

## Building Women's Leadership in Education: The Key to Transformation for Lifetime Opportunities and a Success Mindset

Yulia Rahmi Imani\*, Abdul Wahid Zaini, Uswatun Hasanah

Universitas Nurul Jadid, Indonesia

Email: rahmiilmaniyulia@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**  
Education, Women,  
Leadership

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\* Yulia Rahmi Imani

This study aims to analyze the role of women's leadership in education in creating lifelong opportunities and shaping a success mindset. The research method used is a qualitative approach with case study techniques, where data is collected through in-depth interviews with a number of women leaders in educational institutions as well as field observations. The results show that women's leadership has a significant influence in improving the quality of education, shaping a collaborative and resilience-based mindset, and introducing more inclusive policies for students from various backgrounds. The study also found that while gender and social structural challenges still hinder women's participation in educational leadership, appropriate empowerment measures, such as leadership training and increased access to education, could open up greater opportunities for women to play a role in global education transformation. The implication of this study is the importance of designing education policies that support women's leadership as the key to creating a more equitable and sustainable education. This research also contributes to the development of a more inclusive and gender-equality-based educational leadership theory.

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### Article History:

Received: January 6, 2024; Received in Revised Form August 12, 2024; Accepted: December 20, 2024;

Available online: December 21, 2024

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### Please cite this article in APA style as:

Imani, Y. R., Zaini, A. W., & Hasanah, U. (2024). Building women's leadership in education: The key to transformation for lifetime opportunities and a success mindset. *Journal of Social Studies and Education*, 2(2), 82-93.

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving world, the role of women in leadership has become increasingly vital in shaping societies and driving economic growth (Brabazon & Schulz, 2020). Despite significant progress, gender disparities persist in many sectors, including education, business, and politics. Studies indicate that when women are empowered through education and leadership opportunities, they contribute significantly to social and economic development (Chen & Barcus, 2024). However, cultural barriers, unequal access to education, and societal expectations continue to hinder women's full participation in leadership roles. The transformation of education to foster lifelong learning and cultivate a success mindset is crucial in unlocking the potential of women and ensuring their active engagement in leadership at various levels (Gause, 2021). Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from governments, institutions, and communities to create an inclusive environment where women can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.

Extensive literature highlights the importance of education in empowering women and fostering leadership skills (Rana et al., 2024). Scholars argue that education catalyzes women's empowerment, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate challenges and seize opportunities. Research indicates that women who receive quality education are more likely to assume leadership roles and positively impact their communities (Hegarty et al., 2022). For instance, studies by the United Nations and World Bank emphasize the correlation between female education and economic development, advocating for policies that promote gender-inclusive education systems (Zhao et al., 2024). Additionally, various theoretical frameworks, such as transformational leadership theory and social learning theory, underscore the significance of education in shaping women's leadership capabilities and self-efficacy (Lopes Cardozo et al., 2022; Hamid et al., 2023; DeAngelo et al., 2023). The literature suggests that targeted educational interventions can break barriers and pave the way for women's leadership success.

This research aims to explore how transforming education can unlock lifelong opportunities and instill a successful mindset through women's leadership. The key research questions include: How does education influence women's leadership potential? What are the barriers that hinder women from accessing leadership roles despite educational attainment? And, what strategies can be implemented to foster a culture of lifelong learning and a success mindset among women leaders? By addressing these questions, the study seeks to provide insights into effective educational practices and policy recommendations that can enhance women's leadership capabilities and drive societal progress.

The underlying assumption of this study is that education plays a pivotal role in shaping women's leadership trajectories and fostering a success-oriented mindset. It is hypothesized that access to quality education, coupled with mentorship and supportive networks, significantly enhances women's leadership potential and contributes to lifelong success. Preliminary findings suggest that educational transformation when tailored to address gender-specific challenges, can empower women to break through barriers and achieve leadership excellence. Thus, the study argues that a comprehensive approach to education reform is essential in creating an enabling environment where women can thrive as leaders and change-makers.

