

Senior Women's Leadership: A Case Study in the Social Organization of the Association of Veteran Wives of the Republic of Indonesia (PIVERI)

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the dynamics and characteristics of senior female leadership within the social organization of the Persatuan Istri Veteran Republik Indonesia (PIVERI), particularly at the Regional Management level. PIVERI is a women-based organization comprised of the wives of veterans, with members ranging in age from 50 to 90 years, who continue to play an active role in advancing the independence of Indonesian women. Employing servant leadership and transformational leadership frameworks, this research utilizes a qualitative approach with a multiple case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observation of seven PIVERI Regional Management Boards across various regions of Indonesia. The interview results revealed that in six Regional Management Boards with strong performance, the application of servant leadership was evident, particularly in elements such as persuasion, awareness, community building, listening, and empathy, which appeared consistently and significantly. The leadership competencies of senior women in PIVERI are supported by extensive experience, diverse educational backgrounds, and advanced organizational skills. Their leadership characteristics reflect collaborative values, emotional maturity, and a strong commitment to the organization's social mission. This research underscores the importance of establishing leadership age limits, providing education for members of productive age, and securing government support to strengthen the role of senior women-based social organizations. These findings contribute to the broader study of women's leadership in the context of social organizations and offer practical implications for enhancing similar organizational structures and leadership strategies in the future.

Keywords: female leadership, social organization, senior female, servant leadership, transformational leadership

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the role that social organizations play in addressing complex challenges (Kaufmann & Danner-Schröder, 2022). These organizations are catalysts for positive change in areas ranging from addressing poverty and inequality to promoting environmental sustainability and human rights (Leal Filho et al., 2019). Social organization is a group consisting of several people outside the government that aims to provide benefits to members and the surrounding community (Ding et al. 2024). The success of this social organization is not only judged by economic achievements but also by the extent to which they are able to achieve their social mission to serve the community. Leadership in an organization fully determines the direction of structure, culture, power distribution and communication in each organization (Zeler, Fuentes-Lara, and Moreno 2022). One of the women-based social

organizations is the Association of Veteran Wives of the Republic of Indonesia (PIVERI) with members spread throughout Indonesia consisting of senior women who are full of experience. This study examines the role of senior female leadership in PIVERI social organizations, especially the PIVERI Regional Management. Senior female leadership at PIVERI is 50 years old to 90 years old but they have an equally important role in realizing the independence of Indonesian women, senior female managers with a bigger age gap may have experienced these situations several years earlier, and are thus unable to provide insights that are applicable at the current time (Ramachandaran et al. 2025).

PIVERI was established on July 28, 1964, and is the wife of the Veteran Legion of the Republic of Indonesia (LVRI). The existence of LVRI is supported by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia No. 103 of 1957 concerning the Veteran Legion of the Republic of Indonesia and Law No. 15 of 2012 concerning Veterans of the Republic of Indonesia. PIVERI has 90,698 members spread throughout Indonesia, and consists of 1 PIVERI Central Management, 31 PIVERI Regional Management, 306 PIVERI Branch Management. PIVERI is a union of VETERAN wives of the Republic of Indonesia is one of the social organizations in Indonesia that has special and strategic roles and supports the welfare of veteran wives. Initially it was called PIVEKA which was formed to support the leadership of the veteran's affairs department and was mobilized by the government. The purpose of the establishment of PIVEKA is to support the Legion of Veterans of the Republic of Indonesia in thinking about the welfare of the veterans' extended family as a forum for veterans' wives, to strengthen the bond of brotherhood. Over time, PIVEKA changed to PIVERI in 1974 with the task of maintaining the spirit of the 45th Battle Value as the soul and spirit of the Indonesian Nation (JSN'45), establishing relationships with government, non-government agencies and other organizations and fostering the abilities and skills of members as citizens and mothers of the nation who are able to be role models for the Community. Looking at the context of social organizations in Indonesia, especially PIVERI, this study aims to investigate the role and leadership characteristics of women over 50 years old in improving the welfare of veterans' wives and families. This research raises a unique and interesting phenomenon, namely senior women aged 50 to 90 years who lead the organization of PIVERI at the regional level. The leadership shown by these senior women is not only administrative, but also contains inspirational, community-based and volunteer strength, reflecting leadership rooted in the values of service and mutual cooperation. Senior women in PIVERI's leadership appear not only as a symbol of honor but are active in building and caring for the social community. The purpose of this study is to describe the leadership characteristics of senior women aged 50 to 90 years in forming an independent PIVERI Regional Management organization, as well as to analyze the leadership strategies of senior women in the decision-making process and overcoming problems in the organization.

