

The Role of Women's Leadership In Islamic Elementary Schools: A Gender Perspective Study

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Abstract

This study examines the supporting and inhibiting factors of female leadership in Islamic elementary schools. This qualitative study collects data through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. The collected data was validated using triangulation and member checking, and then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The selection of women to occupy essential positions in schools is based on their competence and experience. Women are given equal rights to develop curriculum managerial potential and abilities. As a result, female teachers increasingly have the same abilities and competencies, even better than men. The nature of women who are gentler, patient, detailed, and thorough is allegedly one of the reasons why leaders now prefer female teachers to be leaders in schools. Even so, good women's leadership competencies still experience obstacles to achieving the school's vision, such as; 1) Limited input of quality female human resources, 2) The inability of female leaders to condition their emotions when faced with the natural nature of women (during menstruation, pregnancy, and their obligations as wives and mothers), 3) work piling up, and 4) differences in perceptions between teachers Woman. However, these inhibiting factors can sometimes be countered by factors that support women's leadership, such as; 1) a supportive work environment, 2) a history of education that is linear with work, 3) adequate facilities and infrastructure, and 4) school regulations that support the concept of gender equality. The findings of this study refute previous opinions which stated that Islam is a religion that prohibits women from becoming leaders, but instead, this study provides new evidence that Islam is a religion that upholds the concept of gender equality.

Keywords: *Women's Leadership, Islamic Elementary Schools, Gender Equality*

INTRODUCTION

The polemic about the conflict between women leaders in Islam has increasingly emerged after the ban on the involvement of women in education in Afghanistan (Najibi and Mc Lachlan, 2023). This condition is confirmed by the Taliban group which prohibits mixing gender in universities (Albrecht and Stitteneder, 2022). He also believes some of the subjects taught violate Islamic principles. Apart from that, some others are based on the sound of Al-

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Aquran (the holy book of Muslims) Surah An-Nisa' Verse 34 which states that men are leaders for women (Ghafournia, 2022). There are two interpretations, some interpret the commandment of the verse as containing motivation for men to be better than women, others interpret it that in Islam women are prohibited from leading men (Niaz and Soman, 2023). The debate about the meaning of this verse continues until it is used to damage the image of female leaders. Political parties that promote male leadership candidates continue to increase political electability by frying the issue of the prohibition to elect women as leaders in Islam (Shairgojri and Bhat, 2022). Interestingly, this kind of reality also occurs in educational institutions. Female teachers in several schools do not get the right to occupy the highest position. In Indonesia, for example, only about 30% of primary school principals are female, while in madrasah (Islamic-based schools) only around 13% (Setiyowati et al., 2022).

This condition creates a perception that it seems as if women are not worthy of being trusted as leaders. She has natural weaknesses such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding which have the potential to interfere with her concentration when she is a leader (Shairgojri and Bhat, 2022). These basic assumptions have become a trigger for social science researchers to conduct empirical studies such as Eagly and Karau (2002) which explored women's barriers to leadership. Another study was also carried out by Jacqui Poltera & Jenny Schreiner (2019), which looked at efforts to fight women against gender violence in Africa. In line with the analysis of Longman et al. (2018) which explores the study of women's leadership in the political sphere. So far, these studies have provided many benefits, but research that specifically examines women's leadership in Islamic-based schools is still rare. Even though this effort has at least two important reasons to be carried out. The first is to expand references to the development of women's leadership and leadership as a whole in madrasah ibtidaiyah. Second, to show that there are benefits when increasing diversity in different domains, such as gender diversity (Marianne, 2011). Quality, innovation and creativity can be enhanced by multicultural teamwork. Furthermore, the same thing applies to the growth of educational institutions (Agustian, 2019). Diversity within the management team also drives new product development. In addition, institutions with diverse leaders will achieve better performance and increased interest (Ali, 2017).

Likewise, Quality Management (QM) becomes important to develop higher quality institutions (Sulaeman, 2018). Including in institutions led by women, they are required to be able to seek to improve the quality of institutions, as well as evidence of demands for gender

equality (Choir, 2016). For this reason, this study aims to explore the experiences of women leaders in developing educational quality management in madrasah ibtidaiyah (Islamic-based elementary schools). This is important to prove that there are supporting and inhibiting factors for women's leadership. As a representative of Islamic elementary schools in Central Java, the researcher took two research settings, namely 1) at MI Sangubanyu as a leading school in Batang District and a female school principal, and 2) at MI Miftahul Akhlaqiyah Jlamprang as a madrasah with a female principal.

Thus, the novelty of this research can be seen from our efforts to analyze the experiences of women's leadership in quality management and gender equality in Islamic-based elementary schools. This effort is important to see how male Muslims react when led by women (Yakar, 2022). It is also important to see whether there is pressure faced by female leaders considering that some Muslims believe that a leader must be a man (Genon, 2022).

Qualitative research with this type of field research uses an exploratory approach. This choice is justified because it allows researchers to find meaning for phenomena adopted from research traditions and theories (Supinganto, 2021). The design of this research is a type of case study to study social units related to individuals, groups, institutions and society (Riyanto, 2001: 24). Data collection was carried out through a process of in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies (Dewey, 11986). Interviews were conducted with school principals, deputy curriculum heads, and student guardians at partner schools. The selection of this data source is based on the assumption of their involvement in school activities.

