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Post-Crisis Women's Leadership Mediation: An Empirical Study at the University of Lampung

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Abstract

Objective: This study analyzes the mediating mechanism of women's leadership in the transformation of post-crisis higher education governance based on a synthesis of literature and empirical findings from the University of Lampung. Identify the indirect pathways of women's leadership's contribution to institutional outcomes through strengthening organizational performance and institutional innovation. **Theoretical Framework:** Based on transformational leadership and authentic leadership that place value change, integrity, and the formation of a collective vision as the basis for organizational effectiveness. **Literature Review:** The literature shows that women's leadership is characterized by collaborative, participatory, and relational leadership that strengthens social cohesion, symbolic legitimacy, and the adaptive capacity of organizations in a post-crisis context. **Method:** Qualitative research with a systematic literature review and thematic analysis of 45 publications from 2015–2025, combined with reflective interpretation of empirical findings from the University of Lampung as an anchor case. **Results:** The contribution of women's leadership does not occur directly, but is mediated through three main channels, namely relational (institutional cohesion and trust), structural (organizational performance and institutional innovation), and cultural (value transformation and governance legitimacy). **Implications:** The findings emphasize the importance of strengthening the capacity of organizational systems based on social relations, leadership distribution, and internalization of integrity values to support the restoration of sustainable institutional legitimacy. **Novelty:** This study formulates a conceptual model of post-crisis women's leadership based on systemic mediation mechanisms that integrate relational, structural, and cultural dimensions as the foundation for the transformation of public organizational governance.

Keywords: adaptive, innovation, leadership, mediation, women.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of post-crisis higher education governance demands a leadership model that is not only administratively effective but also capable of restoring public trust and restructuring institutional structures in a sustainable manner [1]. In public organizations, crises often serve as a point of reconstruction of values, a coordination system, and a more adaptive and inclusive leadership orientation [2]. In this context, women's leadership is an important phenomenon to study because it has the potential to present a relational, collaborative, and trust-based approach in the institutional recovery process [3].

This dynamic can be seen in the empirical context at the University of Lampung after the 2022 Operation Arrest Incident, which triggered an institutional legitimacy crisis. The phase of institutional recovery was marked by the increasing representation of women in the structural positions of the university [4]. By 2025, women will occupy 38.04% of a total of 489 structural officials, a figure that exceeds the national average of female leadership in higher education (20–25%) and approaches the global representation standard of 30% [5]. The empirical distribution is presented in Table 1 as a structural context, not as an indicator of cause-and-effect relationships.

Table 1. Women Structural Officials at the University of Lampung in 2025

Yes	Faculty / Work Unit	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
1	Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP)	41	22,65
2	Faculty of Agriculture	32	17,68
3	Faculty of Engineering	28	15,47
4	Faculty of Medicine	22	12,15
5	Faculty of Economics and Business	18	9,94
6	Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP)	17	9,39
7	Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMIPA)	17	9,39
8	Faculty of Law	7	3,87
9	Units/Bureaus within the Rectorate	5	2,76
10	Postgraduate	1	0,55
Total Amount		181	100,00

In addition to changes in leadership structure, the post-crisis phase is also marked by strengthening organizational performance [6]. The achievement of the Key Performance Indicators in the 2023–2024 period shows a realization that largely exceeds the set targets. The data provide an overview of the general condition of institutional recovery without being intended as evidence of a direct relationship between women's leadership and performance achievements.

Table 2. Achievements of UNILA's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in 2023–2024

No	Year	Number of IKU	It is >100% realization	It is <100% realization	Average Achievement
1	2023	10	9	1	160,77%
2	2024	11	10	1	131,60%

Conceptually, transformational leadership emphasizes value change, collective inspiration, and organizational capacity building [7], while authentic leadership emphasizes integrity, transparency, and trust as the basis of organizational effectiveness [8]. Both perspectives explain that the influence of leadership on organizational performance can take place through mediation mechanisms, such as organizational cohesion, institutional legitimacy, and policy innovation [9]. Within this framework, women's leadership is understood not only as a structural representation but also as a potential mechanism for strengthening organizational capacity.

Empirical studies show that increasing women's representation in leadership positions does not automatically produce substantive influence due to the power network factor and

organizational culture that is still patriarchal [10]. Previous qualitative research has also highlighted the symbolic communication strategies of women leaders in building internal cohesion, but has not explained the mechanisms of their contribution to institutional achievement in a systematic manner [11]. International studies confirm the importance of structural support for women's leadership effectiveness [12], however, a conceptual synthesis of women's leadership mediation mechanisms in the context of post-crisis higher education in Indonesia is still limited [13].

Based on these gaps, this study presents novelty through the analysis of the mediation mechanism between women's leadership and post-crisis institutional achievements based on a synthesis of literature and empirical findings. The research problem is focused on how women's leadership contributes to institutional recovery through indirect channels, particularly through organizational performance and institutional innovation. This research aims to: (1) analyze the mechanism of women's leadership contribution to post-crisis institutional achievements; (2) interpret the mediating role of organizational performance and institutional innovation; and (3) formulate a system-based conceptual model of women's leadership in public organizations.

