

# A Study on the Life-Story and Mindsets of Successful Women Leaders in Educational Settings

Nisa Novia Avien Christy<sup>1\*</sup> Ming-Chang Wu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Department of Technological and Vocational Education, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan*

\*Corresponding author. Email: [nisachristy971@gmail.com](mailto:nisachristy971@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aims to identify the main factors facilitating career success in women who have successfully created change especially in educational settings. Using semi-structured open-ended interviews, we studied five women leaders came from universities and polytechnics in Indonesia. The researchers exhausted three days with each contestant in their surroundings and used semi-structured, flexible interviews that lasted three to five hours. The researchers found eight overall conclusions about the data. (a) family, partner, and kids, affected each female's option powerful value; (c) each contestant has at least one adviser or link connection; (d) Well communicate with team members; (e) having assist from around is highly essential to serving in their roles ; (f) Support members with high motivation and contribution and allow members with various ideas; (g) Formulate the plans pursuing the team goals previous to the discussions with members (i) their past events have had a huge influence on their success.

**Keywords:** *Women's Leadership, Career Success, Education*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Men are stronger than women physically. In the past, women were created as weak, powerless, and poorly educated [1]. This can be one of the factors in choosing a man to be a leader in a group. Women are considered unable to become leaders because of their nature as wives and mothers, while men as fathers are, in fact, leaders in the family. The previous studies revealed that female and male are related to different characteristics, and that male trait is more associated with leadership standard [2]. Dissimilar perceptions about gender roles and aspirations were much in the backside. Male, for instance, felt like the best political leaders [3]. Gender stereotypes judge female as 'sympathetic', 'connection-oriented', 'unpersuasive', and 'not achievement-oriented'. Consequently, female felt as 'inadequate' in men typed tasks, which affected their achievement expectation [4] Female skills are reviewed more appropriate for 'under-level' [5].

But now, women's lives are increasingly changing. Gender equality brings changes to women's lives. Women now have the same opportunities and opportunities, for example, to obtain an education, participate in the public sector, organize, and others. Women show that they can succeed and progress like

men; some of them can become leaders because they have quality abilities and expertise in their fields. The role of women as leaders is also increasingly apparent in education. Women who occupy positions as leaders in universities at both the university and faculty levels are increasingly emerging. [6]. The fact that women are more educated than before has contributed to an increase in the number of women leaders over the last few decades [7]. With more education and qualifications, female leader is seeking better employment opportunities in organizations.

### ***1.1. The roles of female in the Indonesian Society***

The effort of female's authorization in Indonesian has not been realized in University. Only in public universities are very bureaucratized organizations that have inherited, purposely, or otherwise, many of Western universities [8], and men have dominated its leadership [9].

### ***1.1. Method***

The tough female is always touchy to authority within institutions but can be reserved about comely ingrained

in the political arena [10]. With leaders interviewed, having a powerful self-belief or great sensed self-efficacy in connection with their capability to do well and command their profession's instruction seemed to be a general feature [11]. Self-efficacy is connected to other personality features, for instance, an individual stimulus to accomplish and perseverance towards to target [12]. While most sensed that fortune was substantial, they frequently attributed their achievement to tenacity, struggle, and the willingness to grab possibilities [11].

Women's leadership capabilities are formed under the effect of personal characteristics, internal and external environment. It is concerned with why they choose a private lesson of action in preference to others, and why they continue with a selected activity, often over a long term, and in the face of difficulties and issues. They have a sight, a strong drive to implement it, and the ability to mobilize other members around that vision. Their definition of success most often includes changing the lives of others on an ongoing basis. Persistence and communication skills are very crucial for their achievement. The support they receive is essential [13].

## 2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research approach and semi-structured key informant interviews with five women for four months (March 2020 to June 2010), five in person and one by telephone. After they agreed to participate, the leaders were sent an informed consent form and were asked to review it. Using semi-structured open-ended interviews, we studied five women leaders came from universities and polytechnics in Indonesia. in educational settings. This research seeks to understand how women achieve success in achieving their leadership roles in the educational settings. The qualitative approach is justified because it tries to understand the phenomenon [8]. The result of women from their educational leadership roles, background, and personal journey. Phenomenology is allowed for correct interpretation of the meaning experience women leadership positions faced in achieving their leadership role in education [9]. The interview issues, including two-part in which one associated with [14] social study theory of profession choice and the other sector associated with Barsh, Cranston, and Craske's (2008) focused Leadership Model. In this study, the researchers used investigator triangulation across the data collection and data analysis process to gather the conversation's data and analyse the interviews, interview arrangement, the coding procedure, and the results' progress. [15]