Table 1. Profile of informants from MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu

| No | Initial | Gender | Position | Teaching Time |
|----|---------|--------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | J | F | Headmaster | 15 Year |
| 2. | SD | F | Vice Principal for Curriculum | 5 Year |
| 3. | NJ | F | 4th grade teacher | 7 Year |
| 4. | SP | F | 5th grade teacher | 10 Year |

Table 2. Profile of informants from MI Salafiyah Candigugur

| No | Initial | Gender | Position | Teaching Time |
|----|---------|--------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | BA | F | Vice Principal for Curriculum | 3 Year |
| 2. | SA | F | Vice Principal for Student Affairs | 5 Year |

| | | | | |
|----|-----|---|-------------------|--------|
| 3. | NAU | F | 4th grade teacher | 8 Year |
| 4. | FA | F | 3th grade teacher | 5 Year |

Secondary data sources are in the form of books, articles, scientific journals, and newspapers that discuss issues relevant to this research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). Documentation studies are used to investigate documents that support the vision of women's leadership. Observations are made by visited the research location directly by observing the implementation of policies compiled by female teachers. The data collected was then analyzed using descriptive techniques through the three stages recommended by Miles and Huberman (2002), including: 1) data reduction, 2) data presentation, and 3) conclusion. The analysis is continued by testing the validity of the data based on Lincoln and Guba's theory on four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

This research was conducted at MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu and MI Salafiyah Candigugur to explore the roles and challenges faced by female leaders in Islamic educational institutions. MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu and MI Salafiyah Candigugur were chosen as research locations because both are schools that are active in implementing Islamic values, but with different socio-cultural backgrounds. Both schools provide opportunities for women to occupy leadership positions, which allows researchers to analyze how women as leaders play a role in managing Islamic schools, as well as how the social and cultural environment around the school influences the acceptance and support of female leadership. From a gender perspective, this research is important to understand whether there are differences or specific obstacles faced by female leaders compared to men in similar positions. In addition, this study aims to see how female leadership contributes to the formation of an inclusive school culture that is responsive to the needs of students and the community, so that it can provide deeper insights into effective leadership practices in Islamic educational environments.

DISCUSSION

Profile of female informants in holding educational leadership at MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu

From the results of interviews conducted with teacher informants and education

staff at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Sangubanyu, this study shows that the leadership experience experienced by female teachers at the basic education level is divided into three levels, 1) career and educational history, 2) situations experienced in work, 3) factors that support and hinder the leadership that he experienced. It is a fact that the majority of educational leadership positions in MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu are still held by men. Of the 12 leadership positions, eight were filled by men and four of them were women. However, in the past five years, women's potential to lead has begun to be taken into account, including four female informants from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Sangubanyu who served as school principals, representatives to school curriculum matters, and homeroom teachers. The principal is the most senior leader at the Sangubanyu Elementary School with a working period of 15 years. She is the only one of the madrasa principals with a female gender in Bawang District who has teaching experience of more than 13 years. While the representatives for the curriculum field are junior teachers who have only worked for 5 years. Subsequent informants were given trust as homeroom teachers, each in grade 5 for teachers with 10 years of service, and in grade 4 for teachers with 7 years of service.

Experience of Women's Leadership at MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu

The principal of a female school is a historical first for MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu. This statement is justified because so far before J's leadership period, it had never been found that a woman was given the responsibility to have power as the reins of the highest policy holder. As revealed by SP, a fellow teacher who has been teaching there for 10 years, "This is history for us, the big family of MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu. From ancient times until now there has never been a female madrasah headmaster, only this brother J. Usually the principal must be a man, but due to perceptions that are quite different from foundations lately, now the leadership of school principals is no longer based on gender, but on one's ability and experience in understanding conditions and situations in schools. For example, brother J, he is a senior teacher who has been teaching for 15 years. You must have a lot of experience so you are very worthy to become a madrasa headmaster" (F/09-05-2023).

To understand the historical shift in leadership roles from men to women, it is important to look at how institutions such as Ma'arif in Bawang district have embraced gender equality. Traditionally, leadership roles, especially in education, have been largely

held by men. However, this is beginning to change as social perceptions around gender evolve and the need for more inclusive and diverse leadership becomes apparent. At Ma'arif, for example, significant strides have been made in appointing women to key leadership roles. The principal, J, highlighted the institution's progressive stance by entrusting women with responsibilities critical to the quality of education, including positions such as principal, vice principals in various areas, and homeroom teachers coordinating their subclasses. This inclusion not only reflects a commitment to gender equality but also symbolizes a broader historical shift in leadership dynamics, where women's contributions to educational decision-making and management are increasingly valued and recognized.. As expressed by J:

"The management of Madrasah Ibtidayah Islamiyah Sangubanyu is very much in line with the concept of gender equality. Its strengthening is increasingly driven by the spirit of ma'arif institutions to give important positions of school leadership under its auspices to women. This concept is not only understood as a theory, it is actually implemented, like I was entrusted to be a school principal. Even though this is actually a challenge, this condition gives me the enthusiasm to equalize. Not only limited to school principals, women's representation is also given to important academic positions such as vice principals in curriculum matters and several homeroom teachers who help me to succeed in the madrasa's vision and mission." (J/ 19-05-2023).

