



**WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP RESILIENCE IN PATRIARCHAL ORGANISATIONS: A STUDY OF THE REGIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF PEMUDA PANCASILA, SOUTH SULAWESI**

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*Abstract*

*This study examines women's leadership in a masculine organizational context to analyze how gender interacts with institutional structures, social norms, and power relations. It aims to explain how leadership legitimacy is constructed through performative practices and collaborative strategies. The research employs a qualitative case study approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, document analysis, and interpretive analysis grounded in gender politics theory, performativity, and organizational resilience frameworks. The findings reveal that leadership legitimacy is not derived solely from formal authority but is produced through repeated performative acts, redistribution of authority, collaborative decision-making, and symbolic negotiation within patriarchal structures. Women leaders strategically combine assertiveness and relational competence to navigate role incongruity and double bind dynamics. Collaborative leadership practices shift power relations from hierarchical domination to relational interdependence, while collective voice mechanisms institutionalize deliberation as an organizational norm. The study also demonstrates that symbolic resources, social networks, and adaptive identity work strengthen organizational resilience and legitimacy in non-state institutions. This study contributes to gender politics scholarship by integrating performativity theory, social psychological leadership research, and organizational resilience into a contextualized analysis of women's leadership. It highlights the importance of relational, adaptive, and transformative practices in reshaping power structures and suggests future comparative and multi-level research across diverse institutional settings.*

**Keywords:** *Women's Leadership; Gender Politics; Performativity; Power Relations; Organizational Resilience*

**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini menganalisis kepemimpinan perempuan dalam organisasi bercorak maskulin untuk memahami bagaimana gender berinteraksi dengan struktur institusional, norma sosial, dan relasi kuasa. Studi ini bertujuan menjelaskan konstruksi legitimasi kepemimpinan melalui praktik performatif dan strategi kolaboratif. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan teknik wawancara mendalam, analisis dokumen, dan analisis interpretatif berbasis teori politik gender, performativitas, serta resiliensi organisasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa legitimasi kepemimpinan tidak semata bersumber dari otoritas formal, tetapi dibentuk melalui pengulangan praktik performatif, redistribusi otoritas, pengambilan keputusan kolaboratif, dan negosiasi simbolik dalam struktur patriarkal. Pemimpin perempuan mengombinasikan ketegasan dan kompetensi relasional untuk



menavigasi dinamika role incongruity dan double bind. Praktik kepemimpinan kolaboratif menggeser relasi kuasa dari dominasi hierarkis menuju interdependensi relasional, sementara institusionalisasi dialog memperkuat legitimasi kolektif dan resiliensi organisasi non-negara. Studi ini memperkaya kajian politik gender dengan mengintegrasikan teori performativitas, psikologi sosial kepemimpinan, dan resiliensi organisasi dalam konteks lokal. Temuan menegaskan pentingnya praktik relasional dan adaptif dalam mentransformasi struktur kuasa serta mendorong penelitian komparatif dan multi-level pada berbagai konteks institusional.

**Kata Kunci:** Kepemimpinan Perempuan; Politik Gender; Performativitas; Relasi Kuasa; Resiliensi Organisasi

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Pemuda Pancasila is a nationalist mass organisation with strong historical roots dating back to the Old Order era and one that expanded rapidly during the New Order period. Its semi-militaristic identity, hierarchical structure, and close proximity to political elites have led the organisation to be widely understood as a masculine space characterised by centralised leadership patterns. Literature on the transformation of conflict-based organisations indicates that internal cohesion and the capacity to maintain command structures constitute key determinants of organisational sustainability (Dudouet, 2012). Within nationalist organisations grounded in collective identity, leadership legitimacy tends to be exclusive and hierarchical in nature (Ahmadi et al., 2024). Consequently, organisational structures inherited from militaristic cultures possess the potential to reproduce patterns of masculine domination that are relatively resistant to change.

