



Gender Awareness in Building Self-Efficacy in Student Organization Leadership at School

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ABSTRACT

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This research focuses on the forms of gender discrimination that occur in the leadership of student organizations and their impact on female students' self-efficacy. It aims to identify and analyze the various forms of discrimination experienced by female students and their influence on their confidence and participation in organizations. The research method used was a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews and participatory observation. The results showed that there are four significant forms of gender discrimination: the lack of representation of women in leadership positions, harmful gender stereotypes, the neglect of women's voices in decision-making, and the existence of gender-based violence and bullying. The implications of this study highlight the need for more inclusive policies and support for female students in the school environment to overcome gender discrimination issues and increase their self-efficacy in leadership. This research is expected to be a reference for schools and stakeholders in formulating more effective strategies to create gender equality in student organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

In education, gender equality is an issue that receives special attention, especially in the school environment. As an institution that shapes the character with the younger generation's mindset, schools are moulded to create a fair and equal climate for all students, regardless of gender. However, facts show that gender discrimination still occurs in various aspects of life, including in the leadership of student organizations in schools. This discrimination can take the form of neglecting the role of female students, limiting opportunities to become a leader, and stereotypes that place them in an inferior position (Marine & Lewis, 2019). Student organization leadership significantly influences the development of students' self-efficacy, which can affect their future achievements and confidence.

Although women and men have the same potential to lead, female students are often overlooked when selecting these positions. This results in low self-efficacy of female students and reinforces the stereotype that they are

incapable of leading (Ahn & Cunningham, 2020). Therefore, it is important to explore the forms of gender discrimination in student organization leadership and their impact on student self-efficacy. This study explores the dynamics of gender discrimination in the context of leadership and its implications for the development of student's confidence and abilities.

Botella et al. (2019), it was found that this study highlighted the challenges of gender imbalance in STEM fields, especially the low participation of women in the technology sector and their high rate of resignation. The program includes institutional support, strengthening professional networks, increasing leadership and visibility of female role models applied at the master's and doctoral undergraduate levels. Another study by Diekman et al. (2021) indicates that this study shows an implicit association of stereotypes between gender and leadership. Bevilacqua et al. (2022) The study found that women make up only 19% of the number of practising surgeons in the United States, and this representation further decreases at the academic rank. the study explored gender in editorial leadership positions in surgical journals, with the result that women remain underrepresented in leadership with varying forms of change over the past decade among different specialities.

From previous studies, it appears that although many have discussed gender discrimination and self-efficacy, there is still a lack of research that examines in depth how these forms of discrimination specifically occur in the leadership of student organizations. This study will fill this gap by identifying and analyzing the various forms of gender discrimination experienced by students at school and its influence on their self-efficacy in the context of leadership.

The novelty of this research lies in the holistic approach that will be used to analyze the phenomenon of gender discrimination in student organization leadership. This research will not only explore gender representation but will also analyze the social and cultural factors that contribute to such discrimination. In addition, this study will develop strategies to increase gender awareness in the school environment, which is expected to create a more inclusive environment and support the development of students' self-efficacy.

This study aims to identify and analyze the forms of gender discrimination that occur in the leadership of student organizations in schools, as well as their impact on students' self-efficacy. Understanding this issue, it is hoped that this research can provide new insights for educators and policymakers in designing programs that support gender equality and empowerment of female students in the school environment. This research is expected to be a reference for further studies and support efforts to create a fair and equal educational environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type to explore and analyze forms of gender discrimination in student organization leadership at school. This approach was chosen because it can provide a more in-depth understanding of student's experiences and perceptions regarding the gender discrimination they experience. This research was conducted at State Vocational High School 1 Kotaanyar, Probolinggo Regency, East Java, with the zip code 67293. This school was chosen because it has an active and diverse student organization, allowing researchers to obtain representative data on leadership dynamics and gender discrimination. The data collection techniques used in this study include in-depth interviews and participatory observation.

Researchers use thematic analysis techniques. The data collected from interviews and observations will be analyzed by identifying the main themes that emerge related to forms of gender discrimination and their influence on students' self-efficacy. The analysis begins with transcribing the interviews, then coding the data, and then grouping the data into relevant themes. This approach is expected to reveal underlying patterns and provide deep insight into gender discrimination in the school environment.

