



Jurnal Social Library

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Kesepian dalam Kepemimpinan: Studi Kasus pada Pemimpin Perempuan

Loneliness in Leadership : Case Studies on Women Leaders

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Disubmit: 16 Juni 2024; Diproses: 20 Juni 2024; Diaccept: 29 Juni 2024; Dipublish: 01 Juli 2024

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi makna kesepian dalam kepemimpinan dan mendeskripsikan dinamika kesepian dalam kepemimpinan ditinjau dari faktor pemicu, serta konsekuensi yang dirasakan oleh pegawai negeri sipil perempuan dalam kepemimpinan, terhadap pelaksanaan tugasnya. Penelitian kualitatif dipilih sebagai jenis penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Metode dalam penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian studi kasus. Partisipan yang dipilih untuk penelitian ini adalah PNS perempuan yang berstatus sebagai pejabat struktural Administrator (eselon III) pada instansi pemerintah daerah di lingkungan Pemerintah Provinsi Sumatera Utara. Jumlah partisipan untuk dapat memperoleh penjelasan yang holistik dan komprehensif mengenai kesepian yang dialami oleh pemimpin perempuan sebanyak tiga (3) orang. Dalam penelitian kualitatif ini, metode pengumpulan data yang digunakan berfokus pada wawancara mendalam dan narasi. Selain itu, metode dokumentasi atau metode visual juga dilakukan dan dalam mengumpulkan data dalam penelitian ini digunakan data primer dan data sekunder. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa seluruh responden mengalami kesepian selama menjadi pemimpin.

Kata Kunci: Kesepian; Kepemimpinan; Pemimpin Wanita.

Abstract

This research aims to explore the meaning of loneliness in leadership and describe the dynamics of loneliness in leadership in terms of trigger factors, as well as the consequences felt by female civil servants in office, on the implementation of their duties. Qualitative research was chosen as the type of research used in this research. The method in this research uses a case study research method. The participants selected for this research were female civil servants who had the status of structural Administrator officials (echelon III) in regional government agencies within the North Sumatra Provincial Government. The number of participants to be able to obtain a holistic and comprehensive explanation of the loneliness experienced by female leaders was three (3) people. In this qualitative research, the data collection method used focuses on in-depth interviews and narratives. Apart from that, documentation methods or visual methods were also carried out and in collecting data in this research, primary data and secondary data were used. The research results show that all respondents experienced loneliness while serving as leaders.

Keywords: Loneliness; Leadership; Women Leaders.

How to Cite: Amrah, N., Rahmadani, V. G. & Ananda, F. (2024), Kesepian dalam Kepemimpinan: Studi Kasus pada Pemimpin Perempuan, *Jurnal Social Library*, 4 (2): 256-262.

INTRODUCTION

Loneliness experienced by employees in the workplace is not a new phenomenon, but there is still little research on loneliness in leadership that occurs in the workplace, especially experienced by female civil servants who also hold structural positions in government organizations. The loneliness felt by employees in the workplace has the potential to be detrimental to the organization (Anand & Mishra, 2018). Loneliness experienced by employees is basically a unique emotion that occurs where they work. It is said to be unique because loneliness is synonymous with being alone, even though they are surrounded by colleagues who are also in the same organization. In addition, increasing competition in organizations will make it more difficult for employees to establish real social relationships (Peng et al., 2017). These social relationships are very important in human life (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). This is because humans as individuals spend most of their time where they work (Kim & Qu, 2020).

This loneliness can occur when employees carry out their daily work amidst diverse and complex interpersonal relationships, but they feel they have failed to build these social relationships. Difficulty mingling with co-workers in complex relationships will put employees in the position of feeling friendless, which will result in them tending to feel lonely (Wright, 2005). Apart from that factor, Rokach (2014) also notes that employees' experiences of loneliness and disappointment are also caused by a lack of respect from their colleagues or superiors. Employees feel left alone and tend to make negative evaluations of themselves.

Employees who feel lonely also tend to have low social skills and have a low level of perception of social risk (Lam & Lau, 2012). This loneliness also makes employees concentrate more on negative social information than positive ones (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009). This ultimately makes employees who feel lonely tend to see threats rather than opportunities in every condition related to their work (Jung et al., 2021).

A person's personality is also used as the main reason for loneliness, while approaching loneliness in an organizational context as an environmental factor is often ignored. If loneliness is defined as a type of mismatch between an individual's social and emotional needs and the reality of their social environment, then the work environment can be a factor that contributes to developing and is responsible for the emergence of loneliness (Rubenstein & Shaver, 1982).