Contemporary leadership studies, on the other hand, emphasise the importance of transformative and ethical models in responding to the complexities of modern social life (Elamin, 2024). However, within organisations marked by strong command legacies, the implementation of transformative leadership frequently encounters entrenched and institutionalised cultures. In Indonesia, post-authoritarian leadership transformation has not entirely eliminated the dominance of central figures; democratisation has often reinforced what has been described as “institutional charisma” (Rochadi, 2023). Within such a context, the emergence of women as leaders in semi-military organisations constitutes a phenomenon that is not only sociological, but also political and symbolic.

The central issue that arises concerns how a woman is able to construct and sustain leadership legitimacy within organisational structures that are historically masculine and patriarchal. Recent literature demonstrates that patriarchal culture significantly influences

both opportunities for and the legitimacy of women's leadership. Research conducted in Nepal finds that androcentric party structures constrain the quality of women's leadership despite the existence of affirmative policies (Sapkota, 2024). Studies in Bali affirm that perceptions of women's domestication hinder political participation (Wayan & Nyoman, 2020), while in Kenya, the legitimacy of women leaders frequently depends upon support from community networks (Moe & Kabera, 2024). Accordingly, women's leadership within non-state arenas confronts complex structural and cultural challenges.

Solution-oriented approaches emerging in the literature emphasise the importance of adaptive–strategic resilience, defined as the capacity of women to negotiate gender identity and mobilise social capital in order to sustain authority. The concept of hybrid feminist leadership suggests that women are able to combine adaptive strategies within patriarchal structures with the reinforcement of feminine identity as a source of legitimacy (Dewi, 2024). Resilience in this context extends beyond personal endurance, encompassing the capacity to gradually reconstruct power relations through inclusive leadership practices.

A number of studies in Indonesia continue to focus predominantly on formal sectors such as bureaucracy and managerial positions, with an emphasis on structural inequality and wage discrimination (Hennigusnia et al., 2024). Within community organisations, women's leadership is frequently portrayed as collaborative and transformational (Suherman et al., 2025), yet such portrayals have not been developed into comprehensive analytical models capable of explaining the dynamics of legitimacy within masculine organisational settings. Structural barriers such as gender stereotypes and entrenched patriarchal systems remain dominant factors (Pradani et al., 2025).

Conceptually, women's leadership resilience within masculine environments may be defined as an adaptive–strategic capacity to sustain legitimacy, effectiveness, and authority through the negotiation of gender identity, the strengthening of social networks, and the transformation of organisational culture. However, the literature reveals a contextual gap concerning non-bureaucratic and semi-military organisations, which remain insufficiently explored in a systematic manner (Malihah, 2024). The limited integration of intersectional perspectives and context-specific Indonesian feminism further weakens the depth of analysis applied to informal power relations.

Based on this review, a research gap can be identified in the form of limited empirical studies that specifically examine the resilience of women's leadership within semi-military community organisations at the local level. This study seeks to address that gap by analysing the leadership of Siti Diza Rasyid Ali within the Regional Leadership Council of Pemuda Pancasila in South Sulawesi as a contextual case study. This approach enables in-depth exploration of symbolic strategies, socio-political capital, and performative practices that shape leadership legitimacy.

The objective of this research is to analyse the strengths and resilience strategies of women's leadership within patriarchal organisations through a qualitative narrative–biographical approach. The originality of the study lies in the integration of adaptive–strategic resilience with an analysis of semi-military organisations in Indonesia, an area that has received limited attention in gender and politics scholarship. The proposed hypothesis posits that women's leadership resilience rests upon a combination of personal capacity, socio-political capital, and symbolic strategies that performatively construct legitimacy within masculine structures. The scope of the study is confined to internal organisational dynamics at the regional level, without extending generalisations to the national structure, in order to preserve the depth of contextual analysis.

## **II. THEORETICAL STUDIES**

The theory of gender performativity developed by Judith Butler serves as a central point of departure for understanding leadership as a socially constructed practice shaped through the repetition of actions. From this perspective, leadership identity does not represent an essential expression, but rather emerges from discursive practices that gain social legitimacy. Zoon (2022) emphasises that leadership should be understood as a discursive and performative practice in which the identity of the leader is continuously negotiated through social interaction. Authority, therefore, does not reside solely in structural position, but is produced through representation, language, and symbols recognised within specific institutional contexts.

