

Exploring Ethical Leadership in Woman Organization

Januariya Laili^{1*}, Siti Nur'Aini²

^{1,2}Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember, Indonesia

*Januariya@unmuhjember.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received February 6, 2026

Revised March 12, 2026

Accepted April 5, 2026

Keywords: Ethical Leadership,
Moral Value, Woman Organization,
Accountability, Participative

ABSTRACT

The young women's organization "X" focuses on issues of gender equality, religion, society, and culture. Leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring the organization's sustainability amid various internal and external challenges. This research focuses on understanding the patterns, principles, and impacts of ethical leadership in Organization X in Jember Regency. A mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires containing open-ended questions to obtain an initial overview of the phenomenon, followed by qualitative data collection through in-depth interviews to deepen and clarify the findings. The participants in this study were branch-level leaders of Organization X. The findings indicate that leaders in Organization X are expected to consistently serve as moral role models, demonstrating alignment between their words and actions as representatives of the organization's core values. In the dimension of care for others, leadership is perceived as a participatory process that actively involves members in decision-making and the implementation of organizational programs, reflecting principles of deliberation and empowerment. Meanwhile, in the dimension of accountability and compliance, leaders are required to adhere not only to organizational regulations but also to prevailing social norms within the broader community. These findings suggest that despite its strong and firm ideological foundation, Organization X demonstrates contextual flexibility in social engagement as part of its da'wah strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's organizations play a strategic role in the process of civilization building, as reflected in their contributions across various sectors, including education, economic development, gender empowerment, child and women protection, religious activities, and other social fields (Jumaidi, 2023) (Mardiyah et al., 2024) (Rahman Bayumi et al., 2022). Organization X is an autonomous women's organization established in 1931 that has actively engaged in addressing issues related to social and gender inclusion, reproductive health, stunting prevention, and economic empowerment. The overarching goal of Organization X is to cultivate Islamic daughters who contribute meaningfully to their families, society, nation, and religion, ultimately fostering the realization of a truly Islamic society (Keputusan, 2016). Achieving this goal is inseparable from the role of leadership in planning, directing, and mobilizing organizational resources. Based on the guidelines formulated during the 2022 Congress of Organization X, the organization currently faces several persistent challenges. These include limitations in both the quantity and quality of cadres, which remain unresolved and hinder organizational regeneration. The organization's dynamics, which rely heavily on a small number of active individuals, constrain its capacity to function optimally. In addition, rapid social change has given rise to increasingly complex issues affecting women and children. These challenges are further compounded by dynamic political conditions that

influence organizational networks, which are at times exploited for the practical interests of certain individuals or political groups, potentially undermining the organization's foundational values. Beyond social and political challenges, Organization X also confronts ideological threats, particularly the emergence of hybrid cultural and spiritual trends that risk eroding the organization's ideological principles. These multifaceted challenges underscore the central role of leadership in ensuring organizational sustainability. As a movement-based organization, Organization X requires leadership that is firmly grounded in values and morality, capable of preserving organizational identity while remaining adaptive to social change.

Organizational leadership plays a critical role in guiding organizations through challenges, shaping responses, and formulating solutions (Chiwisa, 2024). Leadership is built upon the ability to influence members' behavior in pursuit of organizational goals. Effective leadership enables leaders to direct and guide members in fulfilling their roles, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance (Katsaros et al., 2020)(Purwanto et al., 2021). While the general literature review emphasizes the importance of leadership influence and control over members, in the context of Organization X, leadership must be implemented using an approach rooted in organizational values, such as role modeling, deliberation, and member empowerment. This means that Organization X requires leadership that is not only structural but also ideological and moral value. Previous studies conducted within the broader organizational context of X have predominantly examined prophetic and transformational leadership (N. Sari & Arif, 2020)(Pamungkas et al., 2021)(Adawiyah et al., 2023)(Iriyanto & Purwanto, 2023)(Primasary & Syamsudin, 2023)(Wijayanto & Srijani, 2023)(Laili et al., 2024), spiritual leadership (Zakiyah et al., 2024), and authentic leadership (Nur'Aini & Laili, 2024). Essentially, these types of leadership are still included in ethical leadership (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018). Fundamentally, these leadership approaches fall within the broader framework of ethical leadership [17]. However, empirical studies that specifically address ethical leadership within Organization X remain limited. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring ethical leadership among the board members of Organization X's women's organization.