According to Karnick (2005), the manifestation of loneliness as a feeling of physical, emotional or social isolation, shows that loneliness is a dangerous condition. When employees feel isolated in their organization, because social interactions between members of the organization are not going well, for example, so that it is difficult and they tend to avoid expressing their views and opinions openly to other people around them, and gradually move away from other people, then they will feel loneliness in the work environment. Loneliness experienced at work can be considered a condition whose causes and consequences are different than the loneliness an individual experiences in their personal life. For this reason, the general definition

of loneliness and the conditions that can increase it become a conceptual guide for observing the phenomenon of loneliness experienced by a leader in work life.

According to Weiss (1973), several factors cause feelings of loneliness such as an individual's failure to feel connected to a social group, not being at the desired level of closeness, and inadequate communication and interaction within the group. Groups in this case include family relationships, friendships, and neighbors (individuals). In an organizational context, it is a relationship between colleagues or work groups (organization).

In government organizations, occupying a structural position means being a leader in small groups according to echelon levels. Both as Supervisory officials (echelon IV), Administrator officials (echelon III), Primary High Leadership Positions (echelon II) and Middle High Leadership Positions (echelon I). Each official structurally has subordinates who will help carry out their duties and functions as leaders at a certain echelon level. In order to become a leader as intended, civil servants will be included in a mechanism for the appointment process to a position.

Individual participation in succession to achieve a certain position can make leaders feel isolated in the situation and separated from their environment and colleagues (Rokach, 2014). This is because promotions that often occur in educational institutions, for example, where individuals are promoted in the same organization, make employees experience drastic changes in relationships when they are transitioned from teaching positions to leadership positions. Changes in interaction patterns are not only found

between previous colleagues, but also occur in new work environments. (Nichols and McBride, 2017).

Changes in interaction patterns have led leaders to report that they feel more isolated and vulnerable than before (Jazzar & Kimball, 2019). Feelings of loneliness are seen significantly among leaders promoted from within organizations (Nichols & McBride, 2017). McCooley (2017) argues that women involved in leadership roles tend to experience higher levels of loneliness, compounded by the fact that they are involved in traditionally male-dominated leadership roles.

Therefore, the overall aim of this research is to explore feelings of loneliness experienced by women, with particular emphasis on female civil servants who are appointed to positions in government organizations. For this reason, based on the explanation of the reasons above, researchers are interested in researching the dynamics of loneliness experienced by leaders. In this case female civil servants who hold positions in the Regional Government Organization of North Sumatra Province with the aim of exploring the dynamics of loneliness in leadership, with special emphasis on Female civil servants who are appointed to positions in government organizations and the consequences that may arise in carrying out their duties.

METHOD

Qualitative research was chosen as the type of research used in this research. The method in this research uses a case study research method. The participants selected for this research were female civil servants who had the status of structural Administrator officials (echelon III) in

regional government agencies within the North Sumatra Provincial Government. The number of participants to be able to obtain a holistic and comprehensive explanation of the loneliness experienced by female leaders was three (3) people. In this qualitative research, the data collection method used focuses on in-depth interviews and narratives. Apart from that, documentation methods or visual methods were also carried out and in collecting data in this research, primary data and secondary data were used. Some of the data collection tools that researchers use are recording devices, interview guides, and writing instruments. Data analysis was carried out in this research using the phenomenological data analysis method, known as FDA. Miles and Huberman (Iskandar, 2008) explain that the analysis stage consists of steps, namely data reduction, data display or data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the research on the first respondent showed that the respondent felt that implementing leadership as she wanted was not easy, despite the efforts she made for the common good and achieving goals. According to her, the obstacles she faces as a female leader include the difficulty of accepting her opinions from subordinates because there is still a one-sided view of female leaders. This makes her have to try harder. Another problem is that, because there are not as many female leaders as there are male leaders, when she needs input regarding leadership from fellow women, this input will be more difficult to obtain and in the end, she has to learn on her own to become a better leader. Another challenge that is

also quite difficult to face is how she must be able to position herself as a leader without ignoring normative expectations of herself as a woman. Apart from that, the first respondent also considered that being a leader is not easy because the respondent's personality does not really like to dominate and the respondent is actually an introvert. This makes it even more difficult for her to lead, but she still continues to learn to be able to communicate better with her subordinates. Plus, as the intensity of work increases day by day, respondents begin to lack time for social life outside of working hours. The respondent's condition since taking office ultimately had a negative impact on her emotional state. Respondents felt bored, unenthusiastic and lonely at work.