In terms of leadership, women are more likely to exhibit positive social behaviors, collaborations that have been shown to be more effective in influencing others. Women have better attitudes and leadership skills, are adaptable, diligent and have a balanced

personality and are skilled in terms of emotional intelligence (Zeler et al. 2022). Although they are 50 years old to 90 years old, they have an educational background that cannot be underestimated to lead this social organization. Higher education is a challenging motivation to develop women's education (Thien et al. 2025). Their experience of working and organizing is one of the main keys in running this social organization, Age and generation differences affect the diversity of teams with differences in work experience and work goals because seniors have more experienced skills and assessments (Westover 2024). The many organizational experiences they have greatly support the role of leadership in organizational social activities to empower members to become independent women, PIVERI provides benefits for women to share experiences and develop skills in their communities by utilizing social and cultural knowledge so as to create an open and friendly environment for people around them (Westover, 2024) Women's leadership has different and unique characteristics compared to men who offer a lot of contributions to modern organizations. Individual characteristics such as courage to take risks, as well as organizational factors such as workplace flexibility and senior management support also play an important role in their career progression. The study emphasizes the importance of a balance between personal and professional life supported by an inclusive workplace environment. Proactive strategies such as planning and social support have been shown to help women maintain their balance, while reactive strategies are necessary when dealing with unexpected stress and emotions. Women's leadership proposes that intelligence and emotion are the keys to success (Hsu et al., 2022)

One of the leadership styles of social organizations is servant leadership, a positive leadership style including altruistic leadership, inspirational leadership and servant leadership (Hamid, 2024) Servant leadership shows relevant outcomes and a positive impact on expected leadership behavior in a number of organizations (Fischer et al., 2024). This concept emphasizes that every leader initially thinks of as a servant first, meaning that leaders must focus on serving others, especially team members before attempting to achieve organizational goals. Servant Leadership is very useful for maintaining the motivation, attitude and welfare of employees who are already experienced in social organizations, so that this servant leadership will be beneficial for the benefit of social organizations and the wider community (Lemoine et al., 2024). Servant leadership aims for the progress and welfare of the surrounding community so that a leader must meet the needs of his members (Elzek et al., 2024) Servant leadership makes members of the organization able to compete, change and be trusted in leadership that is in accordance with the agreement (Usman, Ali, et al., 2024) The concept of Servant leadership is closely related to the leadership character of PIVERI Regional Management, leaders over 50 years old show a leadership style that is serving, empathetic and oriented to the interests of the organization.

Transformational leadership and servant leadership have a greater role than other leadership styles to improve the personality of organizational members (Usman, Ogbonnaya, et al., 2024) Transformational Leadership is a leadership style that inspires and motivates members of an organization optimally to achieve organizational goals

(Sarwar et al., 2023) Transformational leadership is considered more suitable for women, where leadership behavior is different from traditional leadership, leadership characteristics show that women's roles have more roles to highlight their personalities, have many skill abilities (Hsu et al., 2022) In this study, the concept of transformational leadership is reflected in the leadership character of PIVERI Regional Management through the ability of women leaders over 50 years of age to inspire, set an example and encourage positive change in their organizational environment.

Existing research, such as Ding et al., (2024) shows that social capital significantly enhances individual performance in elderly care organizations, highlighting the potential of senior leadership in fostering organizational effectiveness. Similarly, Hsu et al., (2022) conducted a meta-analysis confirming that emotional intelligence is a key factor in successful female transformational leadership. However, most of these studies focus on professional or corporate settings, with limited attention to volunteer-based or senior-specific contexts. This reinforces the need for targeted research on older women's leadership in non-profit social environments like PIVERI.