Ethical leadership is defined as leadership that adheres to prevailing moral norms and is manifested through personal conduct and interpersonal relationships, thereby serving as a model for organizational members through communication, reinforcement, and decision-making processes (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leadership can be measured using three interrelated dimensions, namely the ethics of justice, the ethics of criticism, and the ethics of care (Kalshoven et al., 2011). Furthermore, ethical leadership is supported by three core factors: integrity, professionalism, and self-development (Krisharyuli et al., 2020). Values-based leadership emphasizes communication processes that reinforce organizational values and identity (U. T. Sari, 2019) (Krisharyuli et al., 2020). Accordingly, this study aims to explore the leadership of Organization X in Jember Regency as an autonomous organization characterized by distinct cultural values and organizational dynamics. Ethical leadership is therefore considered an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding leadership practices within Organization X. Leaders who embody ethical leadership demonstrate behavior grounded in ideological values and position themselves as role models through ethical and moral conduct. More specifically, this study seeks to address several key questions that are elaborated in the Results and Discussion section: (1) What are the forms and characteristics of ethical leadership practices implemented by the board members of Organization X's women's organization? (2) What values underpin decision-making processes and leadership interactions? (3) What challenges are encountered in implementing ethical leadership? (4) How does ethical leadership influence organizational dynamics and member commitment?. Accordingly, the findings of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of ethical leadership practices within a values-based women's organization.

2. METHODS

This study employed a *mixed methods* approach with a *sequential explanatory* design to examine ethical leadership within organizational X. The use of this design allowed the study to integrate quantitative and qualitative data in a structured and complementary manner, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Data collection was conducted in two sequential stages. In the first stage, data were gathered through an open-ended questionnaire administered to 60 branch administrators of organization X. This phase aimed to obtain an initial mapping of ethical leadership practices across branches by identifying general tendencies, shared perceptions, and emerging issues related to ethical leadership within the organization. Although the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions, it functioned as an exploratory quantitative phase that informed the subsequent qualitative inquiry. In the second stage, qualitative data were collected through a focus group discussion (FGD) involving seven key informants representing branch leadership, including the chairperson and members from the cadre development, social affairs, and education divisions. The FGD was conducted to deepen, clarify, and contextualize the findings derived from the questionnaire phase. Data analysis was carried out sequentially and integratively. Questionnaire responses were first analyzed to identify general patterns and preliminary themes, which then served as the basis for developing the FGD guidelines. Qualitative data obtained from the FGD were analyzed thematically to explore the meanings and organizational contexts underlying the initial findings. Integration of quantitative and qualitative data occurred at the interpretation stage, allowing the study to move beyond surface-level patterns toward a nuanced and contextualized understanding of ethical leadership as practiced within organization. This integrative approach ensured that the findings reflect both broad organizational tendencies and in-depth insights from key organizational actors, thereby enhancing the rigor and credibility of the study.

