

## **WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN HUMANITARIAN INSTITUTIONS ASAR HUMANITY FOUNDATION**

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### **Abstract**

Women have leadership potential in humanitarian institutions. However, women are considered unsuitable to become leaders because they are soft and emotional. This research aims to provide an overview of women's leadership (Nyai) in leading Islamic boarding schools. The method used in this research is qualitative case study research. This research gathered information from four selected informants: the CEO, institutional managerial level leaders, and Asar Humanitarian Foundation staff. From the research results, it was found that the leadership of the humanitarian organization Asar Humanity Foundation (Nyai) considered the charismatic, transformational, transactional, and visionary leadership styles to be suitable to implement. However, the leadership style that was most suitable for the CEO of this organization was transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is considered to inspire the team under the CEO, which aligns with institutional values that all members of the organization should internalize.

*Keyword: Leadership; Women; Humanitarian Institution; Leadership Style*

### **Abstrak**

Perempuan mempunyai potensi kepemimpinan pada lembaga kemanusiaan, akan tetapi perempuan dianggap tidak cocok untuk menjadi pemimpin karena memiliki sifat lembut dan emosional. Tujuan penelitian ini yaitu memberikan gambaran mengenai kepemimpinan perempuan (Nyai) dalam memimpin pesantren. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif studi kasus. Penelitian ini menggali informasi dari empat informan yang dipilih mulai dari CEO, pimpinan tingkat manajerial institusi, dan staf Yayasan

Kemanusiaan Asar. Dari hasil penelitian ditemukan bahwa pimpinan organisasi kemanusiaan Asar Humanity Foundation (Nyai) menganggap gaya kepemimpinan karismatik, transformasional, transaksional, dan visioner baik untuk diterapkan, namun gaya kepemimpinan yang paling cocok untuk CEO organisasi ini adalah kepemimpinan transformasional. Kepemimpinan transformasional dianggap dapat memberikan inspirasi kepada tim di bawah CEO yang sejalan dengan nilai-nilai institusi yang seharusnya terinternalisasi pada seluruh anggota organisasi.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan; Perempuan; Lembaga Kemanusiaan; Gaya Kepemimpinan

## **Introduction**

Leadership is one of the factors that influence society. Its involvement in embodying the character of companies, organizations, and non-profit institutions plays a central role in determining the future of society organizations. (Maulana, 2022). The role of a leader is determined by his personality, influencing and guiding his members. (Wahyuni & Nasution, 2024). Leaders can influence the spirit and enthusiasm of work, security, the quality of work life, and also the level of performance of an organization (Retnowati et al., 2023).

Leaders also play an essential role in helping groups and individuals to goals. (Latifah, 2021). A leader is a person who has the skills and advantages, especially the competence in one area so that he can influence others to jointly undertake certain activities for the achievement of one or more goals. (Bormasa & Sos, 2022). This goal will become the big idea of the vision/mission of the organization ahead.

Leadership is believed to be one of the critical factors that influence the performance of other organization members (Ali & Ali, 2023). One of the critical factors that affect the success of the leadership process is the behavior of the leader concerned or the style of leadership (Ghufron, 2020). Leadership style is understood as the behavior or the way the leader chooses and uses to influence their organization's minds, feelings, attitudes, and personalities (Waedoloh et al., 2022).

In an institution, the dominance of men as leaders is still so strong. Women also have a potential that is not inferior to men in terms of leadership (Erviena, 2021). It is impossible to get rid of the individual who

plays the role of the leader himself. Many associate the individual's ability to lead with the biological aspects that are inherent in the leader, based on the gender difference between men and women, which then leads to the term gender inequality that then places women in a disadvantageous position (Seviarica et al., 2022). For example, a different salary, an opportunity to secure a strategic position in a company, or a chance to speak in public.

In a modern world that focuses on competence and performance, gender is no longer a dominant differentiator (Latifah, 2021). It is seen that the jobs that used to be dominated by men now can be done by women very well, such as military service, Taxi/Bus drivers, mining managers, CEOs and managerial levels, fuel workers, and so on; it proves that men and women are equally capable to this day, leadership is still an exciting topic to study and research, as most often observed but is a phenomenon that is little understood (Khoer et al., 2022). The phenomenon of leadership style in Indonesia has become an exciting and influential issue in political and national life (Muslimah, 2021). In the business world, the style of leadership has a strong influence on the course of the organization and its survival (Sembiring et al., 2024).