The spirit of gender equality at MI Sangubanyu is strengthened by various policies that do not discriminate between male and female teachers. This can be seen from several aspects such as fulfilling equal rights between women and men, involving women in policy making, giving equal salaries to women and men, providing equal career path opportunities. Even to the protection of women from harassment in the workplace.

"Obviously yes, this school highly upholds the concept of gender equality. A lot of clear evidence is given. We provide equal rights for women and men by involving women in policy making. Equally important, teachers here also have the appropriate salary with their duties and responsibilities in teaching, the salary does not depend on gender. Just like men, we provide women here the opportunity to develop career paths, either continuing their studies at a higher level or something else. Even to the protection of women from harassment, especially in the school environment. We also provide equal opportunities for women in the community, if there are those who fit the criteria to join (teach) at this school, we obviously welcome them as long as their educational qualifications meet "(J/ 19-05-2023).

The school principal said that selecting more female teachers would open up many alternatives to place them in important positions in schools. In line with SD's statement which states that the more female leaders the better:

“In my view, female leaders are better able to see and describe more colors. He wasn’t just an errand boy, directing to do this and that like most men. In contrast to female leaders who tend to be cooperative, they are more able to share the work fairly, they can even work together with each other.” (SD/ 20-05-2023).

Not contradictory, the NJ informant argued, women are more detailed than men, he explained that women's details are the forerunner of being patient and conscientious. On this basis, the NJ informant thought that the more involvement of women would bring better benefits to the institution. However, according to him, the pressure point should not lie on men or women, but those who are able to become dignified figures. Added to this is the fact that even though MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu is led by a female school principal, the fact is that the ideas conveyed by men in determining policies are sometimes more dominant to be accepted than by women. As stated by NJ.

“Compared to men, women are clearly more conscientious, on average women have more patience when faced with a problem. These characteristics will encourage women to be more detailed in completing work. I believe that more involvement of women's leadership will have a better impact on the development of schools. However, the emphasis should not be on gender issues. For me, an ideal leader is one who is able to become a dignified figure. Added to this is the fact, even though we are led by female school principals, the fact is that the ideas conveyed by men in determining policies are sometimes more dominant to be accepted.” (NJ/ 19-05-2023).

Even though men's ideas are sometimes more acceptable in policy making, the selection of female school principals is not a decision taken without reason. The competence possessed by women is certainly a basic consideration for why she is chosen as a leader. Like J who is a leader in a boarding school. J is believed to have high loyalty. Another consideration, J's dedication to education is quite high, coupled with his age and working period which is classified as mature. As disclosed by SP.

“Effective school principals have the ability to communicate well, how to motivate all team members, handle and delegate responsibility, listen to feedback, and have the flexibility to solve problems in an ever-changing workplace. I think this is the trait that J gets from various life experiences, including perhaps his experience as a leader in a pesantren” (SP/ 20-05-2023).

The research data above concludes that women's leadership at MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu has been given space to demonstrate their competence and ability to lead. This decision was made on the basis of his ability to possess leadership qualities such as

integrity, knowledge, courage, initiative, wisdom, fairness, trustworthiness, and selflessness. Leaders with this kind of criteria are certainly reflected in the level of education, ability, dedication, and loyalty to the responsibilities given to them. From this, women leaders who are chosen according to their fields are an important effort to support curriculum development and its implementation in schools.

Supporting Factors for Women's Leadership in MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu

The results of this research show that there are three factors that gain women's leadership succession. This factor is influenced by variables 1) the conduciveness of female co-workers that support the vision and mission of the work, 2) infrastructure in schools and, 3) educational background that women have had before entering the workforce. In the view of informant J, co-workers such as superiors, staff, class teachers and others can help provide motivation and support such as suggestions for problems encountered, giving praise to colleagues who have succeeded in achieving an achievement, providing each other with information that is owned both inside information or outside of school. He also added that colleagues often provide directions, even examples of problem solving from the cases at hand.

According to informant J, facts like this can motivate women's leadership when it is down. As stated by informant J:

We certainly understand, all women need a friend to confide in, especially when conditions are down. Now in this section, colleagues who want to listen to our complaints are needed. Yes, of course co-workers such as superiors, staff, class teachers play a very important role in providing motivation when there are problems, even giving praise to fellow colleagues who have succeeded in achieving an achievement, providing information to each other whether information from inside or outside the school. The main thing is that there are a lot of female co-workers who play an important role in maintaining the quality of this school." (J/09-09-2020).

In line with informant J, SD seems to agree that colleagues have an important role in supporting women's leadership. In addition, informant J is of the opinion that women's leadership will be maximized if it is supported by adequate infrastructure.

“Even though there are many men here, my thoughts and ideas to improve this school are widely heard. Yes, it's also a fact when I hear a lot of ideas from male educators. It's just that men here are not selfish, instead they think that women are more diligent, tenacious, and disciplined in leading. But it's not enough to get here, we must have adequate

infrastructure so that the ideas voiced by women here can be realized. Schools that have adequate facilities and infrastructure will be able to improve the quality of school education. This happens because adequate facilities and infrastructure will support learning activities to obtain the desired results. Of course, good cooperation is needed to make it all happen. "(SD/19-05-2023).