Empirical applications of this theory in non-Western settings demonstrate that leadership performativity is strongly influenced by cultural norms. Wijana et al. (2024) find that within Balinese Hindu communities in Lombok, women encounter structural constraints rooted in entrenched patriarchal norms. Such norms are reproduced through customary

practices and gender-based divisions of labour that continually reinforce subordination. These findings strengthen the argument that women's leadership is negotiated within spaces already shaped by social expectations surrounding femininity and masculinity.

Within contemporary leadership literature, women are frequently associated with transformational and participatory leadership styles. Shaed et al. (2018) demonstrate that women leaders score higher on transformational dimensions, characterised by visionary inspiration and individualised consideration. Silva (2017) further argues that participatory leadership aligns closely with feminist approaches and enhances organisational inclusivity. However, within masculine organisational environments, such styles are often perceived ambivalently. Women are expected to perform a "double performance", simultaneously displaying empathy and assertive authority in order to be regarded as legitimate. This paradox illustrates that empirical effectiveness does not necessarily translate into symbolic legitimacy within patriarchal structures.

The reproduction of patriarchy within organisations operates through both formal and informal mechanisms. Ade (2021) argues that patriarchal systems function through unequal distributions of power across economic, political, and organisational domains, including preferences for men in authoritative positions. Such mechanisms gain legitimacy through cultural norms and legal institutions, rendering masculine dominance seemingly natural. Wijana et al. (2024) add that resistance to gender equality remains strong despite structural reform efforts. Patriarchal reproduction persists through biased recruitment and promotion rules, exclusive male networks, and the internalisation of subordinating norms by women themselves.

In relation to political legitimacy, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital offers an important analytical framework. Ramadhany and Rahmawati (2020) show that women's political success is not determined by a single form of capital, but by the conversion and combination of social, economic, political, and symbolic capital within fields dominated by patriarchal habitus. Social capital in the form of relational networks enables the mobilisation of support, while symbolic capital, including reputation and social recognition, functions as a key source of legitimacy. However, the distribution of such capital is shaped by class structures and male dominance, often resulting in forms of "symbolic violence" that constrain women's claims to authority.

This approach is further enriched by an intersectional perspective that examines the interaction between gender, class, and social networks in shaping leadership opportunities. Holland-Smith (2017) explains that access to high-value networks is not neutral, but rather conditioned by social position and gender norms that determine who is deemed worthy of authority. Consequently, women's leadership opportunities emerge through ongoing negotiation between capital accumulation and layered structures of domination.

A conceptual synthesis of these bodies of literature indicates that women's leadership resilience cannot be understood solely as personal endurance. It represents the outcome of interactions between identity performativity, strategies of capital conversion, and negotiation within patriarchal structures. Transformational and participatory styles may enhance effectiveness, yet legitimacy remains contingent upon the capacity to mobilise symbolic capital within masculine power fields. Analytical approaches therefore need to connect cultural, structural, and relational dimensions simultaneously.

Despite significant advances in global scholarship, a substantial gap remains in studies of women's leadership within semi-military community organisations at the local level in Indonesia. Existing research largely concentrates on formal political parties, bureaucracies, or corporations, while the dynamics of legitimacy within organisations characterised by command cultures and strong masculine identities receive limited attention. Furthermore, integrated analytical frameworks combining performativity theory, Bourdieu's capital, and intersectional perspectives remain rarely applied to non-state organisational contexts.