The role of women leaders in Islamic-based organizations, seeing that the highest leadership of the organization, at the CEO level held by a woman becomes very central (Wahdania, n.d.). The CEO, in this case, serves to determine the significant objectives of the institution assisted by the building board, and to define the significant strategy of the organization every year (Maya, 2023). This central role is the foundation of the primary responsibilities of the organization's leadership, which is devoted to the daily work tasks that the entire organization must fulfill (Anwar & Yani, 2023).

Leadership in Islamic-based institutions will also show how humanitarian purposes are pursued (Rivaldi et al., 2024). Non-profit institutions, as the third sector to build the country, have a central role to play in achieving justice for the entire Indonesian people by channeling donations from donors into a community development program to be delivered to beneficiaries or communities below the poverty line in need (Indonesia, n.d.). The vital role of women leaders is urgently needed as the organization's primary objective in its efforts to the vision and mission of

the institution (Damayanti et al., 2023). The review of the library in this study includes the theory of leadership styles. Several kinds of leadership styles are proposed (Robbins, 1996):

#### 1. Charismatic Leadership

A leadership style that impresses employees with extraordinary leadership skills. Charismatic leaders can influence employees by expressing a clear vision of the mission that connects the present and the future so that employees feel interested in following. Leaders will also give examples of good behavior so employees can follow them. Employees who work with charismatic leaders are motivated to do the job as well as possible.

#### 2. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership inspires and communicates to employees to carry out responsibilities that go beyond their interests for the institution's benefit.

#### 3. Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership can motivate its followers toward the company's set goals by clarifying the duties and responsibilities of employees. Transactional leaders promise rewards for employees who have good performance and leaders will also acknowledge the achievements achieved by employees.

#### 4. Visionary leadership

Visionary leadership refers to leaders who create a realistic, engaging, and credible vision of the organization's future. The vision gives a new passion for a better future; besides that, the vision is also a giant leap into the future by raising skills and resources. Visionary leadership has its ways and qualities in carrying out the work, that is, the ability to express the vision with behavior, not only verbal, and to expand the vision.

The results of previous research conducted by Fatimatu (2020) describe the effectiveness of female Islamic boarding school leaders (nyai) in carrying out their role in building Islamic boarding school institutions. The fundamental difference between this research and previous research is in the research subjects taken; previous research focused on Nyai leadership in Islamic boarding schools, while this research was focused on the leadership style of female leaders in non-profit institutions. The similarities between these two studies lie in the leadership indicators used,

namely charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership styles. Apart from that, the targeted organizations or institutions have solid religious characteristics, with Islam being the primary guideline in carrying out the organization's vision and mission. This research aims to provide an overview of women's leadership (Nyai) in leading Islamic boarding schools.

## **Research Method**

Qualitative methods are used in this research, which is research with a case study method or approach. This research focuses intensively on one particular object and studies it as a case. Case study data can be obtained from all parties involved; in other words in this study collected from various sources (Ulfatin, 2022).

Case studies in this research describe a case in more depth or more than one case in a given period. The case studied in this approach must be specific and describe a particular phenomenon with its specificity compared to other phenomena. Then, this research can produce descriptive data in words or orally from the people needed by observing through the method of interviews and participatory observation as the primary tool to obtain the results of the research.

Primary sources are sources that directly provide data to data collectors (Alir, 2005). In this research, the primary data sources are the female chair of the Asar Humanitarian Foundation and members of this institution. Meanwhile, secondary data sources are data sources that indirectly provide data to data collectors, for example, through other people or documents, archives, and recordings.

The informants targeted in this study are the head of the humanitarian organization Asar Humanity Foundation, consisting of three people with one female CEO and two people at the director's level, as well as their subordinates or staff of two.

**Table 1.** Lists of Informants.

No.	Name	Title
1	Ms. RM	CEO
2	Ms. AH	HRD Director
3	Ms. L	Program Director
4	Mr. SN	Staff
5	Mr. RZ	Staff

The primary source is the source that directly provides data to the data collector. In this case, the primary data source is the female head of the Asar Humanity Foundation and members of the institution. At the same time, the secondary source of data is the source that indirectly gives data to data collectors, for example, through other people or documents, archives, and recordings. The informants targeted in this study are the head of the humanitarian organization Asar Humanity Foundation, consisting of three people with one female CEO and two people at the director's level, as well as their subordinates or staff of two.

## **Results and Discussion**

In developing an organization, leadership is central to every level of leadership, from the top leadership to the managerial or supervisory level. The organization's members are also required to have a good leadership attitude as an effort of the organization to undertake the process of regeneration of leadership so that in the future, the staff can take over and forward the leadership of the current organizational leaders to the level of organizational leadership. Leadership is one of the critical factors that can influence society; its involvement in realizing the vision of the mission of the institution, as well as the character of the better and competent members of the organization in their fields make leadership a growing aspect of the organization that cannot be released in the process of growth

the organization because a good organization, must have a role model of good leadership.