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the results of the interviews conducted, the following results can be found:

### 3.1. Educational Background

#### Participant 1

"I rised in a family which has educational background. My grandma was elementary school principal, my grand pa was a teacher and my father were a banker. My mother was very discipline mom, she made education as our goal to make her happy. So, I did it, because I want to make my parents proud., I studied hard to get a good score in every levels of my education. Now, my husband is a lecturer also, he very support me to give the best that I could in my job. My family support everything I did. My husband is very understanding person. My children are very independent children. We can share everything such as sad, happy and our problems".(Head of Department, age 40)

#### Participant 2

Having modern family is a big help. In a conservatives family, which still be held by some of conservatives Indonesian, a woman have to stay at home, take care of family, make sure her husband and children are well fed, and the only profession we have is housewife. But my family wants me to become an independent person. The sense of independency will give us enough power to make our own decision, so we will not rely on other. This decision-making skill that my family taught me play important role on how to be a good leader. (Head of Department, age 35)

#### Participant 3

My father is an army. My mother is a teacher. family's education is disciplined learning. I was raised by parents that respect their children choice. So, most of my career choice is chosen by me, but still I consider that it is necessary to consult, ask for consideration, or even just simply ask my parents opinion about my career. (Head of Department, age 55)

#### Participant 4

My family is a democratic family which appreciate the children decision. We can try any different opportunity to our development. In my early year as a teacher, in a small private education institution to gain some experience. If my family is strict and idealist, I believed they will not allow me to join that small institution, but my family is patient enough although my career is not yet stable at that time. So, this nature of my family helps me a lot to develop how to become what I become now. Most of my career choice is chosen by me, but still I consider that it is necessary to consult, ask for consideration, or even just simply ask my parents opinion about my career (Head of editor journal, age 32)

#### Participant 5

I am the first of four children. My father is a civil servant. My mother is a department head in a private office. My mother is a role model for me. I cannot be like him yet. His work in the office is extraordinary, even at home he is good at cooking, the house is always very clean—anyway, the figure of an extraordinary woman. She always encouraged me to do her best and provided support in all my endeavours. (Head of Project, 47)

Sometimes, individuals make similar choices. Human behaviour is considerably affected by an individual's upbringing and family [16]. Even, individuals may select to work in the same institutions as their parents [17].

### **3.2. Past Event**

Participant 4

Economic crisis in 1997/1998 that hit Indonesia. My family was quite well off before we become one a victim of Indonesian economy crisis that caused my father was laid off from his work. Life that was relatively easy became a bit more difficult because we were used to live comfortably before. Seeing my father that used to work in a decent company and suddenly must start a business is not the best view, but fortunately we were strong enough to overcome it. (Head of editor journal, age 32)

Participant 3

The events in the army that had a lot of influence. I can be disciplined, firmly. Even students are strict ... I was consistent from the time I was in the army. Not only time, discipline, in my opinion, is a commitment (Head of Department, age 55)

Participant 1

When I was a member in a unit. I do not have any opportunity to sound my voice. I just follow the decision although I did not want to do it. It made me to promise to myself, if I become a leader, I must give an opportunity to my member to speak. (Head of Department, age 40)

Past events are factors that influence individual behaviour. Their past events have a very large influence on their success, because past events are a factor that directly affects an individual's behavioural intentions in shaping attitudes.

### **3.2. Self Management**

Participant 4

The most effective way to solve those problems is by communication. I contact the person and remind them about the schedule or about the response we expect. If it does not work, usually I use a strict deadline with consequences they might face. Ex: I have the authority to change the reviewer or the author (and the article). (Head of editor journal, age 32)

Participant 2

I can always back up. If there is an obstacle for one lecturer, I do not mind ... I still work up with my colleagues. I am not too dependent on other people. I work what I can do, yes, I do. Not depend on others, it reduces my stress. that's what I've always experienced so far. (Head of Department, age 47)

Participant 5

I work based on schedule ... I always have a coordination meeting every week to monitor the extent of the work assigned. For example, something happened that I have backed up. I have more teamwork. if one person cannot, then I can use another person. (Head of Project, age 47)

Participant 2

I learn how to deal with people, and how to manage a team since I was a member of Student Executive Board in my bachelor's degree. Since I was in charge external affair, so I had the opportunity to meet and interact with so many different people. This experience helped me a lot to build my confidence and decision-making ability, which is important for a leader. (Head of Department, age 35)

As leadership, they have good self-awareness and self-management. The quality of these female leaders is characterized by independence, more confidence, being able to manage time, be principled, make better decisions, be brave, be assertive, communicate more effectively [14].

