*Article*

# The Analysis of Women's Leadership Communication Styles in Group Communication

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**Abstract:** Women's leadership continues to change in response to the development of various social changes that occur. This research aims to dig deeper into the communication style of women's leadership in a communication group context, focusing on women leaders in the Universitas Mercu Buana student organization for the 2022/2023 academic year. This research refers to Communication Theory by Sasa Djuarsa Sendjaja which states that leadership styles in groups are divided into five categories, authoritarian style, bureaucratic style, diplomatic style, democratic style, and laissez-faire or group-centered style. With a qualitative case study approach, researchers collect data through data collection and analysis such as in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. This research uses the constructivism paradigm. In this study, researchers interviewed 5 main key informants and 10 additional informants who are administrators of 5 student organizations active at Universitas Mercu Buana. This research applies Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis technique, then source triangulation is used as a data validity checking technique. The results showed a comprehensive picture of how women leaders in student organizations use their communication styles to give orders, communicate, make decisions, motivate, supervise performance, and lead their group members. The findings show variations in women's leadership communication approaches, with some leaders highlighting assertive leadership, while most lean more towards an inclusive and democratic approach. The researcher can conclude that this study provides a deep insight into the role and contribution of women leaders in group communication, particularly in student organizations.

**Keywords:** Communication; communication style; women leadership; group communication; student organization

## Introduction

A student organization (*ormawa*) is a group or body formed by students in higher education institutions to develop potential, interests, talents, and skills in various fields. Student organization serves as a platform for students to actively participate in activities related to self-development, learning, and community service (Nastiti, 2023). Student organizations include various types of organizations, such as the Student Executive Board (BEM), Student Associations (HIMA), and other Student Activity Units (UKM). Student organization plays an important role in shaping the character and skills of students. Students can hone their organizational, communication, collaboration, and leadership skills through involvement in the student organization. Additionally, student organization provides a platform for students to expand their networks, exchange ideas, and learn from practical experiences that cannot be obtained in the classroom. (Nastiti, 2023) states that student organizations can foster democratic attitudes in students, including encouraging critical thinking, discipline, and responsibility. At Universitas Mercu Buana, the student organization is an integral part of campus life,

serving to enhance student's learning experiences and support broader educational goals. The phenomenon of female leadership in student organizations at Universitas Mercu Buana draws particular attention, especially due to changes in female representation in leadership positions.

Data obtained from the official sources of the Student Affairs Bureau of Universitas Mercu Buana shows an increase in the number of female leaders in the past two years, particularly in the academic years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. In this analysis, it was revealed that there was a 10% increase in the representation of female leaders in student organizations. The researcher will explain in detail the data showing the increase in female leadership representation within the student organizations at Universitas Mercu Buana. From the 40 student organizations recorded in the archives of the Student Affairs Bureau of Universitas Mercu Buana, the representation of male leaders in the student organization management for the 2021/2022 period was 23 people, accounting for 58%. Meanwhile, the representation of female leaders in the student organization management for the 2022/2023 period was 17 people or similar with 43%. This indicates that there was still a significant male dominance in student organization management during the 2021/2022 period.
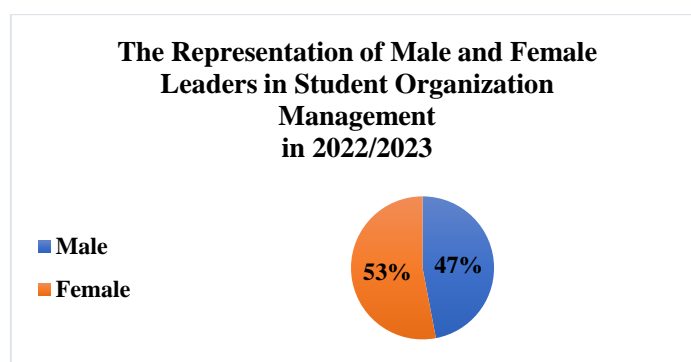


Picture 1 Pie chart of leader representation by gender in student organizations
for the academic year 2022/2023

