

Women's Leadership Strategy in Community Service Programs in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement Community

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ABSTRACT

Women's leadership in social organizations is an important issue because women increasingly play a role in managing communities and creating social change. However, studies on women's leadership in community service-based communities are still limited, especially related to strategies used in building organizations in a sustainable manner. This study aims to analyze women's leadership strategies in community service programs in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement. This study uses a qualitative method with an anthropological approach through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of the founders, leaders, administrators, and volunteers of the North Sumatra Teaching Movement. The results of the study show that women's leadership is applied through participatory, communicative, and familial patterns with strategies of building open communication, involving members, and empowering through social and educational programs. This study concludes that women's leadership is able to be a driver of social change through the ability to build solidarity and organizational sustainability.

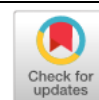
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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one of the important aspects of the sustainability of an organization because it relates to the ability of individuals to direct, influence, and mobilize members to achieve common goals. In its development, leadership is no longer solely understood through formal hierarchical and authority structures, but also through the ability to build social relationships, communication, collaboration, and empower members. This paradigm shift expands the space for women to participate in various sectors of life, including social organizations and community-based communities. Perspectives on women's leadership show that leadership skills can be understood through capacity, experience, and the ability to build change in organizations, not solely based on gender (Alvado et al., 2021; Fitriana & Cenni, 2021).

In the context of an organization, women's leadership can be understood as a leadership practice that takes place in a social environment that has certain constructions and expectations for the roles of men and women. Studies on women's leadership show that women are able to carry out various leadership functions in organizations, both through decision-making processes, coordination, communication, and the development of relationships between members. Thus, women's involvement in leadership is not only related to the existence of women in formal positions, but also to their contribution in directing organizations and achieving common goals (Hafsari & Dwi, 2023; Muslimah, 2021).

Leadership in a social community based on community service has different characteristics compared to organizations oriented to formal structures. A community that involves volunteers needs leaders who are able to build trust, coordinate activities, maintain communication, and encourage member participation. Relationships formed in the

community are not only based on formal authority, but also on the leader's ability to build cooperation and solidarity. Therefore, a communicative, participatory, and collaborative approach to leadership is important in maintaining the sustainability of community activities (Purwanti et al., 2020; Setiawati, 2024).

These characteristics are also relevant in communities engaged in education and community service. The implementation of educational programs requires coordination between various parties, from administrators to volunteers who are directly involved in the field. Leaders are not only tasked with directing the implementation of programs, but also need to create conditions that allow members to contribute according to their respective abilities. In this context, women's leadership can be seen through involvement in building communication, cooperation, and organizational culture that supports the achievement of community goals (Khoirunnisaa & Maunah, 2021; Nasikhah et al., 2022).

The North Sumatra Teaching Movement is one of the social communities engaged in education and community service. This community involves founders, administrators, and volunteers in carrying out various activities related to education and community service. The involvement of women in the community shows that women not only play a role as executive members, but can also occupy strategic positions in program planning, activity coordination, decision-making, and community development. This condition is an important context to understand women's leadership practices in volunteer-based social organizations.

The existence of women in leadership positions is also related to changes in views on gender equality in organizations and society. Research on women's leadership shows that the acceptance of women as leaders is influenced by societal perceptions, social norms, and gender constructions that develop in certain environments (Destianti & Afrizal, 2024; Hibbah & Safitri, 2024). In social organizations, these changes can be seen from the increasing openness of women's opportunities to participate in decision-making and carry out leadership responsibilities. Thus, women's experiences in organizations can be part of the process of changing gender relations in social spaces.

Despite this, women's leadership still faces various challenges related to gender construction and social norms. Views that associate leadership with masculine characteristics such as assertiveness, dominance, and authority can raise doubts about women's capacity as leaders. In addition, women can face structural and social barriers in gaining legitimacy and leadership opportunities. This phenomenon is related to the concept of a glass ceiling, which is an obstacle that limits women from obtaining opportunities to reach certain positions despite having the necessary abilities and qualifications (Septiana & Haryanti, 2023). Patriarchal culture can also strengthen the division of roles based on gender and influence society's acceptance of women in leadership positions (Agustina, 2025).