Slightly different from the opinion of J and SD, NJ stated that the quality of women's leadership was greatly influenced by their educational background. He revealed that a teacher with a bachelor's degree in education would be easier to adapt to the educational needs of the school, while a teacher with a non-educational bachelor's qualification would experience many difficulties when carrying out policies that had been mutually agreed upon. Informant NJ explains:

"Yes, colleagues and educational facilities are indeed important in supporting the succession of educational achievements at MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu. However, it cannot be denied that educational background plays the most important role in achieving educational succession. The average teacher who only graduated from high school or equivalent, or who has a non-education degree, will find it very difficult to adapt. For example, when asked to prepare a Learning Implementation Plan, make HOTS-based questions, or simply do an assessment of learning evaluation in class. They are very busy running it all. It's very possible because in college, you don't get educational support courses such as Learning Implementation Plan Documents, Micro Teaching, Learning Evaluation and others. "(NJ/19-05-2023).

The results of interviews with the four informants concluded that educational background has a significant influence on women's success in leading or carrying out instructions from leaders. Their presence will be more established if they are in a good environment with colleagues who support the comfort of the entire MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu family in carrying out their respective duties and obligations. These three factors are a unified whole and intersect each other. If one of the factors is not fulfilled properly, the possibility of achieving the institution's vision is relatively small to achieve success.

Factors Inhibiting Women's Leadership in MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu

Behind the supporting factors that can make women's leadership successful, the informants did not deny that there are several factors that can hinder the success of women's leadership. Among several factors mentioned by informants, there are three things that have the most influence; 1) lack of female human resources both in quality

and quantity, 2) uncontrollable female nature, and 3) overlapping work. Informant J explained that although the number of female teachers accepted by MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu was large, he felt that there were still not enough of them to match the number of male teachers in schools.

“The total number of female teachers is now 4, but they are still less when compared to male teachers. This clearly has an impact on the success and courage of female teachers in conveying ideas. There should be more. Indeed, several times many women wanted to register as teachers here, but because their educational qualifications were not up to par, we had to turn them down. Of course this effort is important to maintain school quality, moreover it is very much related to the value of accreditation”

Factors such as excessive workload or emotional difficulties often pose greater obstacles to women's leadership compared to men's, due to the compounded impact of biological, emotional, and societal expectations. Informant NJ highlighted that women's resilience can be particularly challenged by physiological factors such as menstruation. During this period, women experience not only physical discomfort, like cramps or abdominal pain, but also emotional fluctuations caused by premenstrual syndrome (PMS), which typically manifests one to two weeks before menstruation. These hormonal shifts can heighten sensitivity and affect mood stability, potentially impacting decision-making or leadership performance. Beyond biological factors, NJ also pointed to societal and familial responsibilities as significant challenges for women leaders. Women often juggle professional obligations alongside traditional roles as wives and mothers, where family demands can interfere with emotional stability and focus. Balancing these dual responsibilities can limit women's availability for leadership roles, as the mental load required to manage both spheres may detract from their ability to think strategically or lead effectively. This complex interplay of physical, emotional, and societal expectations underscores why women may face greater challenges in leadership compared to men, who are often less burdened by similar familial or societal expectations. Thus, addressing these barriers requires an understanding of the unique pressures faced by women and creating supportive environments that mitigate such constraints to foster equitable leadership opportunities. The NJ informant revealed,

“This is a problem that may be faced by all women. He faced pomegranate when faced with work and family responsibilities. At school we have to be professional in taking care of our work as educators. But it is undeniable, problems at home, be it fights with

husbands, or children who are not cared for, sometimes burden us to be able to focus on carrying out our duties at school. But how about it, on the one hand serving her husband and taking care of children is a woman's obligation, but the responsibility of taking care of the school is a decision that is not negotiable. Not to mention that during menstruation, we not only feel physical symptoms, such as pain or cramps in the stomach, but also emotional symptoms. This makes us more sensitive and perceive bad mood swings. Maybe this is the impact of premenstrual syndrome (PMS), which generally occurs about one to two weeks before I have my period."

Slightly different, the SP informant explained, the female character that sometimes appears is a feeling of insecurity and fear of competing with men. She revealed that women often feel that they have many shortcomings if they are willing to accept offers to occupy certain leadership positions. He felt no more worthy than men to lead. Even though a detection has been carried out regarding which female teachers are eligible/have the competence to occupy certain positions, she admits that she refuses to have male teachers who are more competent. Even though she received support from her family and husband, the SP informant thought that the nature of a woman is to be a makmum for men, if she violates this nature it will bring badness to things that have never been thought of before. The following is a statement made by SP,

"It has already been mentioned in the Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Nisa' Verse 34, it is clear there that "men are leaders for women." madharat for the organization. I personally think that if a woman has a weak character, she feels that she has many shortcomings. Of course it is a consideration to accept an offer to occupy a certain leadership position. Of course women are less worthy than men to lead. My personal assumption is that, even though a detection has been carried out regarding which female teachers have the competence to occupy certain positions, I will reject it if there are more competent males" (SP/21-05-2023).