The researchers see this as a unique phenomenon worthy of further study because it is relevant to the research object. Student organizations are environments rich in dynamics and social interactions closely related to communication contexts. Women's leadership in student organizations has great potential to create space for these organizations to learn and participate in the process of becoming true leaders. The developments shown in this phenomenon indicate a change in the role of women in leadership. In the past, before the women's emancipation movement, women's representation and participation in leadership were very minimal, as this was considered a male-dominated area. Women had limited access to education, social life, politics, and the economy for centuries. The presence of women in leadership positions can foster great hope in society that women also have the capability and ability to influence development, progress, and bring positive change. A study by Bappenas (Rachim et al., 2020) mentioned that women have the potential to participate more in Indonesia's economy and contribute as drivers of the nation's life and development.

Research conducted by Tjahjono and Palupi also shows that, according to employees, female managers have different characteristics compared to male managers. Women tend to provide more assistance, be more detail-oriented, multitask, have good communication skills, be good listeners, and be able to see and exploit business opportunities (Rachim et al., 2020). A leader must be able to communicate effectively, as 70-90% of a leader's daily work involves communication (Mulyana et al., 2019). Suherman (2019) defines leadership as "a social influence process where the leader's role is to seek voluntary participation from subordinates towards achieving organizational goals." Leadership discussed in this research is part of building an experience. Communication style in leadership is seen as a process of change management because each process involves learning that can create opportunities for student organizations and their leaders to learn. Therefore, this research focuses on examining women's leadership in group communication, showing that women's leadership in student organizations is a learning process to express their leadership within the context of group communication. Although there has been much research on communication in leadership, there is still a lack

of understanding of women's leadership communication styles in the context of group communication, especially among student organizations. This research focuses on two main questions:

i.   How is the communication style of women's leadership in group communication in student organizations at Universitas Mercu Buana University for the academic year 2022/2023;

ii.  Why do female leaders in student organizations at Universitas Mercu Buana for the academic year 2022/2023 choose to use that communication style in their leadership?

This research aims to identify and analyze the communication style of women's leadership in group communication within student organizations at Universitas Mercu Buana for the academic year 2022/2023. Furthermore, the improvement of this communication strategy can be initially applied in the immediate environment, namely student organizations, as a first step in creating and shaping female leaders capable of generating positive changes that have a broad impact, both on a small scale and on society.

## Literature Review

### 1. Communication

The term communication etymologically comes from the English word "communication," which derives from the Latin "*communicatio*," and is rooted in the word "communis," meaning "common" or "shared." Effendy argues that "common" here means common meaning (Effendy, 2017, p. 99). Communication suggests that a thought, meaning, or message is shared (Mulyana D, 2016). Thus, communication can be understood as a process of achieving a shared meaning of a message conveyed from the communicator to the communicatee to reach a common understanding, both verbally and non-verbally. Then, to understand other definitions of communication, there is a famous definition and model of communication by Harold Lasswell, which states that communication is essentially a process that explains "who," "says what," "in which channel," "to whom," and "with what effect" (who says what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect). (Ruliana, 2018, p. 13) identifies five indicators used to classify the context or levels of communication based on the number of participants involved. These indicators include contexts involving two or more people. Here are the levels of communication:

i.   Intrapersonal Communication is communication that includes the process of communicating with oneself, such as thinking. Intrapersonal communication is very important in building effective interpersonal communication.

ii.  Interpersonal Communication refers to face-to-face communication between two or more people, where each participant can directly respond to the verbal and non-verbal reactions of others. This communication involves various behaviours and can involve more than two people, depending on the nature of the message or information conveyed.

iii. Group Communication is communication that occurs among group members who have a common goal and interact with each other to achieve that goal. In group communication, each participant can provide feedback and responses to other participants. Group communication can involve interpersonal communication and the principles that apply in this context.

iv.  Public Communication is communication where a speaker interacts and communicates with a larger number of people or a large audience. Examples of public communication include speeches, lectures, campaigns, and similar events.

v.   Organizational Communication refers to the communication processes that occur within an organization, both formal and informal, and take place in a broader network than group communication. Therefore, organizations are often defined as groups of groups. Organizational communication involves various types of communication, including dyadic communication, interpersonal communication, and public communication.

vi.  Mass Communication is a type of communication conducted through mass media, whether print or electronic media. The messages conveyed are general and disseminated quickly, especially through electronic media. Mass communication is defined as a form of communication aimed at a widely

dispersed, heterogeneous, and anonymous audience through print or electronic mass media, allowing the same message to be received simultaneously and instantaneously.