Accordingly, the theoretical relationship between gender performativity, patriarchal reproduction, and capital conversion becomes crucial for explaining how women construct and sustain legitimacy within masculine spaces. This study positions these three frameworks as its analytical foundation in order to address existing empirical and conceptual gaps, while also contributing to the development of gender and politics scholarship grounded in the local Indonesian context.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a case study specification, employing a narrative–biographical approach to examine the construction and negotiation of leadership within the socio-political context of the organisation. This approach is selected because it enables in-depth exploration of lived experiences, narrative identity, and the

performative practices through which the research subject builds leadership legitimacy (Ladkin, 2010; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). The research design is articulated through theoretically informed participant selection (theoretical sampling), repeated in-depth interviews, and the analysis of speeches and organisational archives in order to comprehensively map the historical and institutional context (Liang, 2019; Yin, 2018). Data collection is conducted through triangulation, integrating interviews, documentary sources, and media archives to enhance interpretive depth and minimise the risk of single-narrative bias (Carter, 2014; Flick, 2022). Validity and reliability within the qualitative paradigm are ensured through the principle of trustworthiness, encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Cypress, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This is operationalised through the application of member checking, the maintenance of an audit trail, systematic documentation of the coding framework, and the use of analytical memos to ensure consistency and traceability throughout the research process. Data analysis follows the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, involving data reduction, data display in the form of matrices or thematic networks, and the iterative drawing and verification of conclusions to ensure procedural transparency and auditability (Saldaña, 2021).

#### **IV. RESEARCH RESULTS**

##### **1. The Leadership of Siti Diza Rasyid Ali within the Regional Leadership Council of Pemuda Pancasila, South Sulawesi**

The leadership of Siti Diza Rasyid Ali within the Regional Leadership Council of Pemuda Pancasila, South Sulawesi, illustrates how women's leadership resilience is produced through the interaction of personal capacity, adaptive strategies, relational strength, and symbolic construction within a masculine organisational setting. The research findings indicate that her leadership legitimacy does not emerge automatically as a consequence of formal office, but is constructed through consistent and repeated practices. From a performativity perspective, this process may be understood as the social production of leadership identity (Zoon & Ashfaq, 2022). Leadership, therefore, operates not merely at the structural level, but at the level of praxis that connects action, narrative, and collective recognition.

At the personal level, integrity, decisiveness, and empathy constitute the core foundations of her leadership. The statement of Informant B highlights this ethical

dimension: “During the time I accompanied her, what stood out most was her consistent prioritisation of organisational ethics above all else... Through her attitude and example, administrators and cadres internalised the organisational spirit, because she demonstrated directly how the organisation should be run with commitment and responsibility” (Interview with Informant B). This consistency of example demonstrates that personal legitimacy is built through alignment between words and actions, a form of moral authority which, in narrative leadership studies, is understood as the outcome of narrative identity work (Ladkin, 2010; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). In this sense, her personal resilience rests upon the capacity to maintain identity coherence amid structural pressures.

However, personal attributes alone are insufficient to explain leadership continuity across two terms. Within a masculine organisation, decisiveness functions as a crucial symbol of authority. Informant C described her as “firm yet humane”, while Informant D noted a strong and charismatic leadership aura. This combination of firmness and empathy reflects what the literature identifies as the paradox of women’s leadership, namely the requirement to perform a “double performance” in order to be perceived as legitimate within masculine spaces (Shaed, 2018; Silva & Mendis, 2017). Siti Diza does not negate her gender identity, but negotiates it through a performance of authority that is simultaneously disciplined and inclusive.

The strategic dimension of her leadership is evident in the production of performance-based legitimacy and organisational consolidation. She stated: “I do not run this organisation on the basis of family ties, but on rules, mechanisms, and shared interests. What matters most to me is that the organisation functions properly and maintains its integrity” (Interview with Informant A). This statement reflects a conscious effort to dispel potential stigma of nepotism amid a strong political family background. From Bourdieu’s perspective on symbolic capital, this represents a strategy of converting social capital into legitimate recognition (Ramadhany & Rahmawati, 2020). Legitimacy is thus supported not merely by networks, but constructed through adherence to organisational procedures and ethics.

The transformation of the organisation’s image through social programmes demonstrates sensitivity to shifting public perceptions. Informant B observed: “Under Ms Diza’s leadership, the organisation’s direction has indeed focused more on social

programmes that directly engage the community.” This strategy may be understood as an effort to rearticulate the organisation’s collective identity, from a strength-based masculine image towards an inclusive social orientation. Within a performativity framework, such actions reproduce new organisational meanings through repeated concrete practices.