This research aims to obtain comprehensive data and a richer context by combining interviews and observations. Through direct observation of student organization activities, researchers can see the interaction dynamics between students and the influence of organizational structures on gender representation in leadership. This research is expected to provide a clear and realistic picture of the existing conditions so that the results can be used as recommendations for schools to improve gender equality in student organization leadership.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that gender discrimination that occurs in the leadership of student organizations in schools reflects a pattern consistent with previous research findings. As Walker (2020) explained, gender discrimination in the context of leadership often results in the underrepresentation of women, which is evident in the acquisition of strategic positions in student organizations. This research confirms that female students tend to be viewed as less capable of leading, which aligns with the conclusions reached by Bhatti and Ali (2021), who found that gender stereotypes significantly affect female students' confidence in taking on leadership roles.

Meanwhile, in the study by McQuillan and Mayo (2024), the authors highlighted that the lack of access to training and development for female students is one of the inhibiting factors in achieving optimal self-efficacy. The results of this study confirm that gender discrimination not only affects female

students' participation in student organizations but also has implications for their character development and self-efficacy. Thus, the findings highlight the urgency of formulating policies that are more inclusive and supportive of gender equality so that all students, regardless of gender, can have equal opportunities to contribute and develop in leadership.

In this study, various forms of gender discrimination affect students' self-efficacy in student organization leadership. Interviews with students and teachers provided in-depth insights into their experiences with this issue. The findings focused on four main aspects: underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, gender stereotyping, neglect and discrimination in decision-making, and gender-based violence and bullying.

The Lack of Representation of Women in Leadership Positions

One of the main findings of this research is the lack of representation of women in leadership positions in student organizations. The lack of representation of women in leadership positions in student organizations is one of the crucial issues identified in this study, where the facts show that female students often lack opportunities to occupy strategic positions, even though they have the same abilities and potential as their peers but different gender (male). Accordance with the expression of Rina Sulistiani, one of the students, revealed: "Many of my female friends have more ability or IQ, but we are rarely elected to become chairman or representative within the scope of the organization, and usually those elected are from the male section." The interview with this informant shows that although many female students have high abilities and potential, they still have difficulty being selected for leadership positions in the organization. This statement reflects a significant gender gap, where intellectual ability is not a determining factor in selecting leaders. This indicates that deep-rooted social and cultural factors still influence the view of women's role in leadership, so often, female students feel marginalized in important decision-making processes.

Thus, the lack of representation of women in leadership has negative implications for developing their self-efficacy, where they feel less valued and less confident in taking on leadership roles. Then, it was also added from an interview with Muhammad Andi, who is one of the students from the male gender, revealed, "If I see that leaders must be firm and brave in taking risks, and sometimes if women are considered not to have such characters because their nature is dominant soft, therefore women are rarely chosen to be a leader." This informant mentioned a strong stereotype about the characteristics of an ideal leader who is considered assertive and risk-taking.



Figure 1. Representation of Women's Leadership

Figure 1 reflects entrenched social norms, where traits that characterize good leadership, such as assertiveness and courage, are often associated with male attributes. By stating that women are perceived to have softer traits, this statement creates a restriction on women's ability to be recognized as leaders. Interviews of this statement indicate that feminine traits considered dominant, such as gentleness, are viewed negatively in the context of leadership, leading to the neglect of women's potential to lead. This suggests inequity in selecting leaders, where individuals' qualities and potential are not objectively assessed but are somewhat limited by stereotypical views of gender. In this context, it is important to challenge and change these perceptions to create a more supportive environment for women to take on leadership roles and demonstrate that effective leadership is not necessarily measured by assertiveness or courage.

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotyping is one of the findings in this study, which shows that internalized social norms strongly influence people's perceptions of women's roles and abilities in leadership. In the context of student organizations, these stereotypes often result in biased assessments of women's abilities, so women are rarely allowed to occupy leadership positions despite having the same competencies as men. Gender stereotypes also emerge as a problematic factor affecting women's participation in becoming leaders. According to an interview with Dika, one of the male students commented, "I feel that a leader must be firm and sometimes women are considered less assertive because many of my friends argue that, a leader must be able to make quick and precise decisions and not hesitate in dealing with problems.