## 2. Group Communication

In the book "Teori Komunikasi" compiled by Sendjaja (2018), it is explained that groups are an inseparable part of human activities. Both primary and secondary groups serve as a medium for individuals to realize their hopes and desires in various aspects of life through shared information. Sendjaja (2018) states that there are several reasons why individuals join groups, including:

i. Attraction of group members: Physically, it can be concluded that the interpersonal relationships between individual members and group syntality are influenced by various structural variables within the group. One component of the syntality dimension is the synergy dimension, which serves as an indicator of group compatibility. Therefore, to formulate effective group synergy can be designed through specific similarities based on the interests of individuals within the group.

ii. Attraction to group activities and goals: Attraction to becoming a member of a specific group: Personal, social, symbolic, work-related, and economic benefits.

In conclusion, group communication is the process of interaction where information exchange or message delivery occurs within a group, connected to the dynamics and context of that group. The existence of a group in society is reflected by its functions, which include social relations, education, persuasion, problem-solving, decision-making, and therapy. All these functions are utilized for the benefit of society, the group, and its members.

## 3. Group Communication Theory

There are various theoretical perspectives on group communication. These perspectives include social comparison theory, group personality theory, group achievement theory, social exchange theory, and sociometric theory. The theory to be used and further explained in this research is group syntality theory. Group syntality theory is a study of group interaction based on group dimensions and personality dynamics introduced by Raymond Bernard Cattell. He introduced and used the term "syntality" to describe group personality. According to Cattell, group personality is closely related to individual personality. Syntality itself is defined as the characteristics closely associated with the entire group, determining consistent behaviour by the group, thus enabling the prediction of group performance. Cattell also stated that social situations and values significantly influence individual behaviour.

## 4. Leadership in Groups

According to Burgoon, Heston, and McCroskey, translated by Sendjaja (2018), there are eight leadership functions in group communication, including:

i. Initiation Function: In the initiation role, a leader faces complex tasks. On one hand, the leader needs to take the initiative to develop new ideas, while on the other, they are responsible for providing direction and rejecting inappropriate ideas from group members.

ii. Membership Function: The membership function is part of leadership behaviour to ensure that the leader is not only a leader but also an active member of the group.

iii. Organization Function: In the context of the organization function, a leader has responsibilities involving various aspects related to organizational issues, such as ensuring the continuity of the organizational structure, optimizing organizational operational efficiency, and effectively managing job descriptions.

iv. Integration Function: In the integration function, a leader is required to have the ability to manage and resolve conflicts that may arise within the group.

v. Internal Information Management Function: A leader also has the responsibility to provide advice that allows information exchange between group members and to seek input on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the group's work programs.

vi. Gatekeeping Function: In the gatekeeping function, a leader's role goes beyond just being a gatekeeper but also as a manager of information coming in and out of the group.

vii. Reward Function: In the reward function, a leader evaluates and recognizes the activities performed by group members.