Informants NJ participated in sharing their experiences. As if agreeing with SP's opinion, the NJ informant explained his own lack of will to lead a group. He stressed that in his view, men are more professional because they have broader insights. Instead, he admits that the position he currently has was because he was forced by the school principal. For all considerations, he then agreed to the task of the principal to become the homeroom teacher for grade 4. He considered that this position should belong to a man because men have assertive, professional leadership characteristics and better cognitive abilities. Informant NJ Explains.

"I can't run fast at work, especially since I'm a woman who sometimes can't do anything on my own. But yes, at that time I was able to because the principal really expected me

to become homeroom teacher. This position should be given to men because men have strong leadership characteristics. assertive, professional, and better cognitive abilities. I am actually less interested in this position because I have to complete many tasks. Meanwhile, I also have demands to serve my husband and children. (NJ/ 21-05-2023).

In addition to the above, the last factor that also hinders the success of women in leadership is work that piles up. Piled up tasks can stress women out. When tasks pile up, women will feel burdened and stressed. This can cause anxiety, high blood pressure, headaches, and other health problems. Stress can also affect the quality of a person's sleep, which in turn can exacerbate pre-existing problems. Piled up tasks make women not focus on the task at hand. This can lead to errors and weaknesses in their performance. Moreover, if tasks have to be completed within a tight time frame, women will feel rushed and take shortcuts, which can affect the quality of their work. As explained by SP:

"Obviously, mas, piling up tasks makes girls stressed. If the work piles up, it can cause anxiety, high blood pressure, headaches, and other health problems. Stress can also affect the quality of a person's sleep, which in turn can exacerbate pre-existing problems. Piled up tasks make women not focus on the task at hand. This can lead to errors and weaknesses in their performance. What's more, if the task has to be completed in a tight time, I swear, it'll be a headache!" (SP/ 21-05-2023).

The informant SD confirmed that the stress that female teachers feel due to piling up assignments can affect one's relationship with other people. When women are too busy with tasks, they may not have time for family and friends. This can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation, and can eventually damage their relationship. Informant SD said that piling up tasks can have a significant negative impact on women's mental and physical health. Therefore, it is very important for women to manage tasks well so as not to accumulate too much

Profile of Female Informants in Holding Educational Leadership at MI Salafiyah Candigugur

From the results of interviews conducted with teacher informants and education staff at MI Salafiyah Candigugur, this research shows that the leadership experiences experienced by female teachers at the primary education level tend to be easier to gain trust to occupy important positions, they don't even need a long time. Women involved

in leadership activities have sufficient access to carry out activities, providing benefits through social control over the implementation of academic procedures that are equal to men. However, the leadership role of women in MI Salafiyah Candigugur remains under the control of men. This is reasonable, because even though there are many women who occupy important positions, in fact the principal who acts as the owner of the highest authority is still held by men. Women are given positions in the areas of vice principal in the field of curriculum (3 years of service), vice principal of student affairs (5 years of service), homeroom teacher of class 4 (8 years of service), homeroom of class 3 (5 years of service).

It is a fact that the majority of the leadership positions in MI Salafiyah Candigugur are still held by men. Of the 10 leadership positions, six were filled by men and four of them were women. However, since the past three years, women's potential to lead has begun to be taken into account, including four female informants from MI Salafiyah Candigugur who served as vice principals in various fields, or homeroom teachers. What's unique is that this school doesn't seem to really consider tenure as a reason for giving the position of teacher at school. To serve as vice principal for curriculum, BA only needs 3 years of work, while SA only takes 5 years to hold the position of vice principal for student affairs. It is not a long time for someone to get an important position in school.

Women's Leadership Experience at MI Salafiyah Candigugur

The highest achievement of women's leadership at MI Salafiyah Candigugur has held the highest position as school principal in the previous two periods. However, for the next two periods, until now the position of school principal is still entrusted to men. The current positions filled by women are in the areas of vice principal for curriculum, vice principal for student affairs, homeroom teacher for grade 4, and homeroom teacher for class 3. The BA informant explained that there were several important positions filled by women indicating that the MI Salafiyah Candigugur school was evidence that this school has paid attention to, even implemented the concept of gender equality. In his narration, BA stated that women were chosen because they have a patient and tenacious character. BA said,

“Actually, the two previous periods of MI Salafiyah Candigugur were led by women. However, from the next period until now, it just so happens that the head of the school has always been a man. There are several positions currently filled by women, such as vice principal for curriculum, vice principal for student affairs, homeroom teacher for grade 4, and homeroom teacher for grade 3. These facts confirm that the MI Salafiyah Candigugur school has implemented the concept of gender equality. We believe that women are chosen because they have a patient and tenacious character.” (BA/22-05-2023).

In a different narrative, NAU provides an explanation that women have had many

roles in developing education quality management at MI Islamiyah Sangubanyu:

“In this school, women are given access to self-development. If there are any activities, such as graduation for class VI students, halal bi halal, and commemoration of other Islamic holidays. In that series of activities, women always dominate in every committee structure. Women also have critical thinking about school policies, they contribute ideas for a better quality of education. The female teachers here are very energetic” (NAU/22-05-2023).

Slightly different, FA provides an emphasis that the placement of women's leadership responsibilities depends on the competencies possessed by students:

“I believe that the school leadership has made important considerations in deciding the management of certain positions, including the competence and capabilities of teachers. I believe that the concept of gender equality does not mean forcing leaders to choose women as representatives for certain positions, but rather on their abilities and potential” (FA/23-05-2023).