The female gender is considered too emotional or considers too many things before making a decision, so they are not suitable to be leaders." This informant's statement shows the existence of stereotypes that associate decisiveness and the ability to make decisions quickly as the main characteristics expected of a leader. In this view, women are considered less capable of meeting these standards, as they are perceived to be more emotional and consider things

too much before making decisions. This statement creates an unfair social boundary, where women are prevented from achieving leadership positions because they do not meet expectations that are based on stereotypes rather than an assessment of individual ability. It also highlights that even when women are equally competent, they are still stigmatized, which can limit their opportunities for leadership roles.

This explanation reflects the stereotypes attached to leadership traits often seen as more suitable for men. Meanwhile, Ca, a female student who is also a student council member, said all male students doubt our ability to make decisions. They often question whether we can handle the difficult situation and take the proper steps quickly. This expression makes us face scepticism just because we are women." The interview with this second informant shows that the scepticism towards women's decision-making ability also comes from their entire management structure, especially towards male students. This scepticism exposes a biased view where women are perceived as not being strong or resilient enough to deal with difficult situations. This scepticism creates additional pressure for female students to prove themselves more complex than their male counterparts despite having the same skill set. They feel they have to face perceptions that may doubt their capacity simply because of their gender. Gender stereotypes not only affect how male students perceive women but also how women perceive themselves. With this stereotype, female students will develop a sense of hesitation to emerge as leaders, resulting in their low self-efficacy in the realm of leadership.

The statement above already reflects the emergence of a negative perspective on the nature and attitude of a woman in becoming a leader. Another student also mentioned something similar. Dewi Astuti th, the coordinator of the extracurricular section, argued, "I feel that every time I propose or give an idea or some suggestions, my friends don't seem too enthusiastic. They often embrace my ideas and then refine them according to their own opinions, or even seek additional opinions from their peers." From the interview with this informant, it can be understood that there is a perception that an idea from female students or administrators is not "complete" or strong enough if it is not supported or reinforced by the opinions of male students. The environment where female students feel that their contributions are not directly accepted, resulting in female students feeling less valued and recognized by the group or organization, thus negatively impacting their confidence and drive to participate actively in the organization. The psychological barriers that female students face in organizational environments where recognition of their contributions often depends on greater acceptance from male colleagues.

Neglect and Discrimination in Decision-Making

This experience reflects that although female students contribute to a discussion in the organizational realm, their voices do not get the attention they deserve from the listeners, especially the male gender. Ali's statement as the supervising teacher, who added, "Sometimes I see that, female students are more passive in voicing their opinions because they feel unappreciated. We also often see that whatever we say will be ignored or considered less important, like there is a pattern that keeps repeating, where every time women speak, many choose not to respond, as if our ideas are not as valuable as the ideas of administrators from the male gender." This informant's opinion reveals that the psychological impact experienced by female students due to this pattern of discrimination is that victims feel that their opinions are not valued or are often ignored.

Sholehatul Inayah, one of the student council administrators, "When I try to give views that I think good, my ideas are often ignored or diverted to other topics, as if my views are less relevant or not very important to discuss. In fact, there were times when my ideas were even reiterated by the male students by slightly modifying what I said, and only then did I get the attention of the group. This situation makes me feel that as a woman, I am not considered equal in contributing to the organization, even though I have ideas that can bring change." These interviews highlighted the unfairness in accepting ideas within the organization, where the views presented by female students were often ignored or considered irrelevant.

That make suggestions have potential or value, their views are often dismissed. Ironically, only when the same idea is repeated or modified by a male student is considered important and given attention by the group or all parties. This situation illustrates a pattern of systematic disregard for women's ideas, leading to them not feeling recognized as equal contributors within the organization. This pattern leads to feelings of marginalization and can hinder the development of female students as leaders, even though female students have ideas capable of bringing about positive change in the organization.