Leadership can be understood as an attempt by a leader to organize their team to pursue the organization's goals; in a non-profit organization, the humanitarian goals and helping others become the primary objectives in the formation of an organization. This is stated in the following interview with Ms. RM, CEO of Asar Humanity.

"As an Islamic-based non-profit organization oriented towards religious and humanitarian values, the main goal of this institution must be to spread its benefits and help those in need in Indonesia to the world." (Ny. RM, 2023)

Therefore, Islamic-based non-profit organizations have a deeper meaning in the field of humanity and help equally because, in everyday work, pursuing an orientation that seeks profit, worship, and the interest of building a better civilization is continually demanded. It is also included in an interview with the following Ms.RM.

"Our vision is to be a non-profit organization on a national and global scale to build a better world civilization." (Ms. RM, 2023)

The leadership specifically advocated by women normatively has substantial legitimacy, theologically, philosophically, and legally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that women must be given the freedom to choose and be elected as leaders. In Indonesia, several laws govern gender-based leadership, one of which is the Republic of Indonesia Act No. 39 of 1999 on human rights, which has guaranteed women's representation in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

Gender-based leadership, more specifically female leadership, is becoming a distinct phenomenon in modern society. In the past, the role of women as leaders in an organization or company was still considered taboo. Often, stereotypes associated with the dual role of a woman and in the world of organizations or companies were struck so that conflicts of roles occurred within a woman leader.

In an organization or institution, the dominance of men as leaders is still so strong. Women have no more significant leadership potential than men. It is impossible to get rid of the individual who plays the role of the leader himself. There are many links between the individual's ability to lead and the biological aspects inherent in the leader, based on the gender

differences between men and women. This has resulted in the term gender disparity or gender bias (gender types) that then puts women in a disadvantageous position, even though women are a human resource that even in the world is much larger than men.

The phenomenon of gender inequality that implies female leadership in nonprofit organizations was also presented by the informant, Ms. AH, Director of HRD Asar Humanity.

"Out of the dozen people at the level of directors and managers, there are fewer women in leadership; in Asar, there are only three directors and two managers. We are a pioneer startup, and the average leadership level is in men. However, if the staff level or the senior staff are many, they are also female." (Ms. AH, 2023)

Almost similar statements were also made by Ms. L, Ms. L arguing that the non-profit agency, according to him, gives equal opportunities for women and men to be leaders of the organization; regardless of gender, the organization's leaders are chosen based on credibility.

"If I think that compared to a profit-oriented organization or company, like where I worked before, the non-profit agency provides a lot more opportunities for women to develop, and here, women are given more space to speak and lead, just back to each individual, whether they want to or not." (Ms. L, 2023)

Gender inequality in modern society In a modern world that focuses on competence and performance, sex is no longer a dominant factor in work. Women can now do jobs that men once dominated with excellent starts: military service, taxi/bus drivers, heavy duty mining drivers, head of mining mandor, company CEOs, fuel filling, and others. These phenomena prove that men and women have equal abilities to this day.

The phenomenon of male and female leadership in modern society is often associated with the fields in which they belong. However, the evolution of the era towards modernity and digital versatility continues; it cannot be denied that certain areas are reserved for certain genders only, for example, the profession of a virgin that can only be held by women or the occupation of a vehicle mechanic that men usually occupy. The specificity of the abilities, mentality, and physiological inherence of these gender differences makes a specific job classification for both women and men exist. It is also similar to the following statement given by Mr. SN.



"I have never seen a leader of the darkest kind, ever got a good and competent leader of both women and men, just not all fields fit for each gender, for example, marketing, usually more suited if filled women" (Mr.SN, 2023)

Ms. L. also did similar things, as follows.

"Normally if the sales or marketing team is female, the presentation of the program can be immediately closing, not waiting a long time" (Ms.L, 2023)

In leading an organization, women often encounter internal and external conflicts with their closest environment, the family. Conflicts often refer to women's dual roles in the home as children or mothers and organizational leadership roles that require women to deploy their total capacity to the goals of the organization.

Besides, the conflict within a woman is an emotional feeling that sometimes arises when it comes to making a strategic decision. Women's emotional side is often seen by the eye, making women's leadership irrational. In contrast, the essential nature of women who are sensitive and more sensitive to other people's emotions can be a plus value in the style of women's leadership, as presented in an interview with Ms. L.