### **3.4. Motivation**

Participant 2

I give full trust to my subordinates, make employees directly involved with the work, such as identifying problems and thinking about solving strategies. I think it is important to pay homage to colleagues and employees. I give recognition and appreciation for the good work of my subordinates. (Head of Department, age 35)

Participant 1

I always work with a team ... teamwork is my strength. My teamwork is still supportive. As the woman leader, we must realize our potential. We are special we not only have a brain but also heart and intuition. So, with the complete gifts we can be a good leader for a better future of higher education (Head of Project, age 40)

Participant 5

Empowering employees is a gentler and more effective way of motivation. give employees the opportunity to participate in making company policies, provide adequate access to information, and carry out training. (Head of Department, age 47)

Participant 3

"Is this better said in person? "Or" Is now the right time to make this statement? "Timing and tone can make a big difference. I often take a moment to consider whether the purpose is to create a message that is meant to inspire, motivating, and offers reassurance. (head of Department, age 32)

The model of leadership articulated by women is characterized by a support member with high motivation and contribution and allow members with various ideas.

### **3.5. Interpersonal Relationship**

Participant 1

My relationship with my senior colleague for ten years has been very well established. I try to respect my seniors by respecting their opinions at meetings. With my colleagues all this time very closely. I can put myself as a partner or friend to share ideas or give advice (Head of Department, age 40)

Participant 5

In the family environment, my husband always fully supports me ... for example, I work late into the night, he never complains. even if I bring work home, he also wants to help me (Head of Project, age 47)

Participant 4

I have a good relationship with colleagues in the office, whether senior or peer one or two friction at a reasonable level. My family including families who are very supportive of my busy life on campus. Incidentally, I was not born into a patriarchal family that demanded that women be at home; instead, my parents and husband wanted me to continue working and be independent. (Head of Journal editor, age 32)

Participant 2

My mother in law and my sister become a best support system that I have now. I just believe them to take care of my children while I work. Having modern family is a big help. In a conservatives Indonesian, a woman have to stay at home, take care of family, make sure her husband and children are well fed, and the only profession we have is housewife. But my family wants me to become an independent person. The sense of independency will give us enough power to make our own decision, so we will not rely on other. This decision-making skill that my family taught me play important role on how to be a good leader. (Head of Department, age 35)

The female identified others' support, especially family members, as an essential factor in achievement [13].

### **3.6. Mutual Trust**

Participant 5

I think, when a boss has positive authority, it can affect the performance of his employees. Enhance a positive attitude in everything that is lived and also trust that employees will carry out their duties smoothly and following applicable rules so that when employees get the trust that has been entrusted to their superiors, they will feel they have responsibility. Trust as a form of indirect motivation given to employees, with such employees will try as much as possible to work. (Head of Project, age 47)

Participant 3

the thing that I do is to make we as superiors emulated by their employees. For example, I come to work on time. With that, employees can be compelled to provide positive evaluations of our performance, and subordinates are not reluctant to show their professionalism as well. It can create an excellent reciprocal relationship in terms of the trust at work. (Head of Department, age 55)

Participant 2

I know what I need to do for the betterment of my company before I discuss it with my subordinates. I do it often (Head of department, age 35)

Participant 4

I believe that my team and I trust each other. We are evidenced by our good coordination with a clear delegation line. The real proof is the result of our work, which is always finished on time I provide an assessment of the work of my subordinates using the agreed measurement tool. (Head of journal editor, age 32)

Most women tend to work with people, and as leaders, women leaders work with people because great leaders inspire trust in their employees, fueling their confidence to make bold decisions. They prioritize cooperation over expecting people to do for them [15].