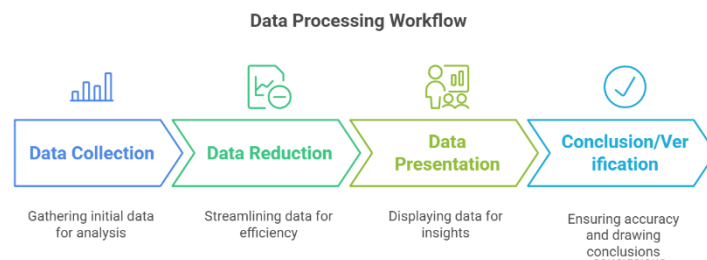
## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative type with a case study approach (Khuzaiyah et al., 2022). Data collection techniques were carried out using interviews, observation, and documentation, and the research location at PP Miftahul Ulum Besuki was the Islamic boarding school owned by Mrs. Nyai Hj Khoirani which contained several educational institutions, Muslimat Kindergarten, MI Miftahul Ulum, MTs Mifathul Ulum, MA Mifathul Ulum, and SMK Miftahul Ulum. So that it can facilitate data collection and research can communicate intensively with information sources (informants). Research subjects consist of school heads, teachers, TU staff, and students/santri under the auspices of PP Miftahul Ulum, the school committee as representatives of the community, staff Deputy Regent, and drivers.

**Table 1. Female Leadership Interview**

| No | Informant                                | Gender | Result                                 |
|----|--|--------|--|
| 1  | Exemplary                                | Female | Deputy Regent Staff                    |
| 2  | Drivers                                  | Male   | Attentive and generous                 |
| 3  | Heads of Miftahul Ulum Vocational School | Male   | Innovative and solutions               |
| 4  | Heads of MA Miftahul Ulum                | Male   | Inspirational, religious, and caring   |
| 5  | Heads of Mts Miftahul Ulum               | Male   | Flexible and humble                    |
| 6  | Head of MI Miftahul Ulum                 | Male   | Humanist and creative                  |
| 7  | Heads of Muslimat                        | Female | Kindergartens are exemplary and caring |
| 8  | Teachers                                 | Female | exemplary and caring                   |
| 9  | TU Staff                                 | Male   | Caring and humanist                    |
| 10 | school committees                        | Male   | Inspirational and caring               |
| 11 | Students/Santri                          | Female | Exemplary and caring                   |

Data collection techniques in this research are observation, documentation, and interview methods (RACO, 2010). Some of the information obtained from observations is space (place), actors, activities, objects, actions, incidents or occurrences, time, and feelings.



**Figure 1. Research Using Qualitative Types**

The reason researchers conduct observations is to present a realistic picture of behavior or events to answer questions, to help understand human behavior, and for evaluation, namely to carry out measurements of certain aspects, providing feedback on these measurements. Documentation data includes: Islamic boarding school vision and mission, program proposals, school work program, and school principals, policies, principals and teachers as well as administrative staff, award charters, lists of facilities, and infrastructure. The main issues in the interviews include: women's leadership in educational transformation, women's competence as leaders, work programs, functions and duties as leaders, leadership styles, supervision, leaders' relationships with school principals, teachers, and staff, relationships with parents- community, development of students, teachers and Guidance Counseling (Harahap, 2020). All information obtained through in-depth interviews, using either recording equipment or manually, is then transcribed (*Transferred Into Written Form*).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

Leadership does not differentiate between the perpetrators, whether they are carried out by men or women. For both, the same requirements apply to being a good leader. From the data obtained, female leaders have proven that changing education can improve people's quality of life throughout their lives. The research results show that women's leadership in educational transformation which can increase lifelong opportunity is carried out in the form of;

### **Increasing Sustainable Learning Opportunities for Women**

Research shows that women's leadership in education plays an important role in creating inclusive and sustainable learning environments. With women as leaders in the education sector, more programs and policies are oriented towards empowering women, thereby opening up lifelong learning opportunities for them in various fields of expertise. The interviews conducted in this research aimed to explore continuous learning opportunities for women as well as the challenges they face in accessing lifelong education.

Respondents consisted of women from diverse backgrounds, including students, professionals, and housewives, who shared their experiences regarding access, barriers, and support they received in the learning process. From the interview results, it was found that economic, and cultural factors, as well as family and community support, have a significant role in determining women's access to sustainable learning. In addition, the use of technology in education has a positive impact on expanding learning opportunities for women at various levels of society. However, there are still gaps in the use of technology due to limited access and digital literacy. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of these factors is essential for designing policies that support inclusive education for women.

Based on interviews conducted with several informants, the data obtained shows several key factors that influence sustainable learning opportunities for women. One informant stated, "Family support and scholarships help women in accessing education, (I\_P1\_2023)" which reflects the importance of family support in the aspect of access to education. On the other hand, the challenges faced regarding the costs of higher education are also a concern, as stated by another informant, "The costs of higher education are often a big obstacle for women to continue their studies (I\_P2\_2023)." In the technological aspect, one informant stated, "Online courses and digital platforms provide opportunities for women to learn at any time, (I\_P3\_2023)" even though there are obstacles in digital literacy, "However, many women still have difficulty accessing and utilizing this technology (I\_P4\_2023)." In addition, in social and cultural aspects, community support and motivation are important factors, with one informant saying, "Community support encourages women to continue learning (I\_P5\_2023)." However, restrictive social norms are also an obstacle, as stated by another informant, "Restrictive social norms often make women feel that they are not allowed to pursue higher education (I\_P6\_2023)." Although these supporting factors are significant, existing challenges must be overcome to ensure women can access lifelong education equally.