Her adaptive advantage becomes increasingly visible when confronting gender-based resistance. Informant D noted: “In my view, the greatest challenge for women leaders remains stereotypes and the greater demand to prove themselves compared to men.” Rather than responding confrontationally, Siti Diza adopted a strategy of proof through concrete performance. This approach demonstrates both psychological resilience and strategic intelligence in navigating patriarchal organisational cultures, as described by Ade (2021) in relation to the often-subtle reproduction of masculine dominance.

The relational dimension also constitutes a central pillar. Deliberation and dialogue are emphasised in her statement: “For me, deliberation is essential to maintaining harmony within the organisation... Through deliberation, decisions are not merely those of the leader, but become collective decisions accepted by all parties” (Interview with Informant A). This deliberative approach reflects the integration of structural authority with collective participation, which transformational leadership literature associates with increased loyalty and organisational cohesion (Shaed, 2018).

In addition, symbolic capital derived from professional experience in national-level sport strengthens both external and internal legitimacy. Informant D stated that her professional background in national sports “has been highly influential in shaping her current leadership.” This cross-sector reputation functions as an additional source of collectively recognised authority, extending the basis of legitimacy beyond the organisation’s internal structure.

Accordingly, the leadership of Siti Diza Rasyid Ali may be understood as a multidimensional construction integrating identity performativity, the conversion of social and symbolic capital, adaptive strategies in relation to patriarchy, and participatory relational consolidation. The resilience that emerges is not an inherent trait, but the outcome of leadership practices that continuously reproduce legitimacy through tangible work, consistent narratives, and the management of organisational symbols. Within a masculine semi-military organisation, this leadership demonstrates that transformations of

power relations may occur gradually through adaptive and performative strategies, without recourse to overt confrontation. This case therefore enriches understanding of women's leadership in non-state organisations and affirms that leadership sustainability is determined by the capacity to manage meaning, relationships, and structure simultaneously.

## **2. Leadership as a Performative Practice within Masculine Organisational Spaces**

Performative practices play a central role in shaping leadership legitimacy within organisations characterised by strong gender norms, as legitimacy derives not only from formal position, but also from symbolic alignment between leadership identity and social expectations regarding who is deemed fit to lead. Within the historically masculine context of the Regional Leadership Council of Pemuda Pancasila, South Sulawesi, the leadership of Siti Diza Rasyid Ali demonstrates that authority is constructed through repeated actions, symbolic representation, and ongoing identity negotiation. Research indicates that in organisations saturated with masculine stereotypes linking leadership to agentic traits such as decisiveness and dominance, women face role incongruity between gender stereotypes and leadership prototypes (Wolfram et al., 2020). In such contexts, leadership cannot be understood solely as a structural position, but rather as a performative practice that negotiates recognition.

Role congruity and lack-of-fit theories explain that when gender identity is perceived as misaligned with leadership norms, legitimacy is often questioned even before performance is evaluated. Cha et al. (2023) found that women assigned leadership roles reported lower perceived legitimacy than when occupying subordinate positions, whereas men showed no significant difference. Such perceptions mediate feelings of social status, indicating that authority is shaped by both internal belief and external recognition of role suitability. In this context, Siti Diza's statement that "As long as a person has the capability and commitment to work, that person is worthy of leadership, regardless of gender" (Interview with Informant A) may be read as both a normative claim and a performative strategy challenging assumptions of incongruity.

Research grounded in Butler's theory of performativity suggests that women leaders often strategically display attributes associated with masculinity, such as verbal authority and emotional control, in order to gain recognition as legitimate leaders (Round et al.,

2025). This practice is not merely passive adaptation, but an exercise of agency within constraining structures. Siti Diza's leadership reflects a similar pattern through the assertion of firmness combined with empathy. Informants described her as possessing a strong leadership aura, "firm yet humane", indicating a combination of masculine and feminine attributes. Repetition of firm communication in organisational forums, active presence in strategic moments, and control over internal dynamics constitute actions that continuously produce a leadership image aligned with masculine expectations, without fully relinquishing empathic dimensions.