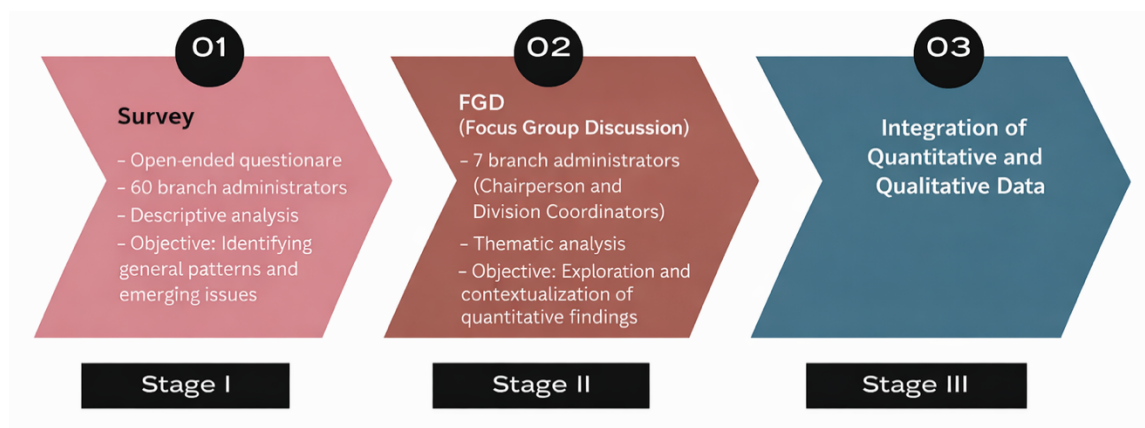


Figure 1. Methods

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collection process that has been carried out, the results of the analysis of this research can be explained as follows:

3.1 The Forms and characteristics of ethical leadership practices implemented by the board members of Organization X's women's organization

In the role of leader in organization X in Jember, "*pemimpin iku kudu iso ngeke i contoh*", is a dominant expression, this emphasizes the importance that leaders must be able to align their words

with their actions. Leaders are expected to demonstrate behavior that reflects the values of the organization, both in organizational management and in daily life. As organizational managers, leaders are responsible for directing the organization effectively to achieve common goals. As an autonomous organization, Organization X upholds institutional values that are consistent with those of its parent organization. One of the foundational values guiding the organization is adherence to the principle of *following the Prophet (ittibā' al-rasūl)*, as formalized in its statutes and bylaws (AD/ART), and applied across individual, social, and organizational domains. Within the framework of leadership, the Prophet Muhammad exemplified ethical leadership through moral integrity, consistency between words and actions, and exemplary conduct in all aspects of life. This model of leadership played a crucial role in cultivating trust, loyalty, and long-term commitment among his followers, thereby reinforcing the ethical foundation of collective life and organizational governance. (Santoso, 2024).

Ethical leadership can be defined as leadership that prioritizes ethical moral values. It can be argued that leaders who practice ethical leadership are role models for their members. Ethical leadership is reflected in the behavior of leaders who run the organization based on ethical values. In the context of organizational X, ethical moral leadership is crucial because organizational X is not only a women's movement organization but also a cadre-building organization, so leaders play a significant role. In the context of cadre-building, the leader's exemplary behavior serves as a social learning mechanism, where members observe, imitate, and internalize the values and will reproduce the behavior displayed by their leader. (Bandura, 2001) Consistency in words and actions of leaders in organizational X not only meets organizational demands but also results from the internalization of moral values inherent in the leader and becomes a representation of Islamic values.

3.2 Values underpin decision-making processes and leadership interactions

Concern for people with the main sub-theme "*leaders must involve members in managing the organization,*" emphasizes that in an organization, leaders cannot run the organization alone, but leaders must involve members and provide opportunities for members to contribute to every movement of the organization. One effort to develop cadres in the organization is by involving and giving responsibility to members of the organization, both in incidental activities and in certain divisions. In an organization like organization X, which is rooted in Islamic values and prioritizes the principle of deliberation, member involvement is crucial. Deliberation is not only understood as a formal procedure, but also as a form of respect for the reason, opinion, and potential of each member.

3.3 The Challenges are encountered in implementing ethical leadership

In the *Accountability* and *Compliance* sub-theme, "*Must Follow Organizational Rules,*" this means that organizational rules are crucial in organizational leadership. In terms of accountability and compliance, organization X leaders not only comply with organizational rules but also social norms. Muhammadiyah itself has long taught the importance of adapting to changing times without abandoning the basic principles of Islam. As an autonomous organization, organization X is obligated to comply with the rules and policies established by Muhammadiyah. However, in addition to complying with formal organizational rules, organization X leaders must also be able to adhere to prevailing social norms.