Figure 2. A Woman's Interests

Figure 2, the indicators of this finding addressing gender discrimination in decision-making in student organizations can begin by looking at the preference of male students' voices that put forward their views more than female students. This phenomenon reflects a deep-rooted systemic bias within the organizational structure, where male voices are considered more valid or valuable. At the same time, ideas put forward by female students are often ignored. This inequality not only prevents women's voices from being heard but also decreases their active participation in discussions. When female students feel that their opinions are not valued, they tend to become more passive in expressing ideas or criticism, reducing their contribution to decision-making. This lack of involvement creates a pattern where women feel marginalized in the discussion process, making them reluctant to participate further.

Gender-based Violence and Bullying

Another finding is that gender-based violence and bullying are serious problems that can hinder student development, especially for female students in the context of student organizations. In this study, it was found that female students are often subjected to acts of verbal and emotional violence stemming from gender stereotypes inherent in society. According to Rahmawati, one of the female students, "Some male students often mock female friends when they are speaking in front of the class or during meeting forums. Incidents like this often make us feel insecure and we become reluctant to participate. The ridicule leads to comments about our appearance or abilities as women, creating an atmosphere that does not support us to speak out." The results of the first interview showed that there were forms of verbal violence from male students directed at female students when they tried to speak in front of the class or a meeting forum. These acts of ridicule not only make female students feel uncomfortable but also undermine their confidence, making them more reluctant to participate in discussions actively.

Feronika Anwar, one of the students and a student council member, also argued, "When we try to express our thoughts, often the response we receive is not support, but sarcasm or jokes that make us feel as if our opinions are worthless. It's incidents like this that make us wonder about our abilities, as if we don't have the right to speak in public spaces." Female students feeling as if their ideas or views had no value, leading to self-doubt and forming the perception that they were not fit to contribute to the public sphere. Which in turn creates a pattern of behaviour that lowers women's self-confidence and inhibits them from getting further involved in the organization. Gender-based violence and bullying create an unsafe environment for female students, which in turn reduces their self-efficacy and discourages them from actively engaging in leadership.



Figure 3. Organizational Culture

Figure 3 show that gender-based violence and discrimination in student organizations at school still occur subtly but have a significant impact. One of the manifestations is the discomfort and decreased confidence of female students due to the verbal violence and neglect they experience. Female students who try to express their ideas or opinions often receive ridicule or sarcasm from male peers. This ridicule, which often leads to criticism of their abilities or gender characteristics, creates a non-conducive environment and makes female students feel marginalized, especially in leadership roles. Such attitudes, on the one hand, indicate a lack of social support from male peers, which can result in women's lack of confidence in expressing their views. When male students do not provide enough support or even show skepticism, female students tend to feel unrecognized and considered less relevant in organizational discussions.

Discussion

Gender stereotypes in leadership are a fundamental issue hindering women's advancement in strategic positions in student organizations. Research shows that standard views associating leadership traits, such as assertiveness and courage, with men create gaps in women's representation. This is supported by the role consistency theory described by Foncubierta-Rodríguez (2022), where women are often seen as unsuitable to hold positions requiring masculine characteristics, so they face more significant barriers to recognition. This mismatch between women's traits and expectations of the ideal leader has implications for the low social acceptance of women as leaders (Jameson, 2019; Gray & Weese, 2023).

Societal perceptions suggest that women, with their soft dominant nature, cannot lead, so leadership positions are more often given to men. This negative social acceptance of women in leadership roles is reinforced by the norms and values entrenched in social structures, where the expected characteristics of a leader tend to override feminine traits. Social Role Theory, proposed by Moorosi et al. (2018), asserts that these social expectations limit women's opportunities to

participate in leadership and shape the perception that women are less capable of managing and making strategic decisions in organizations. These three indicators are interrelated, where gender stereotypes not only create limitations in women's access to leadership positions but also reinforce social views that discredit their capacities and abilities.