Based on this description, women's leadership in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement is important to understand how women carry out leadership functions in social communities based on education and volunteerism. This study not only looks at women's formal positions in organizational structures, but also how they play a role in decision-making, communication, coordination, member empowerment, and community development. On the other hand, the study needs to pay attention to social and cultural challenges that can affect the practice and acceptance of women's leadership. Thus, research on women's leadership in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement can provide an overview of women's leadership practices while showing the dynamics of gender equality in community-based social organizations.

METHOD

This study uses an ethnographic methodological framework designed in depth to dissect subjective realities in the field. In order to meet the stringent quality standards of scientific publications, the entire research procedure is comprehensively described into the following specific subsections.

Research Design

The design of this study implements a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods to understand in depth the dynamics of women's leadership in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement Community. The selection of the ethnographic approach is based on its characteristics in revealing social and cultural practices that develop in a community. The ethnographic perspective allows researchers to understand how women leaders build legitimacy, carry out leadership roles, form social relationships, and deal with various gender constructs that develop in the community environment.

The ethnographic method provides a space for researchers to see leadership not only as formal in organizational structure, but as a social process formed through the position of interaction between leaders, members, and the surrounding community. This approach is relevant to the perspective of feminist anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner used in this study, especially in understanding how women negotiate social norms, power relations, and cultural constructs that affect their position as leaders. This research was carried out in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement Community which focuses on community service activities in the field of education by involving administrators and volunteers in various social activities.

Respondents

The determination of informants in this study was carried out through purposive sampling techniques by considering the level of involvement, experience, and knowledge of informants towards the phenomenon of women's leadership in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement Community. The selection of informants is not based on a certain number, but on the ability of informants to provide in-depth information about leadership practices, decision-making processes, organizational dynamics, and community empowerment strategies carried out by the community.

The research informants consist of community founders, women leaders who have responsibility for the management of the organization, community administrators, and active members or volunteers involved in the implementation of community service programs. The involvement of informants with these various positions aims to gain diverse perspectives on how women's leadership is practiced in volunteer-based social organizations. The variety of experiences and positions of informants provides a more comprehensive picture of the forms of leadership, challenges faced, and strategies developed in maintaining the ecosystem.

Instruments

The position of the researcher in this qualitative research acts as the main instrument (human instrument) that has a role in observing, interpreting, and understanding the social meaning of the phenomenon being studied. The researcher is directly involved in the data collection process through interaction with informants to gain an understanding of the experience of women's leadership in the community.

The supporting instruments used in this study include in-depth interview guidelines, observation sheets, and research documentation. The interview guidelines are designed in a semi-structured manner to explore informants' experiences regarding leadership styles, organizational communication patterns, decision-making processes, gender challenges, and leadership strategies applied in community activities. Observation sheets are used to record organizational activities, relationships patterns between members, forms of coordination, and the involvement of women leaders in the implementation of the program. The research documentation includes organizational archives, management structures, activity documentation, and various community service program documents that support the data interpretation process.

Procedures

The research data collection process is carried out through three main stages, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The initial stage of research is carried out through observation of the activities of the North Sumatra Teaching Movement

Community to obtain an overview of the patterns of social interaction, coordination mechanisms, and leadership practices that occur in the community environment. Observation is carried out by paying attention to how women leaders carry out the functions of direction, communication, and decision-making in organizational activities.

The next stage was conducted through in-depth interviews with research informants who had been determined based on purposive sampling criteria. The interview process was directed to explore the subjective informants' experiences regarding how women's leadership is implemented, how social challenges and organizational struggles, and how leadership strategies are developed to support the sustainability of community service programs.

The final stage is carried out through the collection of documentation related to community activities. The document is used as data support to strengthen the results of interviews and field observations. During the research process, the researcher applies the principle of reflexivity by maintaining the goal of understanding the informant's experience and avoiding interpretation influenced by the researcher's personal position assumptions.

Data analysis

The data analysis in this study uses the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña which includes the process of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The initial stage of analysis is carried out through the process of transcription of interview results and organizing field data obtained through observation and documentation. The data that has been collected is then classified based on the focus of the research, namely the form and characteristics of women's leadership, women's leadership challenges, and leadership strategies in creating social change.

The data condensation stage is carried out by identifying important information that is related to the research objectives. The informant's statement then reveals certain themes to find social patterns that emerge in women's leadership practices. The data presentation stage is carried out through narrative descriptions that are reinforced with direct quotes from the informants so as to provide an overview of leadership experiences and practices that take place in the community.