Therefore, organization X leaders need to demonstrate the ability to adapt to social norms without sacrificing the interests of the organization. Social programs, women's empowerment, da'wah, and other activities held by organization X must be aligned with the social values developing in society so that they are easily accepted and beneficial to many parties. This is important considering that organization X operates not only within the organization's internal space, but also in the context of a society with a wide variety of cultures, social values, and norms. Research reveals that organization X has a preference for women's philanthropy that includes women's empowerment,

social entrepreneurship, and social welfare (Annisa, 2012). In the organization X, ideology is a value that cannot be negotiated, but in the realm of organization X has flexibility as part of its da'wah strategy.

3.4 How does ethical leadership influence organizational dynamics and member commitment

The findings suggest that ethical leadership fosters trust, loyalty, and long-term commitment among members. In a faith-based women's organization such as Organization X, leadership grounded in moral exemplarity strengthens organizational legitimacy and sustainability. Although the dimensions of responsibility and sustainability were not explored in depth in this study, there are indications of the organization's concern for environmental sustainability. This is evident in organization X various activities, which strive to eliminate plastic use and preserve the environment. Therefore, further research is expected to further explore the issues of responsibility and sustainability. Future research is recommended to examine the dimensions of *responsibility and sustainability* in more depth within faith-based women's organizations. This focus is crucial because the current study only found initial indications, such as reduced plastic waste use, without analyzing the mechanisms and practical impacts. With this approach, future research can deepen our understanding of how *ethical leadership* drives organizations to contribute socially and environmentally sustainably.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined ethical leadership among the board members of Women's Organization X by addressing five research questions related to leadership characteristics, underlying values, value internalization processes, implementation challenges, and organizational impact. The findings indicate that ethical leadership within Organization X is primarily characterized by moral exemplarity, particularly consistency between words and actions. Leadership is grounded in Islamic ideological values, including the principle of *ittibā' al-rasūl* and deliberative decision-making (*musyawarah*), which emphasize integrity, collective responsibility, and inclusivity. Ethical leadership functions as a mechanism for value transmission through role modeling and participatory engagement, supporting cadre development and strengthening organizational cohesion. Leaders are required to balance adherence to organizational regulations with sensitivity to prevailing social norms, reflecting the need for contextual adaptability without compromising ideological commitments. Overall, ethical leadership contributes to trust, member commitment, and organizational sustainability. These findings highlight the central role of value-based leadership in shaping governance practices within faith-based women's organizations.

5. REFERENCES

- Adawiyah, R., Zhilalurrahman, M. F., & Asy'ari, H. (2023). Penerapan Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah di SD Muhammadiyah 12 Pamulang. *Akademika: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 5(2), 115–135.
- Albarracin, D., & Shavitt, S. (2018). Attitudes and Attitude Change Attitude: A Person's Evaluation of an Object on a Favorable to Unfavorable Continuum. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 69(June 2013), 4.2-4.29. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych->
- Annisa, N. (2012). Preferensi Filantropi Perempuan pada Nasyiatul Aisyiyah di Jawa Timur. *Jurnal Indo-Islamika*, 2(2), 273–309. <https://doi.org/10.15408/idi.v2i2.1178>
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 1–26.

- Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 117–134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002>
- Chiwisa, C. C. (2024). *Journal of Human Resource and Leadership The Role of Leadership in Crisis Management : A Literature Review Journal of Human Resource and Leadership*. 9(3), 48–65.
- Iriyanto, S., & Purwanto, E. (2023). Analisis implementasi model kepemimpinan profetik di perguruan tinggi Muhammadiyah (Studi kasus Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang). *Jurnal Manajerial*, 10(02), 255–269.
- Jumaidi, I. (2023). Peran Organisasi Aisyiyah Di Jambi Terhadap Pendidikan Dan Sosial Keagamaan. *Malay Studies: History, Culture and Civilization*, 2(1), 10–14. <https://e-journal.lp2m.uinjambi.ac.id/ojp/index.php/malay/article/download/1932/920>
- Kalshoven, K., Den Hartog, D. N., & De Hoogh, A. H. B. (2011). Ethical leadership at work questionnaire (ELW): Development and validation of a multidimensional measure. *Leadership Quarterly*, 22(1), 51–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.12.007>
- Katsaros, K. K., Tsirikas, A. N., & Kosta, G. C. (2020). The impact of leadership on firm financial performance: the mediating role of employees' readiness to change. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 41(3), 333–347. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-02-2019-0088>
- Keputusan, T. (2016). *Tanfidz keputusan*. 15–27.
- Krisharyuli, M., Himam, F., & Ramdani, Z. (2020). Ethical of Leadership in Organizations. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 2(1), 1–7. <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/leadership/article/view/1-17>
- Laili, J., Nur'Aini, S., & Naashirudin, M. F. (2024). Guru Muhammadiyah: Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Profetik Terhadap Kinerja Guru di Kabupaten X. *Jurnal Penelitian IPTEKS*, 9(1), 34–40.
- Mardiyah, U., Rais, L., & Rumodar, R. (2024). *Strengthening the Protection for Women and Children from Violence (Collaboration between Aisyiyah and Naswiatul Aisyiyah in Sorong) Memperkuat Perlindungan Perempuan dan Anak dari Kekerasan (Kolaborasi Aisyiyah dan Naswiatul Aisyiyah di Kota Sorong)*. 7(2), 71–84.
- Nur'Aini, S., & Laili, J. (2024). Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Autentik Terhadap Komitmen Organisasi Pada Pimpinan Organisasi Perempuan Melalui Readiness to Change. *Jurnal Psikologi: Jurnal Ilmiah Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan*, 11(2), 447–457.
- Pamungkas, O., Diarsi, S., & Supandi, M. (2021). Model kepemimpinan profetik KH. Ahmad Dahlan dalam pendidikan islam. *Masaliq*, 1(3), 87–103.
- Primasary, A., & Syamsudin, S. (2023). Kepemimpinan transformasional dan instruksional kepala sekolah untuk meningkatkan mutu lulusan (studi kasus di SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Yogyakarta). *Indonesian Journal of Educational Management and Leadership*, 1(2), 135–145.
- Purwanto, A., Asbari, M., Hartuti, Setiana, Y. N., & Fahmi, K. (2021). Effect of Psychological Capital and Authentic Leadership on Innovation Work Behavior. *International Journal of Social and Management Studies (IJOSMAS)*, 02(01), 1–13. <https://ijosmas.org/index.php/ijosmas/article/view/4>
- Rahman Bayumi, M., Alfit Jaya, R., & Zakat dan Wakaf, M. (2022). Kontribusi Peran Perempuan dalam Membangun Perekonomian sebagai Penguatan Kesetaraan Gender di Indonesia. *Al Huwiyah Journal of Woman and Children Studies*, 2(2), 30–42.

-
- Santoso, S. (2024). Islamic Leadership: Prophet Muhammad as a Role Model of Charismatic, Transformational and Servant Leader. *Jurnal Syntax Transformation*, 5(7), 970–977. <https://doi.org/10.46799/jst.v5i7.980>
- Sari, N., & Arif, D. B. (2020). Membangun kepemimpinan profetik kader ikatan mahasiswa Muhammadiyah. *CIVIS: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*, 9(1).
- Sari, U. T. (2019). the Effect of Ethical Leadership on Voice Behavior: the Role of Mediators Organizational Identification and Moderating Self-Efficacy for Voice. *Journal of Leadership in Organizations*, 1(1), 48–66. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jlo.43771>
- Wijayanto, H., & Srijani, N. (2023). Pencerminan Gaya Kepemimpinan Transformasional Pimpinan Amal Usaha Muhammadiyah Bidang Ekonomi Syariah Di Ponorogo. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam*, 9(2), 2247–2258.
- Zakiah, Z., Mukarromah, S., & Kusno, K. (2024). Perempuan Berkemajuan Berbasis Spiritual Leadership Pada Pimpinan Daerah Aisyiyah Banyumas. *Jurnal Literasi Pengabdian Dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*, 3(2), 85–96.