### **Mindset Change Towards Success Based on Women's Leadership**

The findings show that education led by women tends to encourage positive mindset changes, especially in terms of independence, resilience, and orientation towards success. Women leaders in education inspire the younger generation to develop a growth mindset and readiness to face challenges in the world of work and personal life. Changing mindsets towards success is greatly influenced by women's leaders who have demonstrated extraordinary power in inspiring social and cultural change.

Based on observations made on groups of women at various levels of leadership, it can be concluded that they not only bring change to the surrounding environment but also display a more open mindset and are oriented towards long-term success. In this context, women's leadership is not just about position or authority, but also about the ability to push oneself and others towards higher achievements. This observation shows how women in leadership positions have a more inclusive and collaborative view of achieving goals. This mindset transformation, which focuses on internal strength and social solidarity, is instrumental in creating sustainable success. The results of observations regarding changes in women's mindsets in leadership can be described in the following table:

**Tabel 2. The results of observations regarding changes in women's mindsets in leadership**

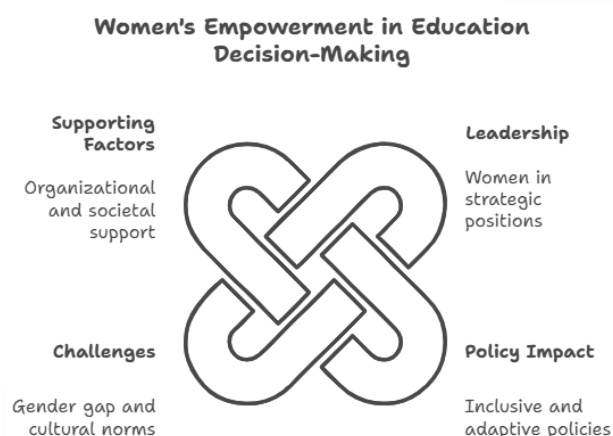
| Leadership Aspects | Supporting Factors                      | Challenge                              |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Positive Mindset   | Self-understanding, internal motivation | Social pressure, gender stereotypes    |
| Collaboration      | Community support, women's networks     | Lack of access to leadership training  |
| Focus on Success   | Long-term mentality shared goals        | Limitation of traditional social roles |

This table illustrates the main findings from observations that show how supporting factors and challenges play a role in shaping women's mindsets in the leadership context. The collaboration aspect, for example, shows how women support each other in their leadership networks, while challenges such as gender stereotypes and social restrictions remain obstacles that need to be overcome. Collaboration thrives with strong community support and women's networks, though limited access to leadership training can obstruct this collaboration. The focus on success, driven by a long-term mentality and shared goals, faces challenges from traditional social roles that restrict women's progress. Overall, the table highlights the dynamic interaction between internal factors and societal barriers, showcasing both the enabling and limiting forces that shape women's leadership journeys.

### **Strengthening the Role of Women in Strategic Decision Making in the Education Sector**

The findings show that women in leadership positions in educational institutions can bring different perspectives to the strategic decision-making process. This contributes to the creation of policies that are more responsive to the needs of women and the community as a whole and promotes gender equality in access to quality education.

Empowering women in making strategic decisions in the education sector is one of the keys to creating an education system that is more inclusive and adaptive to changing times. Based on the documentation carried out, the role of women in decision-making in the education sector has proven to be important in creating policies that are more sensitive to the needs of all parties, including groups that are often marginalized. Women involved in the education policy-making process demonstrate the ability to bring new perspectives that pay attention to gender equity, as well as the need for a more comprehensive education. However, there are still challenges that prevent women from occupying strategic positions in this sector, such as the gender gap in higher education and social perceptions of women's leadership abilities. This documentation aims to identify supporting factors and challenges faced by women in strengthening their role in educational decision-making.



**Figure 2. Strengthening the Role of Women in Strategic Decision Making in the Education Sector**

The image illustrates the interconnected factors that influence Women's Empowerment in Education Decision-Making. It shows how supporting factors, such as organizational and societal support, enable women to take on leadership roles in strategic positions. However, these opportunities are often challenged by the gender gap and cultural norms that limit women's participation in educational leadership. The image also highlights the importance of empowering women in shaping inclusive and adaptive educational policies, which can drive systemic change and promote gender equality. This framework underscores the mutual dependency of these elements, emphasizing that women's empowerment in education decision-making requires both supportive environments and overcoming societal barriers.