"Sometimes emotional stereotypes or feelings for women have their plus points; for example, we understand when the team below has a problem, we know when there is a big meeting and see the condition of people who hear their mood good or bad, it is essential for a leader" (Ms. L, 2023)

As for the difficulty of formulating the strategic direction of an organization or non-profit institution in women, it can be said to be less accurate because the ability to think strategically and rationally in policy-making does not depend on any gender that formulates it; it depends on the competence and analytical ability of the organization's leadership. It was also to the CEO of Asar Humanity, Ms. RM

"Fortunately, I have never been disturbed by the emotional nature of deciding the policy direction of the agency; even the staff have ever said that I am leading more men than other men because a leader very much needs the determination and the right decision-making skills" (Ms. RM, 2023)

According to Robbins (1996), leadership is divided into four categories: (1) Charismatic leadership focuses on an attempt to influence members of an organization by clearly expressing the vision of the organization. (2) Transformational leadership inspires members of the organization to communicate when members can perform their duties well for the organization's interests rather than personal interests. (3) Transactional leadership style is the way a leader can motivate their followers toward the company's set goals by clarifying the duties and responsibilities of employees. (4) A visionary leadership style is one in which a leader can create a realistic, attractive, and credible vision of the organization's future.

According to the informants, in non-profit organizations, leaders at the top managerial level have implemented their leadership style in how they lead. According to the informant, Mrs. AH understands that the four leadership styles are suitable for application. However, the leadership style that is most suitable for her is transformational leadership.

"As a leader, I try to apply all the leadership styles to my subordinates, but the most suitable is the transformational style. As a non-profit startup, transformational leadership can deliver inspiration to the team below me that is in line with the values of the institution that should have been internalized in the entire membership of this organization." (Ms. AH, 2023)

Here is a classification of the leadership styles women leaders in non-profit organizations apply based on information from informants.

**Table 2.** Leadership style classification

No.	Leadership Style	Implementation
1	Charismatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lead the meeting by starting with inspiring stories</li><li>• Be an example and role model for members of the organization (for example, arriving on time, being active in every meeting, etc.)</li></ul>
2	Transformational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invite members of the organization to express their opinions directly</li><li>• Making breakthroughs to accelerate the achievement of organizational goals</li></ul>
3	Transactional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide rewards and punishment to organizational members according to achievements</li></ul>
4	Visionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop big organizational ideas and always be up to date with current developments.</li></ul>

The inclined views received by informants are also often an obstacle to balancing their roles in the world of household and work, as Ms. RM and Ms. L presented in a quotation of the following interview.

"As wives and mothers, sometimes there is internal conflict, which one should prevail, work or household. However, I am sure, as a multitasking creature, women are capable of being a good mother and a good leader, of course, with the glory of a family that has total support related to work out of the house." (Ms. RM, 2023)

"Family, neighbors, and closest brothers and sisters sometimes like to look at me, at a young age, and like to identify the burden of busy work with my unmarried condition to this day, while from this job I get so many valuable opportunities." (Ms. L, 2023)

Given the importance of the role of leadership in non-profit organizations, it is appropriate for women leaders to keep an eye on how their leadership style is applied. The role of women in social life development is not only a process of development but also a firmly structured foundation. I mean, women have an essential role in building a social life, one of them in building the sustainability of an organization.

The importance of having a support system here is that a female leader can cope with the pressure and expectations of many parties with the support of the nearest environment. This subsequent support will help a female leader share their roles well. Society no longer sees women as the weak who are always in the back, but they can act in the frontline as successful leaders in various sectors of life, which men have dominated. Women have the same ability to be at the top of their careers without sacrificing their household roles as children, wives, and mothers.

## **Conclusion**

The leadership of the humanitarian organization Asar Humanity Foundation considers that the four leadership styles- charismatic, transformational, transactional, and visionary- are suitable to apply. However, the leadership style most suitable for this organization's CEO is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is considered to be able to inspire the team under the CEO, which is in line with institutional values that all members of this organization should internalize. As organizational leaders, women face several obstacles, including conflicts with themselves and external parties such as their immediate environment. Conflict often refers to women's dual roles at home as children or mothers and organizational leadership roles which require women to devote all their time and abilities to achieving organizational goals.

The solution to the above problem, among other things, is that women leaders in organizations should be able to divide the time in performing

both roles, both at home and in the workplace well, as well as to build a support system from the nearest family to keep helping the two roles go well.

Researchers can recommend further research to investigate with more targeted informants so that the responses of informants are more diverse. Quantitative data will be essential to see the effectiveness of female leadership styles in Islamic institutions.

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