impacts the school quality culture of SMAN 1 Selong. The quality culture that is still maintained today is the spirit of competition and high appreciation. To develop for the better, school members need to create a sense of wanting to compete and be encouraged to study harder or make changes and innovations. Regarding leadership style, a quality culture like this requires a democratic leader so that there is reciprocity or interaction between students and stakeholders in every process. Apart from that, firmness is also needed so that this culture of quality is maintained and can be preserved for the next generation.

Efforts of Female School Principals in Resolving Obstacles in Improving School Quality Culture at Selong 1 Public High School. The leadership role of the female principal at SMAN 1 Selong is relevant to the research authors [14]. The results of this research study state that a personal approach that is quite effective with school stakeholders has implications for teachers in maximizing existing facilities in learning activities, and the school has a strong culture. Based on the relationship above, researchers conclude that female school principals' leadership role is to develop the quality of education at SMA Negeri 1 Selong. It can be said to have an excellent opportunity to

improve the quality and achievement of educational goals; this can be seen from prioritising solid ties between all parties to maximise the sustainability of goals.

The principal's efforts in planning at Tegar Kelana Suranadi High School align with the planning function as a guide for implementation and control, determining strategies for implementing activities and defining strategic objectives for implementing activities. The organisation must carefully choose the plan, conduct systematic assessments based on conditions and resources, and refer to its vision and mission. Planning is the process of making decisions regarding targets and methods to be taken to achieve the desired goals.

The principle of SMA Tegar Kelana Suranadi's work in the planning process is based on the objectives and functions of planning. In education, educators prioritise planning to advance to the next stage and achieve the desired goals. Planning in education must not deviate from the goals of education itself because those goals will be the starting point of a planning framework.

The leadership style the principal of SMAN 1 Selong applied in maintaining the school's quality culture has positively impacted the cooperation between the principal and his subordinates. The principle in making decisions involves the participation of the people around him. The development of existing collaboration is very beneficial for school principals because it is beneficial in carrying out their functions. The cooperation developed by school principals includes implementing democratic values that recognise the participation and abilities of the people around them so that they have high productivity, which is in line with the results of research by authors [15]. Leadership provides an excellent opportunity for creating two-way communication and exchanging ideas when making decisions. At SMAN 1 Selong, stakeholders participate in decision-making, allowing them to carry out every decision together and bind each other to obedience; this is to research by authors [16], which concluded that participative leadership style has a positive effect on effectiveness in organisations because followers in organisations are motivated by active participation open the leadership of the organisation to the acceptance of their opinions, suggestions, and ideas in the decision-making process.

Change in an organisation is an effort to survive. One change that has not yet appeared significant and is considered urgent is the change in data management or data management. Motivation has been seen as necessary by leaders as part of how leaders mobilise subordinates. The material and non-material motivation provided can stimulate the work productivity of administrators and instructors and increase students' interest in learning. The unique thing found at SMAN 1 Selong is the exemplary work, behaviour, and character of the principal, which has motivational value for the people around him. The motivation that grows from the moral intelligence of leaders can create harmonious relationships that exceed the relationship between subordinates and superiors.

The empowerment of subordinates by the leadership of SMAN 1 Selong has produced subordinates who are very enthusiastic about working in line with the vision of the SMAN 1 Selong school, doing work they love, and trying to fulfil the essential needs of the SMAN 1 Selong school. Everyone involved in SMAN 1 Selong is willing to share their knowledge, experience, and motivation to work together to achieve positive school results. The job satisfaction of school principals and administrators due to empowering school leaders is based on what authors [17]: empowerment triggers a higher level of employee satisfaction.

The leadership function in organisational learning by leaders gives instructors and administrators confidence that organising requires discipline, division of authority and responsibility, continuity of work, respect between individuals, recognition of other people's abilities, communication links, and synergy to achieve one goal established.

When leaders and subordinates use a democratic style, they can exchange ideas to solve problems and make decisions together. In running an organisation, leaders who apply this style tend to be subordinate-oriented by trying to motivate subordinates more than supervise them closely. They encourage members to carry out tasks by allowing subordinates to participate in decision-making, creating an atmosphere of friendship and relationships of mutual trust and respect with group members.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the research results presented in the previous chapter, the conclusions that can be drawn from this research regarding the leadership of female principals in improving the culture of quality at SMA Negeri 1 Selong are as follows:

- 1) The leadership style the female principal at SMA Negeri 1 Selong applied to understand her contribution to improving this school's quality culture is a democratic leadership style with authoritarian actions in certain situations; this shows adaptability and flexibility in his leadership style, adapting his approach based on the specific needs and conditions faced by the school.
- 2) Supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing a school quality culture faced by female principals at SMA Negeri 1 Selong, such as strong

leadership, active staff participation, open communication, collaborative culture, use of data for decision-making, and external support. Principals play a critical role in leading with vision and integrity, encouraging innovation, and being a good example, while active staff engagement and effective communication strengthen collaboration and trust. An inclusive culture and use of data-based evidence facilitate strategic adjustments and effective decision-making. Support from outside the school expands learning resources and opportunities. Strategic measures such as problem identification, open communication, team collaboration, training, data-based decisions, and increased commitment are used to overcome barriers and ensure a quality culture's smooth and sustainable implementation; this demonstrates a holistic and adaptive approach to improving the quality of education.

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