## Discussion

Based on the results of interviews conducted, it can be concluded that women's access to sustainable learning opportunities is influenced by various factors, including family support, technology, and social and cultural norms (Putri, 2024). These findings highlight the importance of comprehensive interventions to address the barriers women face in education. In addition, wider use of digital technology and increased digital literacy are key to opening up more learning opportunities for women (Herlina, 2024). With adequate support from various parties, both government and society, it is hoped that women can access sustainable education more easily and achieve success in various areas of life.

Interview results show that educational transformation for women depends not only on the availability of resources but also on how these resources are accessed and utilized effectively. Family and community support are key factors that can strengthen women's motivation to pursue continuing education. On the other hand, social and cultural barriers need to be addressed through an inclusive and community-based approach (Zubaidi, 2024). The use of digital technology provides great opportunities to bridge education gaps, but adequate awareness and training are needed to optimize its benefits. Therefore, the strategy implemented must be holistic, including economic empowerment, increasing digital literacy, as well as social changes that support gender equality in education (Abdullah & Java, 2024).

Concluding the observations, it is clear that the mindset of women in leadership has great potential to change the way we view success. Women's leadership does not only focus on measurable results but rather on processes and the ability to shape an environment that supports mutual growth and success (Arifin et al., 2024). However, factors such as social pressure and gender stereotypes often hinder this process. Therefore, changing mindsets towards success must include efforts to overcome these barriers, by strengthening support for women in leadership positions (Sain, 2025).

By building greater awareness of the leadership potential of women, we can drive more inclusive and sustainable positive change in society. Interpretation of the results of these observations reveals that changes in women's mindset toward success are strongly influenced by internal and external factors. While women in leadership demonstrate a mentality focused on long-term success and the ability to collaborate, external challenges such as gender stereotypes and social restrictions remain real obstacles (Munawwaroh, 2024). These observations suggest that to achieve more inclusive and sustainable success, deeper changes in existing social structures are needed.

This includes empowering women at all levels of leadership as well as creating a space that allows them to develop without pressure or restrictions holding them back (Putri, 2023). Concrete steps are needed to change society's mindset to facilitate women's success in various fields. Based on the documentation results, it is clear that empowering women in strategic decision-making in the education sector is very important to create more diverse and inclusive policies. Even though many women are actively involved in the decision-making process, there are still many challenges that must be faced. One of them is the gender gap that prevents women from accessing leadership positions in the education sector.

Apart from that, social and cultural norms that often limit women's roles are also significant obstacles (Heru & Bali, 2024). For this reason, women's empowerment needs to focus on increasing awareness of the importance of diversity in decision-making and ensuring that women have equal access to educational opportunities and strategic positions in this sector (Hasanah, 2024).

Interpretation of the results of this documentation reveals that empowering women in strategic decision-making in the education sector not only has a positive impact on the resulting policies but also opens up wider opportunities for women throughout the world to be involved in social development (Cozza, 2022). However, even though there are several supporting factors, the main challenge faced by women in achieving strategic positions is the gender gap which is still very pronounced in leadership positions (Tiwana et al., 2024). In addition, the influence of social and cultural norms that limit women's roles is also a factor that slows down this progress. Therefore, greater efforts are needed to break down these barriers, both through policy reform, women's leadership training, and cultural changes that better support gender equality in decision-making in the education sector.

## CONCLUSION

This research provides important insights into educational transformation that can open up lifelong opportunities and shape a successful mindset through women's leadership. One of the main lessons from this research is the important role of women in leading change in the field of education, which not only improves the quality of learning but also creates gender equality. The research results show that the involvement of women in educational leadership can encourage the emergence of a positive mindset among students, which has an impact on their academic and personal achievements. The main contribution of this research is to identify various factors that encourage and hinder women's empowerment in education, as well as provide a basis for further strategies to utilize women's leadership for long-term educational success.

Although this research provides valuable insights, there are several weaknesses worth noting. One of them is the limited scope of research which only focuses on one geographic area or one particular educational sector. In addition, this research focuses more on subjective perceptions and experiences, so the data obtained can be more limited. Recommendations for further research are to expand the geographic scope and type of education studied, as well as combine quantitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Further research could also dig deeper into the practical challenges women face in educational leadership positions and concrete strategies for overcoming these barriers.

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