The final stage of analysis is carried out through the data interpretation process by describing field findings on the feminist anthropological perspective of Sherry B. Ortner regarding gender, culture, and power. The validity of the research is maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. The confirmation process of the research data is also carried out through rechecking information to informants to ensure the compatibility between the researcher's interpretation and the social experience conveyed by the participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data reduction process, the results of observations of community activities, organizational documentation, and in-depth interviews with the founders, women leaders, administrators, and active volunteers of the North Sumatra Teaching Community Movement, it was found that the structure of social experiences regarding women's leadership practices was classified into three main domains, namely the characteristics of women's leadership, the challenges in carrying out leadership, and leadership strategies in building the entire community.

Domain of Women's Leadership Characteristics in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement Community

Women's leadership in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement Community shows characteristics that are oriented towards a participatory, communicative, and relational approach. Field data show that female leaders do not position themselves only as structural directors, but as part of a community that builds working relationships based on trust, openness, and mutual engagement. Emerging leadership practices are not only centered on

the delivery of instructions, but develop through a process of dialogue, discussion, and exchange of ideas between leaders and community members.

Practically, women leaders carry out coordination functions through open communication in planning programs, division of tasks, and evaluation of community service activities. Decision-making is carried out through a deliberative process by considering input from administrators and volunteers. This pattern shows that women's leadership in this community is built through relational power, which is the ability to create social relationships that allow members to feel shared responsibility for the organization's goals.

The perspective of feminist anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner helps explain that women's leadership positions in communities are not only formed through formal authority, but through a process of social negotiation that results in legitimacy from community members. Women's leadership in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement shows that power can be present in the form of the ability to build solidarity, create spatial participation, and mobilize members through the value of social care. In essence, women's leadership in community service does not replace conventional leadership models, but expands understanding of how social power can be built through interpersonal relationships and collaboration.

Challenge Domains in Women's Leadership Practice

Women's leadership practices in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement Community show that there are various challenges that come from internal organizational factors and the socio-cultural environment. The results of the study identified that the main challenges faced are related to limited resources, differences in member characteristics, coordination difficulties, and social perceptions about women as leaders.

The dynamics of volunteer-based organizations present their own challenges because most of their members have academic activities or work outside the community. This condition causes the level of member involvement to change according to the availability of time for each individual. Women leaders need to adjust coordination strategies so that the sustainability of the program continues despite variations in the level of participant participation.

The socio-cultural dimension is also an important part of the women's leadership experience. Women in decision-making positions need to build trust and demonstrate their leadership capacity in the organizational environment. These challenges reflect that women's leadership is not only related to the ability to carry out organizational functions, but also the process of gaining social recognition for their leadership capacity.

This phenomenon shows the relationship between gender and power as explained in the perspective of feminist anthropology. Women are not in a passive position towards social structures, but rather carry out the process of adaptation and negotiation to gain spatial leadership. The challenges that arise are not only obstacles, but also form a leadership pattern that is more adaptive, responsive, and socially oriented towards social relationships.

Domain of Women's Leadership Strategies in Building Social Change

The women's leadership strategy in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement is realized through strengthening internal communication, member empowerment, organizational collaboration, and community needs-based education development programs. The results of the study show that women leaders use a pressured approach, collective involvement as the basis for carrying out various community activities.

Communication is the main strategy in maintaining the sustainability of the organization. Women leaders build an open communication pattern through regular discussions, coordination of activities, and joint program evaluations. This approach allows each member of the space to express their opinions and contribute to the community development process. This communication strategy strengthens the member's sense of ownership of the organization.

Empowerment strategies are also seen through the efforts of leaders in increasing the capacity of members and volunteers. Members are not only placed as program implementers,

but are given the opportunity to be involved in planning, managing activities, and decision-making. This pattern shows that women's leadership goes through the process of transforming members into active actors in social change.

These leadership practices show that women are able to create social change through an approach based on solidarity, collaboration, and empowerment. Women's leadership in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement not only produces educational sustainability programs, but also builds an organizational culture that places members as an important part in achieving community goals.