Nevertheless, performativity not only reproduces norms, but also opens space for resignification. Prior research emphasises that leadership is a social construction shaped through repeated discursive and institutional practices (Kapasi et al., 2016; Zoon & Ashfaq, 2022). In autobiographical studies of women leaders, Kapasi et al. (2016) found that women often frame leadership through familial values and moral responsibility, simultaneously reproducing traditional femininity and claiming ethical legitimacy. In Siti Diza's case, the narrative of being a "resilient woman in a masculine organisation" becomes a symbolic identity reproduced through speeches, cadre consolidation, and social programmes. As noted by Informant C, "Ms Diza's leadership is not merely about holding a formal position... Her presence adds meaning, not just as a role, but as representation that women's capacity is real and recognised." This narrative illustrates how leadership identity is shaped through consistent discursive repetition.

Repetition of social practices is also evident in the transformation of the organisation's image towards a social orientation. Community-oriented programmes function as public performances that strengthen not only structural legitimacy, but also the symbolism of inclusive leadership. Sulistiani and Indriyany (2024) demonstrate that women leaders in local politics can shift masculine perceptions of leadership through visible and repeated achievements. In this context, Siti Diza's strategy of responding to resistance through consistent performance rather than confrontation allows repeated success to gradually reshape social meanings regarding women's leadership suitability.

At the same time, women's leadership performativity remains constrained by the "double bind". As Kapasi et al. (2016) observe, women must balance masculine expectations of decisiveness with feminine expectations of empathy. This balance is

reflected in Siti Diza's combination of instructional and emotional styles. When she emphasises deliberation, "For me, deliberation is essential to maintaining harmony within the organisation... Through deliberation, decisions become collective and acceptable to all parties" (Interview with Informant A) she not only follows organisational procedure, but also enacts deliberative leadership that mitigates gender-based resistance.

Accordingly, leadership as performative practice reveals an inherent ambivalence: it reproduces masculine norms through symbolic adaptation, while simultaneously opening space for redefinition through repeated successful action. Leadership identity does not exist as an essential attribute, but as the product of ongoing identity work within power relations (Zoon & Ashfaq, 2022). As acts of leadership firm facilitation, adaptive communication, cadre consolidation, and social programming are repeated consistently, they become institutionalised habits that reshape collective perceptions.

Overall, this discussion affirms that women's leadership legitimacy within masculine organisational spaces is not the product of automatic acceptance, but of repeated performative negotiation. Performativity theory offers strong explanatory power by conceptualising identity as a dynamic process institutionalised through social practice. However, its transformative capacity remains bounded by social structures and normative expectations. The leadership of Siti Diza Rasyid Ali demonstrates that through consistent, symbolic, and strategic repetition of action, gender constructions in leadership may be negotiated and gradually redefined, without entirely escaping existing structural constraints.

### **3. Transformation of Power Relations within Masculine Organisations**

The transformation of power relations within masculine organisations does not occur spontaneously, but through negotiated processes involving the redistribution of authority, the deconstruction of hegemonic norms, and the legitimation of collective voice. Within leadership contexts historically associated with masculine dominance, shifts in power relations become possible only when leadership practices move beyond "power-over" models towards collaborative "power-with" patterns (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003). Leadership thus functions not merely as hierarchical control, but as coordination based on interdependence.

The first mechanism is the redistribution of authority. When decision-making processes are opened through deliberation and dialogue, authority becomes shared rather than concentrated in a single figure. The statement, “For me, deliberation is essential to maintaining harmony within the organisation... Through deliberation, decisions become collective and acceptable to all parties” (Interview with Informant A), illustrates how deliberative practice is institutionalised. Theoretically, this reflects a shift from dominative to relational power. Within patriarchal organisations, such shifts reduce symbolic distance between leader and members and normalise participation as a source of legitimacy.