### **3.7. Leadership Characteristic**

Participant 2

I think the characteristics of a good leader are those who can choose the right leadership style. Not the most charismatic leader or the most highly educated, or the most democratic, or the most authoritarian, but who can choose which style of leadership suits the character of his subordinates. (Head of department, age 35)

Participant 4

Working at higher education institution means I work with intellectuals, so I believe democratic leadership style is suit us best. Because most of my colleague know

what to do and how to do it, I don't have to order them what to do (head of Department, age 40)

Participant 5

I have a lot of staff. For example, my leader, we have to work a lot more, because if our subordinates don't give an example, they will be passive. So we have to provide a good example (Head of Project, age 47)

Participant 1

An excellent characteristic, in my opinion, is a leader who can provide a comfortable atmosphere for the workers—a leader who can be responsible and respected by his staff. The styles of my leadership were both democracy and servant style (Head of Department, age 40)

A leadership style is effective as a visionary who can hire others for the common good and plan to realize that vision through a cooperative leadership style [18]. This fits with the model of transformational leadership [19], as a model in this leadership is not located on magnetic personalities or entrance to traditional sources of strength, but appear "when one or more people engage with others in a similar way that heads and members elevate each other to a degree stimulus and higher ethics" [20].

### **3.8. Mentor**

Participant 5

"My support system consists of my family and my (few) friends. My circle is never been wide since I personally prefer quality of relationship than quantity. My family is my main support system since day one just like any family. And the other is my close friend. One of my closest friends for me is not only a friend, but also a mentor for me. She is someone with so much experience in educational field, so I often ask for recommendation, suggestion, opinion for the problem that I face." (Head of Department, age 47)

Participant 3

"My former director because he gave me the opportunity to explore like in college in America. When he was a director, I collaborated, Whatever I planned permitted" (Head of Department, age 47)

Participant 4

I have a role model in my department since the first time I join. When the first time I join my department, I have good senior that I look up too. He was my colleague, but now he is the head of department. I admire the way he communicates with another colleague. Usually the juniors and younger lecturers will have their own clique/group, separated from the seniors. It does not prefer to hang around with the same age. But my head department has a way to easily associate or mingle with

everybody despite being one of the young lecturers. And now he become a leader, he is not only good at getting along, but also good at leading all of us. (Head of editor journal, age 32)

Participant 1

I learn from everyone I meet in my life from my teachers, my parents, and try to find something good that I can imitate and share with the people around me. An important person in my life influenced me at work. She was very patient and open-minded. He cares deeply for us as his disciples. And what changed my career choice was my husband. (Head of Department, age 40)

In universities, mentoring is used to promote and sustain career development and personal growth [8]. The participants in this study had at least one mentor, who helped them throughout their leadership journey.

Most of them chose the same education sector as their parents. One participant chose a different career path from their parents. They chose a career based on the interests and skills that were influenced by their parents. Each participant in this study showed the influence of their family, especially their mother, on their life choices. Many participants admitted that their love for education came from their families. Several participants stated that their mother was more of a motivator. Every participant in this study realized the importance of receiving an education. Almost all participants acknowledged that it was their mother who encouraged them to get an education and achieve their dreams.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

In this paper, five females shared their special experiences for achieving their position and included their adventures and effects, which provides perception into how they have completed their leadership position in education. Providing detailed, Individual journeys of female leaders and their viewpoint is essential for the prospective future of women [21]. The researchers made eight overall findings: (a) family, partner, and kids affected each female's choices for her study and occupational options; (b) education is a substantial value; (c) each contestant has at least one mentor and networking relationship; (d) Well communicate with group members; (e) having assist from somewhere is highly influential in serving; (f) Support members with high motivation and contribution and allow members with various ideas; (g) Formulate the plans pursuing the team goals previous to the discussions with members (i) their past events have had a significant influence on their success.

Meaning the individual journeys, events, and ideas of these five females understand the essential events and effects of achieving a position in an institution. This research can assist as important promotional for

recruiting female into education by providing them with realistic events from women in educational settings. Similarly, it could improve the number of female genders entering educational who may require an increase of support or know other female gender have encountered identical challenges.

This research can assist as guidance and awareness to all parents raising children especially girls to realize the consequences their decision-making as parents have on their daughter. Other leaders who work with female gender in men dominate field can use the research to improve understanding the role of a working woman. In addition, those working in any field, particularly in a male gender dominate field, could use research to more understand the gender dissimilarities that existing between females and males.

In the same way, women searching for a adviser or networking relationship may use this research as a guide of what characteristics to search for in a mentor or networking relation. They may use this research as a guide to assist women leaders with a knowledge of the challenges they may face with solutions to counter the problem.