## 5. Leadership Styles in Groups

Sendjaja (2018) defines leadership style as the degree of control a leader exercises and their attitude towards group members. Leadership styles in groups can be divided into five categories, including:

i. Authoritarian Style: This leadership style is characterized by control and dominance inherent in the leader. Leaders with this style make their words the unquestionable law. This style often relies on existing rules, limits communication, and rarely considers input from other members. Groups with this style may achieve high levels of organization and productivity, but interpersonal relationships among group members tend to be tense and strained.

ii. Bureaucratic Style: The bureaucratic leadership style involves the leader coordinating group activities as a supervisor. This style is oriented toward the organization as the primary guide, not the leaders as in the authoritarian style. Bureaucratic leaders emphasize official written communication. Groups adopting this style have the potential to be more productive due to well-organized structures, but this may lead to apathetic attitudes among some group members.

iii. Diplomatic Style: The diplomatic leadership style involves a leader with manipulative abilities, using their leadership to become the center of attention for group members. Diplomatic leaders use subtle control and flexibility compared to authoritarian leaders. They are open to suggestions and democratic feedback from group members.

iv. Democratic Style: This leadership style uses less control compared to the previous three styles. Democratic leaders expect participation and shared responsibility from all group members, encouraging the development of leadership potential in individuals. They also pay attention to interpersonal relationships and tasks among members. Though less strictly organized, this style often results in high productivity and creativity due to the leader's ability to maximize group members' potential.

v. Laissez-Faire or Group-Centered Style: This style centers on the group without relying on strict rules. Leaders expect active participation from all members without enforcing authority. Communication serves as a link for contributions or ideas from members. Without control, groups with this style tend to be disorganized, unproductive, and apathetic due to a lack of clear goals or direction.

vi. Female Leadership: Leadership cannot be separated from the individual holding the leadership role. Many views associate leadership abilities with certain biological aspects, especially gender. Research by Anggraini & Dwiningtyas (2022) states that the number of female leaders in leadership positions is still much smaller, particularly in male-dominated sectors like engineering, construction, and finance. The limited number of female leaders shows significant barriers for women.

Empowerment involves the development of women who are politically active, economically productive, and capable of making their own decisions (Ibrahim et al., 2023). This empowerment naturally extends to the realm of leadership. According to Fitriani (2015), leadership is not determined by gender, as both men and women possess equal rights and qualifications to be effective, with only biological differences distinguishing them. Women are often depicted as softer, yielding in decisions, considered weak, less active, and nurturing. Conversely, men are usually portrayed as dominant, stronger, more active, autonomous, and aggressive. Besides gender stereotypes, other barriers include male-dominated values and norms, a lack of supportive organizational structures for working women, and insufficient organizational understanding of gender differences in work priorities, patterns, and decision-making styles (Anggraini & Dwiningtyas, 2022). There is a relationship between gender issues and leadership styles in two aspects: decision-making orientation and the influence of a leader. Research shows female leaders tend to prefer democratic and participative decision-making styles, whereas male leaders tend to prefer authoritarian styles. Female leaders also often face gender stereotypes that can limit their influence and authority (Fitriani, 2015).

**Methodology**
In this study, the researchers use a case study method to examine the phenomenon of female leadership in the student organizations of Universitas Mercu Buana. The case study method aims to understand a case in detail and comprehensively through the collection and analysis of various data such as in-depth interviews, observations, and documents. The informant selection technique uses a purposive sampling method, where the selection of informants is adjusted to the research needs. The key informants in this study are:

   i.    IO as the Head of PMK
   ii.   MN as the Head of OASE
   iii.  AE as the Head of Literacy
   iv.   AC as the Head of HIMA PR
   v.    AS as the Head of PSM UMB.

   Moreover, the informants in this study include:
   i.    EA as the member of PMK
   ii.   LW as the secretary of PMK
   iii.  NS as the vice head of OASE
   iv.   DA as the member of OASE
   v.    DR as the vice head of Literacy
   vi.   KR as the member of Literacy
   vii.  OY as the vice head of HIMA PR
   viii. AA as the member of HIMA PR
   ix.   RS as the treasurer of PSM UMB
   x.    DN as the member of PSM UMB

   Primary data were obtained through the process of in-depth interviews with the key informants and informants. The total of key informants and informants in this research are 15 people. The in-depth interview is conducted in semi-structured way, in which the researchers have prepared lists of questions. However, those questions will be developed based on the interview process. Through in-depth interview, researchers obtained more opportunities to explore the information related to the research topic. The process of obtaining information will also involve using secondary data obtained from references such as books, theses, previous research journals, articles, observations, documentation of activities, and other relevant data sources related to the research topic.