SA said that he was chosen as the vice principal for student affairs because he has the ability to manage student activities in supporting quality improvement. Undeniably, the reason that when he was at school he had been the student council president, followed by various extra activities he had participated in while in college was also taken into consideration by the school principal to place him as deputy head of student affairs.

“The principal stated several reasons why I was appointed vice principal for student affairs. I am considered capable and have competence in student quality management. Some of the duties of the student vice president such as carrying out guidance, directing, controlling student or OSIS activities in the context of enforcing school discipline and order and selecting administrators, fostering OSIS administrators in organizations, compiling programs and schedules for regular and incidental student development are experiences I have experienced before . I used to serve as student council president and liked to organize in college. That experience really helped me in carrying out this task as well as possible (SA/23-05-2023).

The SA and FA statements show that the choice of a woman to occupy a certain position is justified because she has the ability to carry out the responsibilities given to her. This decision is not discriminatory because it provides an opportunity for anyone to occupy a certain position. This means that every woman is given space to develop herself so that she can be said to be worthy and meet the criteria to occupy the position she wants at school.

“Women's leadership here receives equal and fair treatment where leadership can be occupied by men or women. Women are chosen to occupy certain positions because they have the ability to carry out the responsibilities given to them. This decision is not discriminatory because it provides opportunities for anyone to occupy a certain position. This means that every woman is given space to develop herself so that she can be said to be worthy and meet the criteria to

occupy the position she wants "(BA/19-05-2023).

For the majority of education staff at MI Salafiyah Candigugur, teachers do not mind being led by women or men. The most important thing for them is responsibility, having good performance and being competent in their field. In line with the statement that NAU is ready to be led by anyone. Despite the fact, female leaders are usually more talkative and often remind if a task is not carried out on time.

"I've never had a problem, if you want to be led by a man, you're welcome, there's nothing wrong with women. The important thing is that they are responsible, have good performance and are competent in their field. Moreover, female leaders are usually more talkative and often remind if a task is not carried out on time. But that's actually good, can encourage his subordinates to be disciplined, afraid of being fussed over." (NAU/28-05-2023).

Apart from being fussy, BA revealed that women have a distinctive character that is more professional. Women are generally more gentle than men. This character makes it easier for him to remind his subordinates if there are mistakes, so they are easier to accept.

"Professionalism and expertise in formulating policies are the basis for us to support a leader. Women are usually better able to calm others because they have patience and trained motherhood, whereas men do not have this trait, because he is used to being a father, not a mother" (BA/26-05-2023).

Seemingly supportive, the FA informant believes that women's leadership is more energetic and loyal in carrying out the responsibilities given to them. These results illustrate that the basis of women's leadership at MI Salafiyah Candigugur is divided into four dichotomies including consideration of experience, length of service, performance, and managerial competence. On the other hand, this research also shows that even though leadership is still dominated by men, women in this school can still develop their potential. Even their achievements are one of the reasons why women are placed in important managerial positions.

Factors Supporting Women's Leadership in MI Salafiyah Candigugur

This research shows that the factors that support women's leadership in MI Salafiyah Candigugur are divided into two things; 1) Regulations that support women to develop careers, 2) a supportive environment. BA explained that all teachers have the same opportunity to continue their further studies, even get financial assistance if they want to carry out Masters studies. They are given equal opportunities to participate in workshop activities, subject matter teacher deliberations (MGMP), and other trainings that support teacher competency.

"There are many things that influence the success of women's leadership, one of which is policies that are supportive and non-discriminatory. all teachers have the same opportunity to continue their further studies, even get financial assistance if they want to carry out Masters studies. They are given equal opportunities to participate in workshop activities, subject matter teacher deliberations (MGMP), and other trainings that support teacher competence in teaching "(BA/26-05-2023).

FAU emphasized that educational policy at MI Salafiyah Candigugur has a very important role in improving the quality of education and forming intelligent and competitive Indonesian people. In response to this, the principal strongly recommends teachers to improve the four competency standards, namely personality, social, pedagogic and professional. The FAU informant revealed

"Teachers have a very important and primary role in improving the quality of education and forming intelligent and competitive Indonesian people. In Permendiknas No. 16 of 2007 concerning Academic Qualification Standards and Teacher Competency, states that a teacher (educator) is categorized as competent if he has 4 (four) competency standards, namely personality, social, pedagogic and professional. Competence is knowledge, skills, and basic values that are reflected in the habits of thinking and acting. The habit of thinking and acting consistently and continuously can enable a person to become competent, in the sense of having basic knowledge, skills and values to do something. By having adequate competence, teachers can carry out their duties properly. You can imagine how the world of education would be if teachers were not given the opportunity to develop the competencies they have." (FAU/28-05-2020).

In BA's view, self-development activities for teachers must prioritize the need to achieve standards and increase professional competence, especially those related to the implementation of learning services. These needs include competence to investigate and understand the context in which teachers teach, mastery of material and curriculum, mastery of learning methods, competence to evaluate students and learning, mastery of information and communication technology (ICT), or other relevant competencies.