The research gap lies in the scarcity of empirical studies exploring the lived experiences, strategic approaches, and emotional capacities of elderly female leaders in Indonesia's social sectors. The unique dynamics of senior leadership including intergenerational coordination, physical and cognitive aging, and cultural authority remain under-theorized and empirically underrepresented, especially in Indonesia where women's traditional roles are often seen as domestic.

Given this research gap, the urgency of this study is grounded in the pressing need to strengthen community-based leadership amid increasing aging populations in Indonesia. Understanding how senior women lead, motivate, and manage social organizations can provide valuable insights for sustainable development strategies, community resilience, and gender empowerment aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

The novelty of this research lies in its dual conceptual approach combining servant leadership and transformational leadership frameworks to analyze the leadership characteristics of senior women in PIVERI. Unlike conventional models that often overlook age and volunteerism, this study contextualizes leadership through the lens of service, experience, and social values rooted in Indonesia's historical and cultural context. It also applies a multiple case study design across seven regions, offering comparative insights into performance variations.

The primary purpose of this research is to explore and describe the leadership characteristics of senior women aged 50–90 years in managing regional PIVERI organizations, and to analyze how their leadership strategies contribute to organizational effectiveness. It also aims to identify enabling and inhibiting factors in their leadership practices and provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening similar women-led organizations.

This study contributes to leadership theory by expanding the application of servant and transformational leadership into senior volunteer-led social organizations. It supports the argument that effective leadership is not confined to age or professional settings but can thrive in intergenerational, informal, and community-driven organizations. The study also fills a contextual research void by offering rich empirical data from an underrepresented group in leadership studies senior Indonesian women.

The implications of this research are multidimensional. For practitioners and policymakers, it offers insights for designing leadership training, organizational support systems, and policies that promote inclusive leadership across age groups. For academia, it expands leadership theory by integrating age and cultural dimensions. For society, it showcases how elder women can become active agents of change, countering stereotypes of aging and promoting intergenerational solidarity in civic engagement.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative multiple case study design, aiming to explore in depth the dynamics of *PIVERI* organizational management at the regional level. This approach is well-suited for examining complex social phenomena in everyday life, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomena and their context are not explicitly defined. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and participatory observation of seven *PIVERI* Regional Management Boards located in *South Sumatra, North Sulawesi, Banten, Jambi, East Java, Bali, and East Kalimantan*. The primary informants in this study include the Regional Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, and one City Branch Head from each Regional Management Board. Informants were selected purposively, considering their strategic positions within the organizational structure, which enables them to provide in-depth and relevant insights.

In-depth interviews were chosen for their flexibility in exploring the experiences, understanding, and perceptions of informants regarding organizational practices, leadership challenges, and both internal and external dynamics. Participatory observation served as a complementary technique to validate interview data and to capture non-verbal dynamics and interactions during organizational activities.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques, facilitating the identification, analysis, and interpretation of data relevant to the research questions. The process included data transcription, open coding, grouping codes into themes, and interpreting the meaning of each theme within both theoretical and practical contexts. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is community-based organizational theory, which highlights the significance of informal structures, participatory leadership, and social interaction as key factors in the effectiveness of membership-based organizations. This approach aligns with *PIVERI's* collaborative social organizational structure, which encompasses 31 regional management boards across Indonesia. The study is expected to provide insights into effective organizational management and contribute to the achievement of the organization's national objectives. The population and research sample consisted of leadership teams from seven *PIVERI* Regional Management Boards

South Sumatra, North Sulawesi, Banten, Jambi, East Java, Bali, and East Kalimantan including the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, and City Branch Chairperson.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of the Chairmen of PIVERI Regional Management

Dimension	South Sumatra	North Sulawesi	Banten	East Java	Jambi	Bali	East Kalimantan
Age (years)	72	72	71	69	60	80	76
Education	Diploma	Bachelor	Senior High School	Bachelor	Bachelor	Senior High School	Senior High School
Organizational Experience (years)	45	15	22	36	29	31	7
Profession	Gymnastics instructor and skills teacher	Church Activist	Housewives	Teacher	Teacher	Housewives	Housewives
Relationship with DPD LVRI	Chief wife	Widow	Chief wife	Chief wife	Chief wife	Vice-chairman's wife	Not Chief's Wife/Representative

