

Gender Equality In Laity Leadership Within Religious And Organizational Life At Catholic Church Of Maria Ratu Damai Walian Parish, Tomohon (A Civic Education Perspective)

Fransisca Laatung^{a,1}, Theodorus Pangalila^{b,2}, Julien Biringan^{c,3}

^aMaster of Social Education Study Programme, Manado State University

^{b,c}Departement of Pancasila and Citizenship Education, Manado State University

*fransiskancizs@gmail.com

INFO ARTIKEL

Article History:

Received: 25 February 2026

Revised: 18 May 2026

Accepted: 24 June 2026

Available Online: 1 July 2026

Keywords:

Gender Equality,
Women's Leadership,
Parish Pastoral Council,
Pancasila,
Civic Education.

ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the evident gender distribution inequality in strategic positions among the laity, particularly in the position of field coordinator within the Parish Pastoral Council (DPP) of Maria Ratu Damai Tomohon, As well as the existence of cultural barriers and misinterpretations of teachings that limit the role of women. The purpose of this study is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of gender equality in women's leadership, to identify the factors hindering their involvement in the DPP structure, as well as to analyze the phenomenon through the perspective of Pancasila values and Civic Education. The research method used is a qualitative approach employing the Miles and Huberman data analysis model to ensure the depth of observation. The findings of the study show that over the past 39 years: 1. Strategic leadership has been dominated by men, creating a "glass ceiling" phenomenon due to women's low self-confidence. 2. The double burden of domestic responsibilities; 3. As well as a patriarchal culture that is not yet aligned with the implementation of the fifth principle of Pancasila. This study recommends that Church leaders implement affirmative policies, such as quotas for women's representation, organizing leadership training programs (public speaking), and strengthening gender literacy so that the parish can become an inclusive democratic forum for all parishioners.

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1. Introduction

Gender distribution refers to the distribution or proportion of individuals by gender within a specific population, region, or sector. According to the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS) regarding Thematic Gender Statistics in the Profile of Indonesian Women, this term is essential for analyzing how the population is divided and how roles, rights, and access to resources are distributed equitably. Technically, gender distribution is used to detect inequality or imbalance in various fields, including employment, education, and political and religious participation. This analysis is crucial for policymakers in determining whether one gender group experiences marginalization or specific structural sociological barriers compared to others.

In the context of leadership, Ghufroon (2020) defines leadership as the process by which an individual influences others as a driving force in an organization, as well as efforts to transform individual or group behavior to achieve common goals. Based on the Social Theory of Leadership, a person is formed into a leader when the environment, time, and circumstances

provide accommodating stimulation and opportunities ("leaders are built, not born"). However, empirical dynamics within the Maria Ratu Damai Walian Tomohon Parish Pastoral Council (DPP) show contradictory anomalies. Based on field interview data, nearly 99% of informants stated that the Strategic Area Coordinator position is completely dominated by men. Over the past 39 years, women's involvement at the core leadership level has been very rigid and rare. Women are consistently placed in "bookkeeping" positions such as secretary or treasurer, while strategic areas such as Liturgy, Organization, and Assets are positioned under male command. This has fueled the strengthening of the "unwritten law" that confines women to administrative roles and eliminates their presence in strategic decision-making.

This reality also deviates from the theological framework of Ecclesiastical Document No. 84 (Piet Go, 2015) on Collaboration Between Laity and Priests in Pastoral Care. The document affirms that lay leadership in the Catholic Church is an essential task rooted in the Sacrament of Baptism, which provides full participation in the threefold office of Christ: Priest, Prophet, and King. DG 84 emphasizes genuine collaboration, regardless of gender, for the good of the Church. When strategic leadership positions in parishes are dominated by one gender, the Church indirectly neglects the gifts and talents of women. This inequality creates a "glass ceiling" phenomenon, where women's active involvement and vertical mobility encounter an invisible yet very strong barrier.

On the other hand, normative interpretations of the laity are often biased. Sugianto & Maranatha (2019) explain that the laity are often negatively defined as non-clerical, non-professional, and merely assistants to the hierarchy (the clergy-laity dichotomy). This marginalized view exacerbates the layered marginalization of lay women. Therefore, this paper scientifically examines the causal factors, transformative strategies, and the relevance of Pancasila values and Civic Education in promoting gender equality in the leadership locus of Maria Ratu Damai Walian Tomohon Parish.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to in-depth explore the phenomenon of women's leadership within the lay community at the Maria Ratu Damai Walian Catholic Church in Tomohon City. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, going directly into the field to collect data from key informants and related stakeholders, including women serving as leaders of the parish pastoral council, prayer groups, catechists, community administrators, and social service leaders. Data collection was conducted through a combination of three techniques (triangulation): semi-structured, in-depth interviews documented with a voice recorder with the informants' permission; long-term direct participant observation of the social situation, church activities, and sociocultural documents within the parish; and analysis of official documents such as pastoral guidelines, activity reports, and internal church publications.