The second support is the condition of the work environment that provides comfort for women to carry out their duties. This element is influenced by the place where a person works, the method of work, and work arrangements both as individuals and as a group. Working environment conditions are said to be good or appropriate if humans can carry out activities optimally, healthy, safe and comfortable. The suitability of the work environment can be seen as a result in the long term. Unfavorable work environments can demand more labor and time and do not support an efficient work system design. As disclosed by an FA informant,

"The work environment for the teacher can influence their ability to carry out assigned tasks.

This element is formed from a person's attitude to work, work methods, and work arrangements both as individuals and other teachers. The condition of the work environment is said to be good or appropriate if the teacher can carry out activities optimally, healthy, safe and comfortable. The suitability of the work environment can be seen as a result in the long term. Furthermore, work environments that are not good can demand more labor and time and do not support obtaining a work system design (FA/27-05-2023).

The work environment is one of the factors that influence the performance of a teacher. An employee who works in a work environment that supports him to work optimally will produce good performance, conversely if an employee works in a work environment that is inadequate and does not support optimal work it will make the employee concerned become lazy, get tired quickly so that the performance the employee will be low.

Factors hindering women's leadership in MI Salafiyah Candigugur

The results of this study indicate that the obstacle faced by female leaders at MI Salafiyah Candigugur is the stagnant quality of management due to different perceptions of each teacher. However, the teacher still needs other people's views as a reference in creating his personal views in the form of suggestions, criticisms, arguments, and others. Because as you know, humans must have their own point of view and different from others. But what's painful is that sometimes some teachers can't control their emotions if something is different from them, which eventually results in competition and feelings to bring one down over the other. As stated by BA,

"In my opinion, the most inhibiting factor is usually related to differences in perceptions and views regarding how to achieve the school's vision. Each teacher has his own views in achieving the vision of the madrasa. But that does not mean that humans are able to live alone just by relying on that personal view. However, the teacher still needs the views of others as a reference in creating his personal views. Such as suggestions, criticisms, arguments, and others. Within the scope of the organization in schools, this difference in views is a natural thing. It would be strange if there were no differences within an organization. Because as we know, humans must have their own point of view and different from the point of view of other humans. But what's painful is that sometimes some teachers can't control their emotions if something is different from them, which eventually results in competition and feelings to bring one down over the other. This clearly threatens the future of the organization." (BA/23-05-2023).

The FA informant stated something that was continuous with BA's expression. According to him, BA has good managerial skills. He can condition if a situation of conflicting ideas is encountered between teachers.

"BA is a great leader, whenever there are differences of opinion, he always provides a forum for negotiations. With this forum for conveying various opinions, it is hoped that new opinions will be generated which can be much better than personal opinions. My personal experience regarding differences of opinion What builds an organization is when I served as vice chairman of the

intra-school student organization within the senior high school. Every time there is a forum that discusses a goal, each member must have their own opinion. It is possible that there will be heated debates in the process of negotiating opinions. However, every time this forum ends, we always get new views that are broader than each other's personal views. Of course, with this we can be sure of a constructive effect in an organization. It is from this process that makes me believe that any differences of opinion in a organization, can build the elements of the organization to be better in terms of adding insight, and in terms of communication between members. (FA/23-05-2023).

In line with the above, FAU informants learned that differences in views within an organization are not a bad thing. This way can build an organization. With these differences, we can get new views that are broader and more comprehensive than personal opinions. The FAU informant explained:

"From this we should be able to understand that different views within an organization are not a bad thing. Rather it is a very constructive thing for the organization, and its members as its main elements. With these differences, we can get new views that are broader and more comprehensive than personal opinions. Of course with this, we get new insights and views that will help us and the organization to be even better in everything that will be implemented in the future. Differences make us think that we need different points of view to find a better solution." (FAU/31-06-2022).

The data above provides an explanation that the factors that impede the success of women's leadership are differences in perceptions between teacher members in achieving the school's vision. What hurts is that sometimes some teachers cannot control their emotions if something is different from them, which ultimately results in competition and feelings of bringing one down and the other down. way to fix the problem.

This research shows that the placement of women in several important positions in madrasah ibtidaiyah provides an important signal of the implementation of the concept of gender equality. He is given equal rights to develop the potential and managerial capabilities of the curriculum. As a result, female teachers increasingly have the same abilities and competencies, even better than men. This reason is an important part for leaders to choose women as leaders in schools, both in the position of headmaster, vice principal in various fields, or homeroom teacher. The nature of women who are more gentle, patient, detailed, and conscientious is allegedly one of the reasons why leaders now prefer female teachers to be leaders in schools. However, good women's leadership competencies sometimes experience obstacles to achieving the school's vision such as; 1) Limited input of quality female human resources, 2) The inability of female leaders to condition their emotions when faced with the natural nature of women (menstruation,

pregnancy, and their obligations as wives and mothers), 3) work piling up, and 4) differences in perceptions between teachers Woman. However, these inhibiting factors can sometimes be countered by supporting factors such as; 1) a supportive work environment, 2) a history of education that is linear with work, 3) adequate facilities and infrastructure, 4) school regulations that support the concept of gender equality.

