

Leadership Transformation: Integrating Feminine and Masculine Excellence in an Era of Inclusivity

Tety Thalib¹, Asna Aneta¹, Zulaecha Ngiu¹, Juriko Abdussamad¹

¹State University of Gorontalo
Email: tetythalib72@gmail.com

Received: April 19, 2025

Received in Revised: May 19, 2025

Accepted: June 5, 2025

Abstract

Leadership is a key element in determining the success of higher education governance. This study aims to analyze the implementation of feminine and masculine leadership styles in five higher education institutions in Gorontalo. The feminine approach, which emphasizes collaboration, inclusive communication, and empathy, is compared to the masculine approach which focuses more on assertiveness, risk-taking, and results-oriented. This study uses a qualitative method with in-depth interviews with institutional leaders to explore the implementation of these leadership styles in higher education governance. The results show that the feminine leadership style is effective in creating an inclusive work environment, increasing motivation, and encouraging innovation, while the masculine style provides advantages in strategic decision-making and managing institutional challenges. The combination of these two styles has been proven to increase the effectiveness of higher education governance as a whole. In conclusion, the synergy between feminine and masculine leadership styles is an optimal strategy in responding to the needs of higher education institutions in a dynamic era. This study provides a theoretical contribution in strengthening the understanding of the relevance and flexibility of leadership styles in the context of higher education.

Keywords: Leadership, Feminine, Masculine, Inclusivity

Introduction

Leadership is one of the fundamental elements that determine the success of an organization (Saputra, 2021). In its development, leadership style is no longer simply associated with masculinity that emphasizes power, control, and results, but also includes aspects of femininity that emphasize empathy, inclusivity, and collaboration. In this context, understanding feminine and masculine leadership becomes important, especially in facing dynamic global challenges. Loden (1985) introduced the concept of feminine leadership as an approach that emphasizes values such as empathy, cooperation, individual development, and close interpersonal relationships.

The feminine approach is not meant to replace masculine leadership, but rather to complement it. The masculine style, which is often associated with attributes such as risk-taking, assertiveness, and results-oriented, has advantages in situations that require quick and strategic decision-making. On the other hand, the feminine approach, with its more cooperative and communicative characteristics, is more effective in creating an inclusive and collaborative work environment (Prinsen et al., 2007). Recent research, such as that expressed by Halliday et al. (2021), shows that the combination of feminine and masculine styles can significantly improve organizational performance.

The feminine leadership paradigm is increasingly relevant in the modern era because social and cultural changes demand a more humanistic approach. In addition, Greenockle (2010) through the concept of emotional intelligence emphasizes the importance of empathy and interpersonal skills in leadership. The participatory feminine style provides space for each individual to contribute, regardless of gender background, culture, or position in the organization. With this approach, leaders are able to create a healthy work climate, where each individual feels valued and motivated to give their best to the organization.

One important aspect of the feminine approach is effective communication. Leaders with this style tend to use a communication approach that listens with empathy, pays attention to the needs and aspirations of team members, and creates constructive dialogue. This is in contrast to the traditional masculine style which is more oriented towards one-way instructions. Inclusive communication creates a collaborative work environment, where new ideas can develop and innovation is achieved. As explained by Northouse (2021), successful leadership is leadership that is able to adapt its communication style to the needs of its team.

Masculine leadership remains relevant in various situations, especially those that require the courage to make difficult and quick decisions. Leaders with a masculine style tend to provide clear direction, set goals, and motivate the team to achieve optimal results. In combination with feminine leadership, the masculine style can add strength to the decision-making process by accelerating strategy implementation without neglecting the values of inclusivity. Bass (2006) through transformational leadership theory emphasize that effective leadership must be able to inspire and mobilize followers towards a common goal, regardless of the approach used.

In an inclusive organization, feminine leadership plays a vital role in building a work culture that values diversity. Feminine leaders tend to be more open to new ideas and different perspectives, thus creating a welcoming and supportive workspace. Values such as empathy and individual development help create closer relationships between leaders and team members. Brown (2019) explains that feminine leaders focus not only on achieving organizational goals but also on the well-being of the individuals within them. This approach not only increases productivity but also creates higher loyalty and job satisfaction.

Feminine leadership styles are also relevant in the context of globalization, where organizations are increasingly multicultural and complex. Feminine leaders who emphasize interpersonal relationships and cross-cultural collaboration can create inclusive and innovative work environments. Research from Stahl et al. (2010) highlights the importance of understanding cultural differences in the work context. In this case, adaptive and communicative feminine leadership can bridge these differences to create harmony in diverse teams.

Meanwhile, masculine leadership provides a firm framework for achieving common goals. Effective masculine leaders are able to provide clear structure and direction in situations that require stability and firmness. For example, in a crisis situation, a results-oriented masculine style can help an organization survive and get back on track. Yukl (2019) in his theory of leadership behavior explains that successful leaders are leaders who are able to integrate various approaches to optimize team performance.