Discussion

The practice of women's leadership in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement Community shows a shift in the understanding of leadership from a concept often constructed through domination, hierarchy, and formal authority toward a model based on social relations, participation, and empowerment. The findings of this study show that women do not only carry out administrative functions as managers of the organization, but also build power through the ability to create interpersonal relationships, mobilize member solidarity, and establish spaces for collaboration in the community. This condition is consistent with the view that women's leadership can develop through social interaction and the ability to influence organizational processes rather than merely through formal authority (Alvado et al., 2021). The findings also strengthen the anthropological perspective that gender relations are shaped through social and cultural processes rather than being determined solely by biological differences (Hamid et al., 2023). Women's leadership in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement therefore demonstrates how leadership legitimacy can be constructed through social practices that are recognized within the community.

The findings of this study expand previous studies on women's leadership, which have largely examined formal organizational environments such as educational institutions, student organizations, and other structured organizations. Previous research has examined women's access to strategic organizational positions as well as the stereotypes that influence women's leadership experiences (Destianti & Afrizal, 2024). Research on women's leadership in the Muhammadiyah Student Association in North Sumatra similarly demonstrates that women leaders perform organizational functions through collective-collegial practices, communication with members, decision-making, delegation of authority, and implementation of organizational programs (Alfialita & Pasaribu, 2021). These findings provide a useful comparison with the North Sumatra Teaching Movement because both contexts involve organizational participation, community interaction, and leadership practices beyond purely administrative authority. However, this research further highlights how such practices operate within a volunteer-based educational community.

The characteristics of women's leadership found in this study display a tendency toward participatory, communicative, and collaborative leadership patterns. This pattern is consistent with research showing that women's leadership can contribute to inclusive organizational environments through participatory and empathetic approaches (Siahaan et al., 2024). Women in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement do not carry out leadership only through an instructional approach, but also through the process of developing shared awareness regarding the importance of educational service. The relationship between leaders and members is therefore not entirely one-way; instead, it is formed through interaction that provides opportunities for members to contribute to community goals. In this sense, communication, participation, and empowerment become important mechanisms through which leadership is practiced in a volunteer-based organization.

The challenge dimension in women's leadership shows that leadership practices cannot be separated from gender relations and social constructions that develop within society. Barriers in the form of stereotypes about women's abilities, limited members' time, and organizational coordination dynamics indicate that women may still encounter social structures that restrict their leadership space. Previous research has similarly found that women leaders may face stereotypes associating leadership with masculine characteristics,

while women respond through persuasive approaches, flexible communication, and evidence of organizational performance (Destianti & Afrizal, 2024). In addition, research on women's leadership in society identifies patriarchal social and cultural norms as among the challenges influencing women's opportunities to occupy leadership positions (Shafira et al., 2024). These findings indicate that women's leadership involves not only the exercise of authority but also continuous negotiation with social expectations and organizational conditions.

Women's leadership strategies in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement show that the sustainability of social organizations does not depend solely on formal management systems but also on the ability to develop relationships among members. Open communication, deliberation, member empowerment, and solidarity become important instruments in maintaining community activities. This finding is supported by research indicating that women's leadership can contribute to organizational development through relationships between leaders and members and through the development of organizational culture (Muslimah, 2021). Research on women's leadership in educational settings also demonstrates the importance of leadership practices that encourage cooperation and involve members in achieving organizational objectives. In the context of the North Sumatra Teaching Movement, these practices allow leadership to operate through trust, participation, and shared responsibility rather than through formal hierarchy alone.

The main contribution of this research lies in its examination of women's leadership within a volunteer-based educational community. The North Sumatra Teaching Movement illustrates how women can perform strategic leadership roles while combining organizational responsibilities with communication, participation, and community empowerment. This finding is also relevant to research on gender justice in education, which emphasizes the importance of creating social and educational environments that provide equal opportunities for women and men to participate and develop their capacities (Sidik et al., 2023). Thus, women's leadership in this community can be understood not only as an issue of gender representation but also as a form of organizational practice through which participation, collaboration, and community empowerment are developed.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion of women's leadership practices in community service programs in the North Sumatra Teaching Movement Community, it can be concluded that women's leadership is not only manifested through structural positions, but also through the ability to build social relationships, collaboration, trust, and member participation. These leadership practices are reflected in participatory, communicative, and relational patterns, especially in facing socio-cultural challenges, limited resources, differences in member characters, and the need to build leadership legitimacy. The strategies implemented include strengthening internal communication, empowering members, collective decision-making, and building social solidarity. In the perspective of feminist anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner, women have the capacity as agents who can negotiate cultural norms and create new leadership spaces. Therefore, strengthening women's leadership requires organizational support through capacity building, public communication, organizational management, decision-making, and community empowerment.

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