The second mechanism involves the deconstruction of hegemonic masculine norms through the redefinition of leadership competence. Research demonstrates that collaborative practices create recognition for empathy, dialogue, and facilitation as strategic competencies rather than subordinate feminine traits (Benschop et al., 2021). In this framework, collaborative leadership reshapes not only managerial style, but also evaluative standards of authority. When leadership is defined by capability and commitment rather than gender, authority becomes decoupled from masculine dominance.

Nonetheless, deconstruction does not entail the complete erasure of masculine symbols. Role incongruity and lack-of-fit research indicates that women in masculine organisations continue to face heightened demands for proof (Cha et al., 2023). Consequently, transformations in power relations often occur through adaptive strategies that combine firmness with empathy, representing identity work aimed at avoiding the “double bind” (Ely & Meyerson, 2006). Such strategies demonstrate that power transformation is typically gradual and negotiated rather than revolutionary.

A third mechanism lies in the legitimation of collective voice. Ospina et al. (2020) argue that collective leadership enhances organisational capacity to challenge inequality through deliberative practice and co-production of meaning. Within masculine organisations, institutionalised dialogue reduces power asymmetries by positioning member voices as integral to decision-making. Legitimacy is thus produced not solely from above, but also from below, creating more horizontal relations without eliminating formal structure.

Power transformation is also shaped by everyday micro-negotiations. Lewis and Simpson (2017) note that women frequently employ discursive reframing and

performance-based legitimacy to challenge subordination without direct confrontation. Such strategies are particularly effective within hierarchical contexts sensitive to overt resistance. By emphasising collective outcomes and professionalism, authority is built through performance rather than symbolic assertion.

Informal networks and coalitions further constitute significant sources of relational power (Ely et al., 2011). Within masculine organisations, access to elite and senior networks strengthens symbolic legitimacy and expands influence. However, network effectiveness depends on professional credibility management to avoid stigma associated with privilege. Internal and external coalitions thus stabilise newly negotiated power relations.

Symbolic dimensions of nationalism and organisational identity also frame power transformation. Nationalism is often gendered, with national imagery associated with masculinity and protection (Thomson, 2020). While such symbols may reinforce masculine legitimacy, redefinition of organisational identity towards social service orientation enables symbolic repositioning. Comparative studies indicate that when institutional identities incorporate gender inclusivity, public legitimacy increases (Huffman, 2018).

Comparatively, cross-national literature suggests that power transformation is more likely in contexts with stronger gender equality norms and inclusive policies. However, numerical representation alone does not guarantee universal legitimacy; it depends on alignment between social identity and constituent experience (Kweon, 2024). Power transformation is therefore context-dependent and shaped by socio-economic structures.

In sum, the transformation of power relations within masculine organisations is a multidimensional process involving authority redistribution, norm deconstruction, collective voice legitimisation, micro-negotiation, and symbolic management. Collaborative leadership not only alters individual behaviour, but also triggers structural changes in authority distribution and legitimacy. Such transformations occur through adaptive, relational, and contextual practices, underscoring that power is not merely an attribute of formal position, but the outcome of strategic management of perception, networks, and symbolic meaning.

#### **4. Implications for Gender Politics Studies in Local Contexts and Non-State Organisations**

Local-level case studies of women's leadership contribute significantly to the enrichment of global gender politics theory by providing contextual empirical evidence of how gender interacts with institutional structures, social norms, and power dynamics. Social psychology literature demonstrates that barriers to women's leadership arise less from individual capacity than from stereotype-based bias and role congruity, namely the misalignment between feminine attributes and masculine leadership prototypes (Hoyt & Simon, 2017). Meta-analytical findings indicate that women tend to adopt participatory and transformational leadership styles positively associated with organisational effectiveness. These global theories gain analytical depth when tested in local contexts, where political and organisational realities reveal complexities beyond universal models.