In practice, implementing inclusive feminine and masculine styles requires a deep understanding of the needs of the organization and the characteristics of team members. An effective leader is one who is able to adjust his or her leadership style according to the situation and context at hand (Corral & Kruse, 2011). For example, in situations that require innovation, a cooperative and inclusive feminine style may be more effective. Conversely, in situations that require quick decisions, a firm and results-oriented masculine style may be more needed.

Therefore, flexibility and the ability to adapt are key to implementing balanced and inclusive leadership.

Research shows that a combination of feminine and masculine styles can improve overall organizational performance. Organizations led by leaders who are able to integrate these two styles tend to be more innovative, adaptive, and productive. This is in line with the latest views as expressed by Ely et al. (2011), that leadership is not just about gender, but about an approach that places humans at the center of every process. By integrating the best elements of feminine and masculine leadership, leaders can create synergies that support organizational innovation, productivity, and sustainability.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore feminine and masculine leadership in the context of higher education organizations. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon in depth in real and contextual situations. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document studies from five higher education institutions in Gorontalo, namely Bina Mandiri University Gorontalo, Bina Taruna University Gorontalo, STIKES Bhakti Nusantara Gorontalo, Ichsan University North Gorontalo, and Gorontalo Polytechnic. The sources include organizational leaders, lecturers, administrative staff, and students who are considered relevant and have direct experience with leadership styles in their respective environments. Data analysis techniques are carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity is strengthened by triangulation of sources and methods, so that the results of this study are expected to provide an accurate and reliable picture of the influence and implementation of feminine and masculine leadership styles in higher education organizations.

Results and Discussion

Leadership is one of the important elements that determine the success of an organization, including higher education institutions. In the context of higher education, leadership styles can vary widely, from those oriented towards humanistic aspects to those focused on achieving targets and results. Based on feminine and masculine theories, there are two main leadership approaches that have unique characteristics: a feminine style that tends to be collaborative, inclusive, and empathy-based, and a masculine style that is more assertive, results-oriented, and tends to be hierarchical.

This study was conducted in various universities, with a focus on exploring how feminine and masculine leadership styles are applied and their influence on institutional success. The results of the study indicate that both leadership styles have their respective advantages, depending on the context and needs of the organization. The following discussion summarizes the main findings categorized based on indicators of feminine and masculine theories.

Feminine Leadership Style

Feminine leadership is known for its more humanistic and interpersonal relationship-oriented approach. Based on research findings, key indicators that describe feminine leadership styles include collaboration, inclusive communication, and individual potential development.

Collaboration in Decision Making

One of the main characteristics of feminine leadership is a collaborative approach to decision-making. Leaders with this style involve various parties in the decision-making process, including lecturers, administrative staff, and students. For example, in one of the universities studied, leaders routinely hold discussion forums to listen to input from all elements of the

organization. This creates a high sense of involvement among members of the organization and encourages a sense of ownership of the decisions made. This collaboration not only improves the quality of decisions made, but also helps create an inclusive work culture. In feminine theory, this approach is considered as one way to build trust and strengthen relationships between individuals within the organization.

Inclusive Communication

Leaders with a feminine style tend to be more open and responsive in communicating. In this study, it was found that feminine leaders often provide space for their subordinates to convey ideas, opinions, and even criticism. In one of the universities studied, leaders used a communication approach that was not only one-way, but involved feedback from various parties. This shows that the feminine style creates a more democratic work atmosphere, where each individual feels their voice is valued. This inclusive communication also helps reduce the potential for conflict within the organization. By creating an open dialogue, leaders can understand different views and find common solutions that are acceptable to all parties.

Individual Potential Development

Feminine leadership style also emphasizes the importance of developing individual potential. Leaders with this approach often pay more attention to individual needs, both in terms of career development and psychological well-being. For example, in one of the higher education institutions that was the object of the study, leaders actively provided opportunities for young lecturers to attend training and conferences. This not only improves individual competence, but also makes a positive contribution to the overall performance of the organization. According to feminine theory, individual development is a long-term investment that can strengthen the organization. By supporting individual growth, organizations can create a productive and motivating work environment.

Masculine Leadership Style

Masculine leadership style focuses more on results, assertiveness, and quick decision making. In the context of higher education, this style also has its own advantages, especially in situations that require immediate action or face strategic challenges.

Courage to Take Risks

Leaders with a masculine style tend to have the courage to take risks in dealing with complex situations. For example, at one of the universities studied, the leader decided to significantly change the organizational structure to increase efficiency. Although this decision was initially criticized by some parties, the end result showed an increase in organizational performance. This courage to take risks is often needed in situations full of uncertainty. In masculine theory, the ability to make difficult decisions is considered one of the indicators of a leader's success.

Results Orientation

One of the main characteristics of the masculine leadership style is the focus on achieving targets and results. Leaders with this style tend to set clear goals and measure performance based on the results achieved. In one of the institutions that was the object of the study, leaders routinely set key performance indicators for each department. This helps the organization to stay focused on its strategic achievements. This orientation to results also provides clarity for members of the organization about what to achieve and how to achieve it. Although this style is sometimes considered too rigid, in many cases, orientation to results can drive increased efficiency and productivity.

