FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF FEMALE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS FROM TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PALEMBANG

A THESIS

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Magister **Program in Language Education**

FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

2024

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Certify that the thesis entitled "Female Leadership in Education : The Experience of Female School Principals From Two Secondary School in Palembang" is my work, and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethics and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic of Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

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The Undersigned,

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and myself.

MOTTO

Whatever happens, happens

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

In the Indonesian school contexts, the female elementary and secondary school teachers outnumber their male counterparts. However, it is a different story when it comes to school leadership. Therefore, investigating school leadership from the point of view of female school principals is worth doing and this was the aim of this present study. Involving two female secondary school principals as the participants of study, this present study investigated the challenges the participants encountered on their path to their school leadership position. It also explored to what extent the participants experienced the challenges after assuming their role as school principals and what strategies and recommendation the participants had to overcome the challenges. The data were obtained through in-depth interviews and were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The results of this study showed that the challenges the participants encountered on their path to their leadership position were subtle discrimination in the form of negative perception before carrying out the role as principal, balancing personal and professional responsibilities, and integrating technology in teaching and learning process. Next, after they were at the position as the school principals, the challenges included family expectations and resistance from the staff especially from the senior teacher. To respond to the challenges, the participants did the persuasive action such as provide real action directly and provide supporting facilities to support the teacher performance. They also provided the recommendation to overcome the challenges as follows: ask for help from young teachers to help guide the senior teacher in the application of technology, accept the changes, develop self competence, and bring a good communication to build up the sense of trust. The findings of this present study contributes to the field of female leadership in education by providing information about what the Indonesian female school principals have been through on their path to leadership position and as a school leader.

Keywords: Indonesian female school principals, school principalship, leadership challenges

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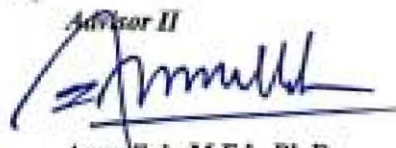Student Number   : 06012682226007

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background, the problems, the objectives, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background

Teaching is a profession that has been dominated by female. In Indonesia, for example, the data from Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) for 2022 show that the total number of teachers at the elementary-high school level is more than 2 million people, of which the number of female teachers is around 1,340,504 teachers or equivalent to 64.88% and male teachers are 725,757 representing a total of 35.12% of teachers. This fact is in accordance with the report by Margret, Samosir, Novitasari, & Setiawan (2021) who underlines that most school instructors, regardless of the educational level, are women. Margret et al (2021) also stated that the highest proportion of female teachers (70 percent) is at the elementary education level. The availability of adequate female teachers is not balanced by their presence in the position of principal. In fact, the number of female principals continues to decline as the level of education increases. This shows that there is an adequate supply of female instructors at all levels of education, regardless of whether the school is managed by the government, a state school, or a private school managed by the community or a private business entity.

However, Margret et al (2021) report that the representation of women as school principals is less than 50 percent. In other words, although the availability of female teachers is sufficient to occupy the position of school principal proportionally, the position of principal at all levels of education in schools is dominated by male teachers. Education Partnership - Performance Supervision and Monitoring (EP POM) (2016) also reports that the higher the level of education, the smaller the percentage of female school principals. This is in line with Tremmel and Wahl (2023) who found that sometimes a woman's feminine characteristics are often considered a weakness compared to men's masculine attitudes. This explains why women have difficulty achieving leadership positions and why their leadership potential is often overlooked

in hiring and performance evaluation processes.

Man and woman have different leadership philosophies, but this does not imply that one is more effective than the other. Man may view leadership as leading while female may view it as facilitating, which may account for some of the disparity. Acaroglu & Turan (2017) state that men associated with assertive and results-oriented traits, while women are associated with collaborative and relationship-oriented traits. According to Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), in education, women in educational administration prioritize instructional leadership, focusing on unique student characteristics, curriculum strategies, and goals. With more experience and degrees, they value curriculum and instruction. They prefer a facilitative leadership style, allowing others to contribute. Women interact more frequently with instructors, students, parents, community members, colleagues, and superiors due to their focus on relationships.