The data above reflects the recognition of the role of women in influencing their opportunities to improve education, profession, and access to educational infrastructure (De Nmark, F. L., 1993). This concept is synonymous with the spirit of gender equality which can be achieved through three things (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995), namely the right to education, the right to the educational process in an environment that supports gender equality, and the right to educational outcomes that support equitable achievement (Mehra , 1997). The choice of women as leaders in madrasah institutions shows that the educational profession in Indonesia no longer views gender stereotypes and biases. Women are chosen to be leaders on the basis of their competency, not on the minimum quota for the number of women leaders that must exist (Latu, 2013). This shows how women are given equal rights and equal access to men (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2010). The higher the competence that women have, the higher their chances of occupying important positions in school (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2010). That is, women have a greater opportunity to occupy high positions in school, if they have better competence than men (Alban-Metcalfe and Alimo-Metcalfe, 2000).

If one observes the results of this research, it can be said that the opportunities for women to hold important positions in schools are certainly higher than for men. Women have a softer nature (Lestari, 2018), they are more patient in dealing with problems (Nisrina, 2018). Cold attitude like this will make other people comfortable (Affiah, 2007), including being the reason why leaders now prefer female teachers to be leaders in schools (Novianti, 2008). Women are considered not easy to act rashly without thinking. People who have a patient and calm personality are not easy to act rashly and without thinking (Novinti, 2008). Women's patience can make other people know better what kind of action to take next (Fatimah, 2015). This attitude sometimes reverses with men who are braver because facing chaos is not only about courage (Hamka, 2016), even leaders must be patient and calm so that everything can be controlled properly (Gipson et al, 2017). People who have high patience and calm are at least more sensitive to the

situations and conditions around them (Yanggo, 2018). Not only being silent and not acting, but also controlling the existing situation for the common good (Eagly, Johso, 1990).

This research has similarities with the study of Snaebjornsson, I.M., & Edvardsson, I.R. He revealed that under certain conditions female leadership is easier to manage their subordinates because women are more able to approach them with heart (Snaebjornsson and Edvardsson, 2013). This closeness creates a psychological atmosphere that makes his subordinates more able to appreciate what is ordered by women (Zalafi, 2016). Both men and women have the soft skills that are important for leadership, such as empathy, good communication, and the ability to deal with challenges. However, men tend to show limited empathy, are less sensitive to the feelings of others, and show signs such as a lack of remorse or guilt (Joel & Fausto-Sterling 2016; Heriyanto, 2023). These traits are then associated with a lack of developed conscience and empathy (Waiter et al, 2014). This study also revealed that the male brain has a larger anterior insula volume in the part that causes behavior that is less sensitive to feelings and emotions (Lai et al, 2014). Rather reversed, the data from this study are contrary to previous studies which explain that women are more emotional (Nurhayati, 2017). Rahmati explained that women are more emotional because they have the burden of thoughts from their responsibilities towards work and family (Rahmawati and Wulandari, 2019). This causes women to get less rest so that they experience physical fatigue which impacts work environment instability (Aswitami, 2018).

Even though the opportunities for achieving gender equality are enormous in schools, women are often subjected to sexual harassment both physically and mentally in the work environment (Kahu and Morgan, 2007). Acts of harassment are also prone to occur between superiors and lower level employees, so that victims feel increasingly powerless and too afraid to report it (Indainanto, 2020). If the school environment is neglectful of cases of harassment of women, this is a big address for disasters in the educational environment. For both women and men, they want to be able to work safely and comfortably without experiencing this action (Khoiroh, 2021). For this reason, in the future government policies must support the concept of gender equality in the world of work. This is important to support the empowerment of women's potentials (Tolley, 2011). The government provides security guarantees for women so that they have the

courage to voice and realize justice for women (Fahimah & Mukhibat, 2023). Same with Madrasah Ibtidaiyah which has supported the empowerment of women to become leaders in managing their education, thus providing convenience for increasing passive income in order to realize freedom of speech (Dollar et al, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This research shows that in fact the spirit of gender equality has been implemented in Islamic-based elementary schools. The findings which show that many women occupy important leadership positions in schools clearly refute the previous opinion that Islam is a religion that prohibits women from becoming leaders in various sectors, whether political leaders, religious leaders or leaders in the education sector. This research shows that women are given equal rights to develop their potential and managerial competence in the curriculum. Selection of women as leaders is based on competence and work experience. Only women who have high capability are trusted as leaders. However, good women's leadership competencies sometimes experience obstacles to achieving the school's vision such as; 1) Limited input of quality female human resources, 2) The inability of female leaders to condition their emotions when faced with the natural nature of women (menstruation, pregnancy, and their obligations as wives and mothers), 3) work piling up, and 4) differences in perceptions between teachers Woman. However, these inhibiting factors can sometimes be countered by supporting factors such as; 1) a supportive work environment, 2) a history of education that is linear with work, 3) adequate facilities and infrastructure, 4) school regulations that support the concept of gender equality.

This study has limitations on aspects of data and data analysis. The data only includes 2 schools in the same area. Data limitations have an impact on the limitations of the applied analytical techniques. Furthermore, the limitations of these two aspects lead to a less comprehensive generalization formulation. For this reason, further research is needed which involves more informants, participants and respondents from various schools and from various regions using a grounded research approach, so that sufficient data can be produced to serve as the basis for formulating generalizations that are more comprehensive and close to actual conditions occurring in the field. . In line with that, the results of the follow-up research can be used as a reference for the authorities in formulating policies in the education sector in formulating gender equality policies that do not harm both men and women.

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