Crisis Management

In crisis situations, masculine leadership styles are often more effective because of their assertive and solution-oriented approach. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, leaders at one university made a quick decision to adopt an online learning system. This assertiveness helped the institution to continue operating despite facing major challenges. This crisis management shows that masculine leadership styles are very relevant in situations that require quick action. In masculine theory, the ability to remain calm and take strategic action during a crisis is considered one of the main strengths of this style.

Synergy between Feminine and Masculine Styles

Although these two leadership styles have different characteristics, research shows that a combination of both styles can provide more optimal results. This synergy allows leaders to adjust their approach to the situation at hand. For example, in one university, leaders adopt a feminine approach in interacting with students and lecturers, while using a masculine approach in setting strategic policies. This approach creates a balance between harmonious interpersonal relationships and achieving optimal results. According to contemporary leadership theory, effective leaders are those who are able to integrate various approaches, both feminine and masculine, to meet the needs of the organization. This flexibility allows the organization to be more adaptive to changes and challenges that arise.

Research Implications

The results of this study provide several important implications. Practically, these findings suggest that college leaders need to have the ability to adopt both leadership styles according to the needs of the situation. Theoretically, this study reinforces the view that effective leadership depends not only on gender, but also on the ability to adapt style to the organizational context. Overall, feminine and masculine leadership styles have their own advantages that complement each other. Feminine style is effective in creating an inclusive work environment and supporting individual development, while masculine style is superior in quick decision-making and achieving results. The combination of these two styles provides the best opportunity to increase organizational success, especially in the context of higher education. By understanding and implementing these findings, higher education leaders can create more effective and adaptive governance to future challenges.

Conclusion

This study reveals that feminine and masculine leadership styles have significant roles in supporting the success of higher education governance. Feminine leadership style, which emphasizes collaboration, inclusive communication, and individual potential development, has been shown to be able to create a harmonious, inclusive work environment, and encourage motivation and innovation among staff and lecturers. On the other hand, masculine leadership style, with its focus on assertiveness, risk-taking, and results-oriented, provides advantages in strategic decision-making and crisis management, especially when the organization faces major challenges. Although each style has different characteristics and advantages, this study emphasizes the importance of synergy between the two. The combination of feminine and masculine styles allows leaders to be more flexible and adaptive in dealing with various situations, both those that require a humanistic approach and those that require quick and strategic action. Thus, leaders who are able to integrate the two styles have a greater chance of creating effective, innovative, and sustainable higher education governance. This conclusion provides insight for university leaders to develop a holistic and contextual leadership approach, so that institutions can continue to grow and be able to answer the challenges of higher education in this dynamic era. In addition, this study also provides theoretical contributions by

strengthening the understanding that leadership effectiveness does not only depend on gender, but on the ability to adjust leadership style to the needs of the organization.

References

- Bass, B. M. (2006). Transformational leadership. *Lawrence Elbaum Associating*. New York: Psychology Press
- Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead: Brave work. Tough conversations. Whole hearts*. Random house.
- Corral Granados, A., & Kruse, F. (2011). Implementing changes in the head teacher role: Adaptation of strategic leadership style in inclusive school settings. *International Journal of Leadership in Public Services*, 7(4), 287-303. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17479881111194170>
- Ely, R. J., Ibarra, H., & Kolb, D. M. (2011). Taking gender into account: Theory and design for women's leadership development programs. *Academy of management learning & education*, 10(3), 474-493. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2010.0046>
- Greenockle, K. M. (2010). The new face in leadership: Emotional intelligence. *Quest*, 62(3), 260-267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2010.10483647>
- Halliday, C. S., Paustian-Underdahl, S. C., & Fainshmidt, S. (2021). Women on boards of directors: A meta-analytic examination of the roles of organizational leadership and national context for gender equality. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 36(2), 173-191. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-019-09679-y>
- Loden, M. (1985). *Feminine leadership: Or how to succeed in business without being one of the boys*. Crown Publishing.
- Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Sage publications.
- Prinsen, F. R., Volman, M. L., & Terwel, J. (2007). Gender-related differences in computer-mediated communication and computer-supported collaborative learning. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 23(5), 393-409. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2007.00224.x>
- Saputra, F. (2021). Leadership, communication, and work motivation in determining the success of professional organizations. *Journal of Law, Politic and Humanities*, 1(2), 59-70. <https://doi.org/10.38035/jlph.v1i2.54>
- Stahl, G. K., Maznevski, M. L., Voigt, A., & Jonsen, K. (2010). Unraveling the effects of cultural diversity in teams: A meta-analysis of research on multicultural work groups. *Journal of international business studies*, 41, 690-709. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2009.85>
- Yukl, G. (2019). *Leadership in organizations* (9th ed.). Pearson.