Data analysis in this study applied the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2024), which took place simultaneously and continuously until data saturation was reached. This analysis process involved four procedural stages: comprehensive raw data collection in the field; Data reduction involves summarizing, focusing, discarding irrelevant data, and categorizing leadership themes; systematically presenting data using narrative text, charts, or tables for ease of understanding; and gradually drawing and verifying conclusions to produce credible and accountable final conclusions. To ensure research accountability, the validity of findings is checked through credibility testing through extended observation, increased diligence, and triangulation of techniques and sources; transferability testing to ensure the study results can be applied to similar socio-religious contexts; and dependability and confirmability testing through an independent audit of the entire research process

(Sugiyono, 2024). Furthermore, the entire research process was conducted with high research ethics, including the implementation of informed consent, guaranteeing the anonymity and confidentiality of informants, and granting respondents full freedom to withdraw from research participation at any time.

3. Result and Discussion

a. Factors Contributing to the Lack of Female Figures in Strategic Leadership at the Maria Ratu Damai Parish Executive Board (DPP) in Tomohon

The lack of female representation in strategic leadership at the Maria Ratu Damai Parish Executive Board (DPP) in Tomohon is influenced by a complex cluster of barriers. This phenomenon aligns with a study by Putranto & Surya Perdhana (2018), which confirms that, at a macro level, women's leadership in the public and organizational spheres remains minimal due to societal cultural constructs. Based on empirical data analysis, three main determinants are identified:

Internal Psychological Barriers: Many women in the parish experience a crisis of self-confidence and feelings of inferiority when faced with male-dominated decision-making forums. These psychological barriers are a residue of cultural conditioning that places women in domestic-subordinate roles. Consequently, women choose to remain in their comfort zones, such as being active in informal categorical groups or working behind the scenes, despite possessing considerable intellectual capacity. This situation contradicts the functionalization of lay leadership formulated by Widyawati & Kanja (2023), who assert that the role of lay people, including women, encompasses leadership of pastoral councils, catechesis, and active social and humanitarian service.

Double Burden and Limited Time Allocation: Women in Tomohon who work professionally must independently shoulder domestic responsibilities upon returning home. Although research shows that husbands provide verbal support (permission) for their wives to be active in the church, this support has not yet addressed the actual division of labor in the domestic sphere. Gender equality theory (Baiduri, 2023) suggests that this sociological inequality triggers extreme physical and mental burnout for women, preventing them from accepting parish managerial responsibilities that require both physical energy and time.

Patriarchal Cultural Hegemony and Ecclesial Misconceptions: The people of Tomohon City, as an integral part of the Minahasa Tribe, have historically been influenced by a strong patriarchal structure in constructing the ideal leader figure (Pangalia & Mantiri, 2020). This view experiences a false syncretism with the structural reality of the Church; because the figure of the Parish Priest is male, the congregation mistakenly projects that all lower hierarchical positions must be held by men to maintain the legitimacy of power. This social barrier is exacerbated by the anxiety of social sanctions in the form of negative community assessments or negative gossip if a woman engages in intensive coordination with the priest in the rectory. As a result, a "glass ceiling" is formed (Baiduri, 2023) that hinders women's involvement in the top structural leadership of the parish.

b. Strategies and Solutions for Enhancing Women's Leadership Roles in the Maria Ratu Damai Parish in Tomohon

To break the chain of structural inequality, a planned and systematic transformation is required. Referring to the feminist framework cited by Nope (2015), this doctrine supports equal social and political rights and initiates broad social change to increase women's power and bargaining power. The first urgent operational solution is to organize continuing education programs, such as leadership courses, conflict management training,

public speaking techniques, and entrepreneurship training (financial independence). This character-based education aligns with the view of Pangalila, Pasandaran, & Essing (2022) that the essence of education is an effort to humanize humans, thus producing individuals who respect the dignity of others without gender barriers.

The second strategy is directly related to reforming parish-level organizational regulations. Given the "double burden" constraint, parishes are obliged to implement flexible policies, such as limiting meeting hours to late hours and optimizing digital communication platforms for technical coordination. This situation-sensitive leadership approach is crucial to ensuring inclusivity (Ghufon, 2020). Furthermore, affirmative action interventions, such as the direct appointment of women by parish priests to lead non-traditional areas (such as Development, Assets, or Security), will set an important precedent in breaking down gender bias and shattering the "glass ceiling."