   In this study, the researchers use Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis techniques, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involves simplifying the data to make it more manageable and easier to analyse. It aims to condense large datasets while retaining the essential information. Data display focuses on presenting the data in a way that makes patterns and insights more apparent. Effective data display helps in interpreting the results and communicating findings. Last, data verification ensures that the data is accurate, consistent, and reliable. This step is crucial for ensuring the integrity of the analysis. In ensuring the validity of the data, the researchers conducted data triangulation method by comparing data obtained from various sources to validate the findings of this research. For example, interviewing female leaders and their committee members to ensure data validity.

**Results and Discussion**

1. Women's Leadership Communication Styles
The findings of this study are unique when the discussion revolves around the distinctive characteristics of female leadership styles that naturally exhibit democratic traits and high levels of empathy. This is what the researcher discovered, where in practice, female leaders exhibit nurturing attitudes effectively, which subsequently enhances their competence in leading an organization. In this context, the researcher found that leadership communication styles can vary significantly among individuals, and each female leader studied

exhibits a distinctive leadership communication style tailored to their individual and organizational/group background. The following table presents the research findings on the analysis of female leadership communication styles:

Table 1. The summary of women's leadership communication style

| | Women's Leadership Communication Style | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Key Informant | Giving Instruction to Members | Communicating | Making Decision | Encouraging Members | Supervising and Reprimanding Members | Conclusion |
| IO | Democratic | Democratic | Democratic | Democratic | Democratic | Democratic |
| MN | Laissez Faire or Group Centered | Bureaucratic | Authoritarian | Democratic | Bureaucratic | Bureaucratic |
| AE | Diplomatic | Diplomatic | Democratic | Democratic | Diplomatic | Diplomatic |
| AC | Authoritarian | Bureaucratic | Democratic | Democratic | Bureaucratic | Bureaucratic |
| AS | Democratic | Diplomatic | Democratic | Democratic | Bureaucratic | Democratic |

*Bureaucratic Style*
MN and AC exemplify the bureaucratic leadership style. MN's approach emphasizes a supervisory and coordinative role within the OASE organization, characterized by providing clear directives and utilizing structured communication. This style prioritizes adherence to organizational guidelines, with the leader primarily acting as a coordinator of group activities. Similarly, AC's leadership demonstrates a structured, organized, and proactive approach. AC's communication is formal and systematic, highlighting clarity in commands and a focus on maintaining organizational order. Both leaders reflect the bureaucratic style by concentrating on structured frameworks and organizational guidelines rather than individual authority (Sendjaja, 2018).

*Democratic Style*
IO and AS reflect the democratic leadership style. IO's communication is marked by minimal control and a commitment to two-way interaction, encouraging significant participation from team members in decision-making processes. This approach promotes shared responsibility and inclusivity, in line with democratic principles. AS's leadership also adheres to democratic principles by fostering an environment of active participation and shared responsibility among PSM members. AS engages in empathetic and inspirational interactions, considering diverse perspectives in decision-making, and encouraging the development of leadership potential in all team members (Sendjaja, 2018).

*Diplomatic Style*
AE demonstrates the diplomatic leadership style through a strategic and subtle approach. AE positions themselves as a central figure for Literacy Club members, employing softer control and being open to input from team members. This style contrasts with more authoritarian approaches by emphasizing receptiveness to feedback and minimizing overt control. AE's diplomatic style focuses on building positive interpersonal relationships and maintaining a balanced, responsive approach to leadership (Sendjaja, 2018).

From the table above, it can be seen that democratic leadership communication styles are frequently used by many female leaders. This leadership communication style allows them to build strong relationships, encourage active participation, and create an inclusive organizational environment. The democratic style helps create a harmonious and collaborative group atmosphere, which is crucial for the success of student organizations.