## REFERENCES

- [1] O. S. & S. & M. Kristiyanti, "(WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATIONS (A Case Study of a Woman Dean in Semarang City))," pp. 1–19, 2016.
- [2] M. Haddaji, J. Albors-Garrigós, and P. García-Segovia, "Women chefs' experience: Kitchen barriers and success factors," *Int. J. Gastron. Food Sci.*, vol. 9, no. May, pp. 49–54, 2017, doi: 10.1016/j.ijgfs.2017.06.004.
- [3] Burgess, C., "Gender and salaries in hotel financial management: it is still a man's world.," *Women Manag.*, vol. 18, no. 1/2, pp. 50–59., 2003, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09649420310462325>.
- [4] Heilman, M.E., Haynes, M.C., "No credit where credit is due: attribution rationalization of women's success in male-female teams.," *J. Appl. Psychol.*, vol. 90, no. 5, pp. 905–916, 2005, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.90.5.905>.
- [5] Kiser, A.I.T., "Workplace and leadership perceptions between man and women.," *Gend. Manag. Int.*, vol. 30, no. 8, pp. 598–612, 2015, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/GM-11-2014-0097>.
- [6] S. Shahtalebi, M. H. Yarmohammadian, and A. Sima, "Women's success factors from leadership in higher education," *Procedia - Soc. Behav. Sci.*, vol. 15, pp. 3644–3647, 2011, doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.04.349.
- [7] A. Lemoine, A. Mayer, A. Gordon, M. Johnson, and M. C. Budden, "The Role Of Higher Education In Personal Relationships," *Contemp. Issues Educ. Res.*, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 9, 2011, doi: 10.19030/cier.v4i1.977.
- [8] A. Predoi-Cross, "Inclusive mentoring and leadership, and the many roads to success," *Can. J. Phys.*, vol. 98, no. 6, pp. ix–xvii, 2020, doi: 10.1139/cjp-2019-0291.
- [9] J. D. Krumboltz, "A social learning theory of career selection," *Couns. Psychol.*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 71–80, 1976.
- [10] J. Marshall, "Gender and Management: A Critical Review of Research," *Br. J. Manag.*, vol. 6, no. December, pp. S53–S62, 1995, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8551.1995.tb00138.x.
- [11] C. C. and C. C. White B, "A portrait of successful women.," *Women Manag. Rev.*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 27–34, 1997.
- [12] Airini, S. Collings, L. Conner, K. McPherson, B. Midson, and C. Wilson, "Learning to be leaders in higher education: What helps or hinders women's advancement as leaders in universities," *Educ. Manag. Adm. Leadersh.*, vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 44–62, 2011, doi: 10.1177/1741143210383896.
- [13] S. C. Folta, R. A. Seguin, J. Ackerman, and M. E. Nelson, "A qualitative study of leadership characteristics among women who catalyze positive community change," *BMC Public Health*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2012, doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-12-383.
- [14] G. F. W. B. Robinson, L. S. Schwartz, L. A. Dimeglio, J. S. Ahluwalia, and J. L. Gabrielove, "Understanding career success and its contributing factors for clinical and translational investigators," *Acad. Med.*, vol. 91, no. 4, pp. 570–582, 2016, doi: 10.1097/ACM.0000000000000979.
- [15] Northouse, "Leadership theory and practice.," Sage Publ., 2009.
- [16] Z. Sakhiyya and K. Locke, "Empowerment vs. meritocracy discourses in Indonesian public universities: The case of female leaders," *Asian J. Women's Stud.*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 198–216, 2019, doi: 10.1080/12259276.2019.1610210.
- [17] J. Dzuhayatin, S. R., & Edwards, "Hitting our heads on the glass ceiling: Women and leadership in education in Indonesia.," *Stud. Islam. Indones. J. Islam. Stud.*, vol. 17(2), pp. 199–232., 2010.
- [18] Burns, "Leadership," New York Harper Row, 1978.
- [19] James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, Print book. New York : Harper & Row, 1978.

- [20] Bass B, Transformational Leadership: Industry, Military, and Educational Impact.1998. 1998.
- [21] S. Madsen, "Learning to lead in higher education: Insights into the family backgrounds of women university presidents," *J. Women Educ. Leadership*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 183–200, 2007.