Source: Data processed



Figure 1. Model Construction based on Research Findings

The results of the interviews found that 6 PIVERI Regionals Management with good performance, the application of servant leadership was strongly indicated such as the elements of persuasion, awareness, community building, listening and empathy appeared consistently and significantly. The transformational leadership aspect was

found that all PIVERI Regionals Manajement showed idealized unfluency elements both in terms of attributes and behavior, but the elements of inspirational motivation and individualized consideration had not appeared evenly, especially in PIVERI Regional Manajement East Kalimantan. The element of intellectual stimulation stands out in PIVERI Regional Management East Java and Jambi, this reflects the existence of leaders with the capacity to think strategically and innovatively'. From the results of the research, it is necessary to provide age limits for the leadership of PIVERI Regional Management, education to members of the PIVERI organization of productive age, socialization to the community of active roles in senior organizations, and direct support from the government. It is very important to have recommendations for further research on the leadership of senior women's organizations at the regional and branch levels.

Studies by Hsu et al., (2022) emphasize that emotional intelligence and transformational leadership qualities are prominent among senior women. The PIVERI case supports this, where mature emotional control and balanced personalities were evident in leaders like those in Bali and Banten. Similar leadership traits in elder female leaders were documented Ding et al., (2024) in elderly care organizations in China. The East Kalimantan case demonstrates that insufficient servant or transformational leadership leads to lower organizational cohesion and member engagement. The leader's short organizational experience (7 years) and lack of a formal tie with DPD LVRI potentially contributed to reduced influence, reflecting Fischer et al., (2024) argument on the illusion of leadership effectiveness without deep-rooted organizational integration.

Community-based organizational theory emphasizes informal structures and relational leadership (Ding et al. 2024). The findings validate this theory, showing that effective PIVERI leadership depends less on rigid hierarchies and more on mutual trust and interpersonal connections, particularly in Bali and East Java.

This study enhances the servant leadership model by contextualizing it in senior female-led social organizations. Leaders' motivation stems from collective historical identity and service, rather than positional power resonating with Lemoine et al., (2024) who argue servant leadership fulfills broader social goals when aligned with organizational missions. The study contributes to generational leadership literature by showing that senior women, despite their age, offer wisdom and emotional stability that younger generations may lack. Westover (2024) supports this, noting that age-diverse leadership enriches organizational decision-making and intergenerational mentorship.

Recommendations arising from this study include setting formal leadership age limits, training for members in their productive age (30–50), and encouraging youth integration through intergenerational collaboration. Governmental support in the form of leadership grants or community training modules can enhance organizational sustainability. Leadership development for PIVERI should include structured training on servant and transformational leadership principles. As noted by Ramachandaran et al., (2025) female empowerment through education is crucial for long-term leadership sustainability in social organizations.

Limitations and Research Gaps

A limitation of this study is the narrow geographic scope (7 out of 31 PIVERI Regional Management units). Further studies should expand the sample and investigate PIVERI Branch-level dynamics to test whether leadership styles trickle down effectively. Unlike prior research focused on corporate or educational female leadership, this study provides a unique view of senior female leadership in grassroots Indonesian organizations. It highlights that advanced age does not diminish leadership effectiveness but instead brings unique values and community orientation. This study suggests that Indonesia's social development policies should recognize senior women's contributions. Empowering them in formal organizational roles could support national goals related to gender equality, elder participation, and community development—aligned with SDGs.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that senior female leadership within *PIVERI* Regional Management is characterized by the ability to foster cohesive communities and inspire members through exemplary conduct and strong commitment. These leaders employ value-driven and relational leadership strategies in decision-making, demonstrating contextual sensitivity, consideration of members' ages, and a focus on organizational sustainability through collaboration and adaptability. The study contributes to the theories of servant leadership and transformational leadership by showing their effectiveness not only in corporate or governmental settings but also within senior women's volunteer-based community organizations. The empirical findings suggest that combining these leadership approaches can create service-oriented organizations and drive sustainable social change. For future research, it is recommended to examine the impact of intergenerational collaboration within such organizations and to explore how digital transformation may further enhance leadership effectiveness and organizational resilience.

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