Female leaders who use this style can minimize conflicts within the group and build strong relationships, which is essential in the context of student organizations requiring high cooperation and solidarity. However, these female leaders also face various challenges in the field, including gender stereotypes and dilemmas in navigating between authoritarian and democratic leadership styles. These

challenges demonstrate how dynamic the role of female leadership is in student organizations. Additionally, changes in student interest in participating in organizational activities influence approaches to leadership communication styles. Some female leaders acknowledge that excessive firmness or applying authoritarian styles sometimes has negative impacts on student participation in the organizations they lead. Therefore, in facing these challenges, they tend to choose more inclusive and participatory communication styles. They realize that collaborative and democratic approaches are more effective in attracting member participation. By creating an open environment and accepting input from all members, female leaders can encourage greater and more diverse contributions. Effective female leadership in student organizations requires flexibility, empathy, and the ability to navigate group dynamics wisely, as well as an investment in building a strong and relevant organization in the future.

2. Factors Affecting Women's Leadership Communication Styles
This research finds that in the field, women's leadership is complex, where female leaders often find themselves at a crossroads between leading with authority/firmness or leading with finesse. This complexity is reflected in various communication styles that appear different in each experienced condition and are influenced by the organizational cultural backgrounds. Some female leaders adopt a strict and authoritarian approach in certain situations, while in others, they utilize a more open and collaborative approach. Additionally, changes in student interests in participating in organizational activities are influenced by the voluntary nature of these roles. Volunteering is defined as the conduct of activities without a contract, or obligations arising from family, friendship, or employment, performed for the benefit of others, the community, or a specific organization, and is not paid (Abdul Hamid & Abdul Halim, 2023). This affects students' intentions to join the organization, a crucial factor considered by female leaders within the student organization. In this context, excessive or authoritarian firmness from a leader can significantly negatively impact student participation in organizational activities (Sendjaja, 2018) states that authoritarian leadership styles often rely on existing rules, limit communication, and rarely heed input from other members. Therefore, leaders who adopt this leadership style are likely to achieve high organizational levels and productivity, but interpersonal relationships within the group tend to be tense and strained (Sendjaja, 2018).

In the results of this research analysis, it was found that some female leaders tend to adopt leadership communication styles that reflect the principles of democratic leadership. This finding indicates that women are fundamentally close with empathy and have strong interpersonal relationships, which are characteristic of democratic leadership styles. (Sendjaja, 2018) states that a group with a democratic leadership style appears less strictly organized, but this leadership style can work in a more relaxed atmosphere and tends to increase productivity and creativity. Thus, this research finds that appreciating various communication styles and leadership approaches can be utilized by organizations to discover the diverse strengths of everyone, regardless of gender. Gender inequality in leadership has been a central focus of research in the field of educational administration, with leadership roles traditionally held by men. This social attitude, or 'injustice,' has made women reluctant to pursue careers in leadership. (Mthethwa et al., 2022). Addressing this issue is not only about gender equality but also optimizing the use of quality human resources to achieve organizational goals effectively. A deep understanding of women's leadership communication styles can lead to more sustainable leadership in the future. The most important aspect of women's leadership is fostering belief and building new perceptions about women's capabilities. This is an investment in building a strong and relevant organization in the face of complex and dynamic challenges.

**Conclusion**
This research examines the communication styles of female leadership in group communication within student organizations at Universitas Mercu Buana for the academic year 2022/2023. The findings reveal that female leaders utilize various leadership communication styles, including democratic, bureaucratic, and diplomatic styles. Each leader exhibits unique characteristics in her communication approach, reflecting an ability to adapt to personal attributes, organizational contexts, and situational demands. The implications of this research suggest that understanding these diverse styles can enhance the development of effective communication

strategies tailored to different leadership scenarios. For future research, it is recommended to employ a mixed-methods approach to provide a more holistic and comprehensive assessment, particularly in evaluating the effectiveness of women's leadership. Furthermore, interdisciplinary studies are encouraged to explore the complexities of female leadership and its broader impact on organizations or groups, offering deeper insights into how these leadership styles influence organizational dynamics and performance.

*Informed Consent Statement:* Informed consent was obtained from all the participants for this study, before the commencement of the interviews.

*Conflicts of Interest:* The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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