Dogmatically, this repositioning is supported by the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem / AA Art. 12), which affirms the apostolate of the laity as an integral right and obligation of the faithful acquired through the Sacrament of Baptism, not merely a secondary delegation from the hierarchy (Hardawiryana, 2006). Implementation of AA No. 12 requires a consistent pattern of collaboration between fathers and mothers for the holistic growth of the faith of the congregation and their role as social beings (Biringan, 2020).

c. Educational Efforts and Concrete Policies to Encourage Future Women Leaders

Based on data analysis, the acceleration of future women's leadership must adopt a Dual Track Approach, namely through structural policies (organizational rules) and capacity building (education). Affirmative action policies in the formation of core leadership align with the constitutional guarantees in Article 28D Paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution and the principle of gender equality formulated by UN Women (2021), which states that women and men have the right to equal opportunities, rights, and responsibilities in all aspects of life, including religion. Transparent and professional meeting management rules and communication patterns must also be established to minimize psychosocial barriers such as feelings of awkwardness or fear of negative stigma.

From an educational perspective, the presence of role models in the form of female figures who successfully balance the domestic, professional, and pastoral spheres has proven effective in motivating women parishioners. Furthermore, a unique positive correlation was found between economic independence and leadership courage. Financially independent women tend to have greater confidence in voicing their ideas in formal forums (Tjiptoherijanto, 2012). Therefore, economic empowerment or entrepreneurship programs at the parish level have dual implications: improving domestic well-being while simultaneously developing a strong leadership mentality in women.

d. Pancasila and Citizens' Rights as the Foundation for Gender Equality at Maria Ratu Damai Parish, Tomohon

The perspective of Citizenship Education (PKn) views the parish as a laboratory of democracy and a miniature of national life. The congregation of Maria Ratu Damai Walian Parish understands that Catholic identity is inseparable from Indonesian nationalism. The values of Pancasila, particularly the Second Principle ("Just and Civilized Humanity") and the Fifth Principle ("Social Justice for All Indonesian People"), serve as the primary philosophical instruments in critiquing gender domination within church organizations (Sari & Najicha, 2022). Social justice mandates that the distribution of power and leadership opportunities within the parish must be shared proportionally for the common good (Nola, 2024).

This support for gender equality also aligns with the mandate of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which guarantees equal status for citizens before the law and government without discrimination based on sex (Warman et al., 2025). By providing space for women to occupy strategic positions, the Catholic Church of Mary Queen of Peace Parish of Walian has made a significant contribution to developing superior human resources for the nation's advancement. This struggle for gender equality serves as a theological-nationalist bridge that reflects the noble principle: "100% Catholic, 100% Indonesian."

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

A. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussions that have been carried out, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- a. There is a massive dominance of masculinity (up to 99%) within the strategic leadership structure (Field Coordinator) at the Central Leadership Council of Maria Ratu Damai Walian Parish in Tomohon. Women's involvement has been domesticated, limited to administrative roles (Secretary and Treasurer), giving rise to an "unwritten law" that marginalizes women from decision-making levels.
- b. The lack of female leadership figures is caused by a multidimensional interaction between internal psychological barriers (inferiority due to cultural upbringing), situational barriers (the dual burden of domestic and public affairs), and cultural-ecclesiastical barriers (the patriarchal culture of the Minahasan people and theological misconceptions that project priestly power into lay administrative governance).
- c. There is a wide gap between the congregation's theological-normative understanding of the equal dignity of baptism and the sociological-empirical reality on the ground, which still tends to hegemonize men as formal parish leaders. 4. Accelerating women's representation requires the implementation of a Dual-Track Approach through affirmative structural policies (top-down) from Parish Priests and strengthening women's technical, communication, and economic independence (bottom-up).
- d. Gender equality in pastoral leadership is a concrete manifestation of the values of the Second and Fifth Principles of Pancasila and the mandate of the 1945 Constitution. Parishes function as miniature civil societies that integrate Christian faith values and a spirit of inclusive citizenship.

B. Recommendations

- a. Parish Priests and the Central Executive Board of the Central Executive Board are advised to implement affirmative action policies in the form of regulations for a minimum of 30% female representation in core management and to boldly appoint female leaders to lead strategic areas (such as Assets or Development), supported by professional, transparent, and honorable work patterns.
- b. Relevant Commissions/Sections in Parishes are advised to conduct periodic leadership capacity building programs, including training in public speaking, organizational management, ecclesiastical catechesis, and creative economic empowerment to eradicate the mentality of women's inferiority.
- c. It is recommended that congregations and families construct a culture of egalitarian family communication through a balanced division of domestic responsibilities between husband and wife, thus freeing up women's physical energy and time to participate in public service within the parish.

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