Despite the significant potential and global contributions of females, the growing gender imbalance puts them in disadvantageous situations. There is ongoing debate on the suitability of females for leadership roles. Even in traditional societies, there is persistent opposition to females assuming leadership posts. They believe that the performance of females is not equivalent to that of males due to the male's role as the leader of the household. In Indonesia, gender inequality remains a challenge. The Indonesian government has done some effort to narrow the gender inequality. For example, by issuing the Law Number 7 of 1984, concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Female, the Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2000, concerning Gender Equality in National Development which mandate all the Indonesian Ministries to carry out gender equality in order to carry out planning, preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national development policies and programs, and the Regulation Number 5 of 2014, concerning the guidelines for implementing gender and child data systems.

The fact that male outnumbers female in terms of school principalship although most school teachers across all levels of education in Indonesia are female, has led to investigations. For example, a study by Margaret, Samosir, Novitasari & Roni (2022) found that cultural factors, particularly family unit dynamics, were the primary barrier

to women aspiring to become principals. Margaret et al. (2022) further reported that these factors include diverse gender standards, cultural traditions, and theological beliefs that significantly affect women. Gaus (2011) Married female educators often require their husband's consent to pursue a principal position, which directly impacts their domestic role obligations. The expectations placed on women in their household roles also contribute to their lack of self-assurance in pursuing a principal career. Additionally, female civil servants are reluctant to participate in job promotions due to their home responsibilities. Another study conducted by Airin (2010) investigating the challenges faced by an Indonesian female school principal state that emale school principals in Indonesia confront considerable challenges to leadership positions due to strongly rooted cultural preconceptions that judge them unsuitable for leadership, which is exacerbated by women's lower levels of education than men. These difficulties are exacerbated by cultural pressures that reduce women's self-confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, a lack of professional supervision and direction, combined with the difficult task of reconciling professional responsibilities with traditional family roles, compels many women to choose between job progress and family obligations. These variables contribute to gender discrepancies in educational leadership.

Regardless of gender, Hallinger, Liu, and Piyaman (2019) found that school principal leadership plays an important role in teacher professional learning. Effective principals create environments that support teacher professional development, which ultimately improves student performance. This study shows that principals who facilitate collaboration among teachers and provide needed resources can develop a positive school culture and support effective learning. Principals lead training programs, seminars, and workshops. Education is believed to be able to prepare and engineer the direction of human development in the future. The performance of a principal is very important for its progress. Principals must have characteristics such as creating relationships with staff, parents, and students, conveying a shared vision and goals, promoting leadership that shares power, creating a sense of collectivity, collaboration, understanding, and teacher development, and having personality traits.

This present study was conducted with the aim of finding out the experience of Indonesian female school principals. Specifically, this present study investigated the

the challenges faced by the participants during their career trajectiories to leadership position, find out to what extent to which the challanges experienced by female school principals persist after assuming the role of principal, and what strategies and recommendations offered by the school principal for the other females who aspire to be in school principalship positions. In addition, this study explains several strategies that can be used by people, especially women who want to continue their careers as principals. Knowing these experiences is very important, there are several reasons including this study provides an overview of the gender gap in terms of leadership in education, and also sees the obstacles faced by women. Gaining insight into these obstacles can help design activities with the aim of advancing gender welfare. Then, this study can provide knowledge related to the leadership approaches and tactics used by female principals so as to increase overall understanding of becoming a successful leader. Finally, sharing experiences and advice from female principals can increase the motivation of other women to achieve leadership positions.

1.2.   The Problems of the Study

The problems of the study are formulated into the following research questions.

1.   What challenges did the female school principals encounter on their path to the leadership position?

2.   To what extent did the participants experience the challenges after assuming the role as school principals ?

3.   What strategies and recommendations did the participants have to overcome the challenges ?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Based on the descriptions of the research questions, the objectives of the study are as follows.

1.   To find out the challenges encountered by female school principals on their path to the leadership position.

2.   To find out the extent to which the challenges experienced by the participants after assuming the role as school principals.

3.   To find out the strategies and recommendations that participants have to overcome the problems.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

It is expected that this study would be beneficial for some parties such as graduate programs, future female school principals, and future researchers. First, for graduate programs, this study would give an illustration that every person can be a leader even they are female. Next for the female school principals, information from this study would help them to face the challenges if one day they become a leader. Finally for future researchers who are willing to conduct similar topic, it is hoped that this study would give valuable information that can be more useful as a reference for their study.

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