Within this framework, Akirav's (2021) findings on female mayoral candidates in Israel highlight the importance of supportive ecosystems such as mentoring, information access, networks, and training (the MINT model). Women's success depends not solely on personal competence, but also on social infrastructure supporting legitimacy negotiation. This perspective is particularly relevant for non-state and civil society organisations lacking formal state legitimacy, where leadership capacity relies heavily on networks, solidarity, and community support.

Empirical contributions from the Global South further challenge Western individualistic assumptions. Penha-Vasconcelos' (2025) study of feminist collective candidacies in Brazil demonstrates collective, intersectional, and community-based leadership models that reposition marginalised groups within formal power structures. Such findings suggest that feminist leadership in the Global South is often structurally transformational rather than merely interpersonal. Similarly, Cerón Vásquez and Chávez Zubieta (2025) show that increased women's participation in Latin America does not automatically translate into institutional transformation, due to persistent structural inequalities.

Theoretical implications point towards a shift from individualistic models to relational and contextual approaches. Recent literature reflects an evolution from gender comparison towards analysis of women's adaptive and transformational capacities within

complex organisations (Saseanu et al., 2024). Contemporary feminist perspectives conceptualise leadership as relational, participatory, and oriented towards collective wellbeing, aligning with transformational and democratic styles frequently adopted by women leaders.

The integration of organisational resilience concepts further enriches this discourse. Resilience, defined as the capacity to maintain positive adjustment under challenging conditions and emerge strengthened after disruption (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007), may be understood within feminist leadership through cognitive, affective, relational, and structural mechanisms. Resilience thus transcends mere survival, functioning as a transformational practice integrating power redistribution and social justice values.

Future research agendas should prioritise non-state organisations, which remain underexplored despite operating under high legitimacy pressure and resource constraints. Comparative and longitudinal studies are required to examine interactions between women's participatory leadership styles and volunteer, community, and donor dynamics.

Moreover, integrating social psychology and intersectionality is essential for uncovering subtle barriers shaped by stereotypes and implicit leadership theories. Mixed-methods research can assess how race, class, and other identities influence leadership legitimacy within civil society organisations, ensuring representation moves beyond symbolism towards substantive inclusion. Conceptual development should explore the relationship between feminist leadership and organisational resilience. Given non-state organisations' vulnerability to funding crises and regulatory shifts, empirical study of how women leaders foster collective learning and avoid pathological learning cycles is crucial. Feminist leadership may thus be positioned as a strategic factor in organisational sustainability amid global uncertainty.

Accordingly, gender politics scholarship requires integration of feminist theory, social psychology, and organisational resilience within interdisciplinary and contextual analytical frameworks. Local and Global South studies not only broaden geographical scope, but also transform conceptual paradigms from individualistic to relational, intersectional, and transformational approaches. By conceptualising women's leadership as a socially negotiated practice within complex power structures, gender politics

research can move beyond representation-versus-effectiveness dichotomies towards substantive analysis of how women shape, challenge, and transform institutions.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that women's leadership within masculine-oriented organisations does not rely solely on formal position, but is shaped through performative practices, collaborative strategies, the negotiation of power relations, and the repeated and contextual construction of symbolic legitimacy. The principal findings affirm that leadership legitimacy is established through a combination of the redistribution of authority, the deconstruction of hegemonic masculine norms, the strengthening of collective voice, and the strategic management of organisational networks and symbols. Collaborative leadership contributes to the transformation of power relations from a dominative to a relational model, while also illustrating how gender identity is negotiated through adaptive practices and identity work in response to role incongruity bias. From a theoretical perspective, this study advances the field of gender politics by integrating performativity theory, the social psychology of leadership, and the concept of organisational resilience within the context of local non-state organisations. Its primary contribution lies in reinforcing a relational and contextual perspective for understanding women's leadership, particularly within organisational spaces characterised by entrenched patriarchal norms. The implications underscore that institutional transformation is not determined solely by numerical representation, but by institutionalised social practices. Future research is encouraged to develop comparative studies across non-state organisations, employing longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to examine the relationship between feminist leadership, symbolic legitimacy, and organisational resilience across diverse social contexts.

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