Gender perceptions of assertiveness in leadership illustrate that assertiveness and courage are often perceived as exclusively inherent characteristics in men and are considered less or not in line with women's traits (Pitcher et al., 2018). This stereotype is in line with Hanasono et al. role consistency theory (2019), which states that when women enter leadership roles, they are often judged against different standards or deemed incompatible with the traditional masculine roles associated with leadership, which can lead to women often being judged as less assertive and deemed unsuitable for leadership, thus limiting their opportunities to seek out opportunities to contribute as leaders.

Scepticism and doubt about women's abilities indicate that women are less competent in making decisions, especially when faced with difficult or complex situations. This scepticism reflects a deep-seated bias whereby women must work harder to gain equal valuation than men (Butkus et al., 2018; Maamari & Saheb, 2018). Perceptions of gender roles in society tend to attribute characteristics necessary for leadership, such as toughness, speed in making decisions, and assertiveness. Whereas women are considered more suitable in supporting roles and being an organizational structure that does not directly face the emergence of significant risks, resulting in women's ability to make decisions is often doubted, not based on an objective evaluation of competence, but rather because of biases and stereotypes that have been embedded in the social environment (Sen et al., 2023).

The lack of recognition of women's contribution to decision-making means that ideas or suggestions submitted by women are often only accepted after validation or support from men. Male students can influence the acceptance of ideas and contributions from different groups, namely from women (Maragha et al., 2024). When women's voices are ignored or only accepted after being supported by male opinions, a pattern of indirect discrimination limits them from fully contributing to the decision-making process (McGowan & Stokes, 2019). Thus, from the explanation above, it can form a pattern of discrimination in student organizations, where gender stereotypes affect the way women are valued, accepted, and given opportunities in organizational settings. A more inclusive approach and awareness of bias are needed to create space for women to be recognized based on their actual abilities, not based on stereotypes or biased perceptions.

Therefore, recognizing ideas only when presented by male students reinforces this cycle of discrimination. The same idea from a female student may not get serious attention or response, but it is valued and considered relevant when a male student repeats or modifies the idea (Lang et al., 2018). Theoretically, this view is rooted in deep gender stereotypes, where leadership traits and abilities are often associated with masculine characteristics such as assertiveness and courage (López et al., 2021; Khurniawan et al., 2024). This inequality in recognizing ideas has implications for developing women's leadership capabilities, where they are not given equal opportunities to demonstrate their potential (Schaillée et al., 2021). These three indicators are interrelated and create an environment that is not conducive to the development of female students in leadership positions, thus requiring serious attention to promote gender equality within student organizations.

These indicators of findings reflect gender bias, social stereotypes, and the psychological impact of discrimination in student organizations. The discomfort and decreased confidence caused by verbal violence can be explained by relational injustice theory, where unequal treatment creates emotional distress that weakens women's participation (Burman et al., 2020; Fahmi et al., 2023). Lack of social support from male colleagues and disregard for women's opinions confirms social legitimacy theory, which suggests the importance of group support in encouraging the participation of other group members. Inadequate support for women reinforces the stereotype that they are less fit to lead, reducing their active role in organizations (Ajgaonkar, 2022).

Gender bias against women's competence is linked to stereotype threat, where negative stereotypes create low expectations that hinder women's participation. Female students who continue to receive rejection tend to internalize scepticism, doubt their competence, and reinforce stereotypes (McQuillan & Mayo, 2024; Faiz et al., 2023). In order to address this issue, schools need to create policies that support gender equality and provide training and support for female students so that they can develop their leadership potential (Silva et al., 2022; Purwanto et al., 2023; Zaini & Fahmi, 2023). Through these measures, it is hoped that a more inclusive and equitable environment can be created where all students, regardless of gender, can contribute maximally to student organizations and develop their self-efficacy.

CONCLUSION

The most important findings indicate that gender discrimination in student organization leadership have significantly impacts female students' self-efficacy. The underrepresentation of women, gender stereotypes, neglect of voice in decision-making, and gender-based violence and bullying create an

environment that is not supportive of female students' leadership development. By understanding the challenges faced by female students, schools and other stakeholders can formulate policies that are more inclusive and supportive of leadership growth among female students. Study also has limitations, such as a limited focus on one particular school and gender context and the use of interview methods that may not encompass broader views. Further research is needed to accommodate variations in age and gender and use survey methods.

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