The results of the research on the second respondent, she stated that during her leadership, the biggest challenge she faced was overcoming the negative view of herself as a leader. This can be seen from how in her early days in office, there were still parties who were skeptical about her abilities. This skepticism makes her have to try her best to gain recognition for her ability to lead. Another problem that she experiences is the judgment that she is too harsh and difficult to understand. This is because she is a quite assertive leader. Her assertive behavior was seen by the parents as unpleasant behavior. She also felt lonely since becoming the leader due to changes in social life. She added that apart from her inability to adapt better socially, another reason that also contributed was because she had a role as a leader that had to be maintained. She finds it increasingly difficult to build closer relationships because of the power dynamics involved.

There is also the idea that she must maintain a certain level of professionalism and distance as a leader. The respondent's condition had a negative impact on her emotional state. Respondents even thought about giving up. She felt her workload was too heavy and did not receive support from the work environment. Direct support at any time from her husband is also difficult to obtain because of the long distance relationship they live in. She also feels lonely, not enthusiastic about working and feels unable to continue working.

Furthermore, the results of the research on the third respondent, she said that while being a leader, the toughest challenge she had to face was proving her worthiness. This is because there are parties who consider her incapable of leading. This proof requires her to show that she can be better than they expected. She must also try to remain firm in her stance and decisions, and use various means to make her decisions acceptable. Meanwhile, the respondent believes that her personality is actually not completely suitable to be a leader, but she always tries to be positive in facing the demands of being a leader. She has also felt lonely since becoming a leader due to changes in social life which are not as good as before she become a leader and there were times when she felt like she has failed to do her job well.

The results of the research conducted showed that there were challenges faced by each subject as a female leader and there were feelings of loneliness felt by each subject. The most important challenge felt by the three subjects was overcoming the disdain given to them by other employees as leaders. The challenges

that each subject must face when leading have an emotional impact on them. The second and third subjects maintained their firmness and stuck to their respective positions even though this made them disliked by several parties, while the first subject chose to balance the expectations of other employees of him and his personal expectations. Apart from the challenges faced by each subject in leading, each subject also feels lonely. This loneliness can be seen from the aspects of Trait Loneliness, Social Desirability Loneliness, and Depression Loneliness.

These results are related to Russell's (1996) theory which groups loneliness into three aspects, namely trait loneliness, social desirability loneliness, and depression loneliness, then it can be seen that the things felt by the subject can represent every aspect of loneliness. In the subjects assessment that their personality do not match their position, it can represent the trait loneliness which states that the loneliness felt by a person is due to the personality. Feelings of loneliness due to an unsatisfactory social life since becoming a leader can represent social desirability loneliness, namely loneliness that occurs because individuals do not get the social life they want. Lastly, the feeling of boredom, lack of enthusiasm, and loneliness felt by the subjects at work, even to the point of feeling unable to do their job and having thoughts of giving up, can represent depression loneliness which is characterized by feelings of lack of enthusiasm and failure experienced by the individuals.

Furthermore, there are several similarities that can be seen from the three subjects related to aspects of loneliness. First, each subject felt a mismatch between

their position and their personality. Second, all subjects felt lonely due to their social life since becoming leaders. Third, all subjects felt the emotional impact they had felt since becoming a leader.

CONCLUSION

Loneliness felt by employees is something that is often encountered. This loneliness is also often found in employees who serve as leaders, especially female leaders. Women involved in leadership roles tend to experience higher levels of loneliness, coupled with the fact that they are traditionally involved in male-dominated leadership roles means they have to face more challenges in their leadership compared to male leaders. The challenges that women leaders have to face can have a negative impact on their emotional state and also lead to loneliness.

The results of this research show that female leaders in the Regional Government Organization of North Sumatra Province also experience the same thing. The female leaders who lead in the Regional Government Organization of North Sumatra Province experience challenges in carrying out their leadership because they are female leaders in organizations that are dominated by men, which makes many parties underestimate their ability to lead and there are also those who consider them unworthy of the leader position. The challenges they have to face make women leaders in the Regional Government Organization of North Sumatra Province feel a negative impact on their mental health, one of which is a feeling of loneliness due to the incompatibility of their personalities with their position as leaders, changes in social life, and unsatisfactory working conditions.

Based on the results of this research, it shows that female leaders in the Regional Government Organization of North Sumatra Province experience loneliness. Women leaders also experience challenges that they have to face due to a lack of support from the work environment and even there are parties who feel that the subjects are not worthy of being leaders. This means that agencies are expected to make efforts to create a more positive climate. Apart from that, in this research, although loneliness and the challenges faced by women leaders have been studied in depth, the factors that cause loneliness have not been studied in depth. Therefore, further research can explore the factors that cause loneliness and consider researching women leaders across institutions so that future research can compare the experiences of women leaders across institutions.

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