This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of public administration studies related to post-crisis leadership and enrich perspectives on the role of mediation mechanisms in the effectiveness of women's leadership. Practically, the results of this study have implications for strengthening higher education governance through an inclusive, adaptive, and oriented leadership approach oriented towards the restoration of institutional legitimacy. Thus, women's leadership is not only understood as a representative phenomenon but as a structural strategy in the transformation of organizations based on public trust.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's Leadership as the Basis for Organizational Transformation

The modern leadership literature places leadership as a relational process that influences collective behavior to achieve organizational goals [14]. In recent developments, women's leadership is understood to have collaborative, participatory, and interpersonal relationship-oriented characteristics, so it is in line with the transformational leadership paradigm that emphasizes collective inspiration and empowerment of organizational members [15]. This approach suggests that the effectiveness of women's leadership is not solely determined by structural positions but by relational capacities that build trust, engagement, and organizational cohesion. In the post-crisis context, these characteristics are an important prerequisite for the restoration of institutional legitimacy and organizational stability.

In addition, the literature confirms that the emotional intelligence of female leaders plays a role as a mechanism for strengthening legitimacy through empathy, interpersonal communication, and high social sensitivity. This relationship-based approach results in an inclusive work environment that increases the participation of organizational members and strengthens a collaborative culture [16]. Thus, women's leadership can be understood as an independent variable whose influence on organizational performance is mediated by the quality of social relations and institutional beliefs.

Leadership Agility in Crisis Management and Institutional Recovery

The study of post-crisis leadership emphasizes the importance of adaptability, decision flexibility, and contextual response to changes in the organizational environment. Research by Masrur Luai Sadullah shows that post-pandemic education leaders display agility in restructuring work systems, implementing technology, and dynamically adjusting policies [17]. These findings are in line with adaptive leadership theory, which emphasizes the ability of leaders to create conditions for sustainable organizational transformation [18].

From the perspective of mediation mechanisms, leadership agility does not work directly on organizational achievements, but through internal processes such as institutional resilience, community emotional stability, and organizational adaptive capacity building [19]. Empathetic and transparent communication has been proven to strengthen social cohesion and collective trust as the foundation of organizational recovery. The communication approach is also in line with situational crisis communication theory, which emphasizes contextual communication responses as a mechanism for stabilizing organizations in crisis [20].

The integration of adaptive leadership, distributed leadership, and agile leadership results in an agile leadership model that emphasizes cross-functional collaboration, organizational member empowerment, and continuous innovation [21]. This model shows that effective post-crisis leadership operates through the distribution of authority and collective participation, which, in the framework of mediation, serves as a connecting link between leadership and organizational performance.

Women's Leadership and Social Relations-Based Mediation Mechanisms

From the perspective of gender theory, women's leadership cannot be separated from the social constructs that affect access, participation, and legitimacy in organizational structures [22]. Gender inequality often serves as a mediating variable that affects effectiveness. Thus, the influence of women's leadership on organizational performance does not take place in a linear manner, but through structural mechanisms such as access to decision-making, symbolic legitimacy, and organizational culture [23].

Empirical research also shows that gender diversity in leadership increases organizational creativity, innovation, and institutional performance. However, such effectiveness depends on the existence of supporting mechanisms such as collective participation, role distribution, and an inclusive work environment. This confirms that women's leadership operates through mediation mechanisms based on the social and cultural structure of the organization [24].

Based on the synthesis of the literature, the mediation mechanism of women's leadership in the post-crisis context can be understood through three main pathways. First, the relational path, namely empathic communication, trust, and social cohesion as the foundation of organizational stability [25]. Second, the structural path, namely leadership distribution, collective participation, and institutional innovation, is a means of organizational transformation. Third, the cultural path, namely symbolic legitimacy and organizational culture change, is the basis for institutional recovery [26].

Empirical findings at the University of Lampung show that the increase in women's representation in post-crisis leadership structures can be understood through the mediation framework, where the influence of women's leadership on institutional achievement takes place through strengthening organizational performance and institutional innovation, rather than through direct relationships [27].

The existing literature has shed light on the characteristics of women's leadership, post-crisis leadership agility, and the influence of gender structures on organizations. However, studies that explicitly integrate these three perspectives within the framework of post-crisis mediation mechanisms in the context of higher education in Indonesia are still limited. Therefore, this study contributes by formulating a conceptual model of post-crisis women's leadership based on mediation mechanisms that connect relational, structural, and cultural dimensions in the process of institutional recovery.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a type of qualitative research with a design *Systematic Literature Review* combined with an interpretive approach to synthesize empirical and theoretical findings regarding the mediation mechanisms of women's leadership in the transformation of post-

crisis public organizations [28]. The approach used is a narrative review with thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns, conceptual mechanisms, and relationships between variables that develop in the scientific literature. The research tool is in the form of secondary data, sourced from reputable journal articles, academic books, and research reports related to women's leadership, institutional innovation, and post-crisis university governance, while quantitative empirical findings on women's leadership at the University of Lampung are used as an analytical anchor case that is interpreted reflectively through the framework of leadership theory and organizational governance without being positioned as primary data [29].

The literature search strategy was carried out through Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect databases with related thematic keywords, using the inclusion criteria of publications for the period 2015–2025, the relevance of the context of public organizations or higher education, and the availability of English and Indonesian, which were selected through the modified PRISMA protocol to produce 45 articles analyzed. The analysis stages include literature familiarization, initial coding, theme formation, theme review and naming, and the preparation of an interpretive synthesis that focuses on the mediation mechanism between women's leadership and institutional achievements [30].

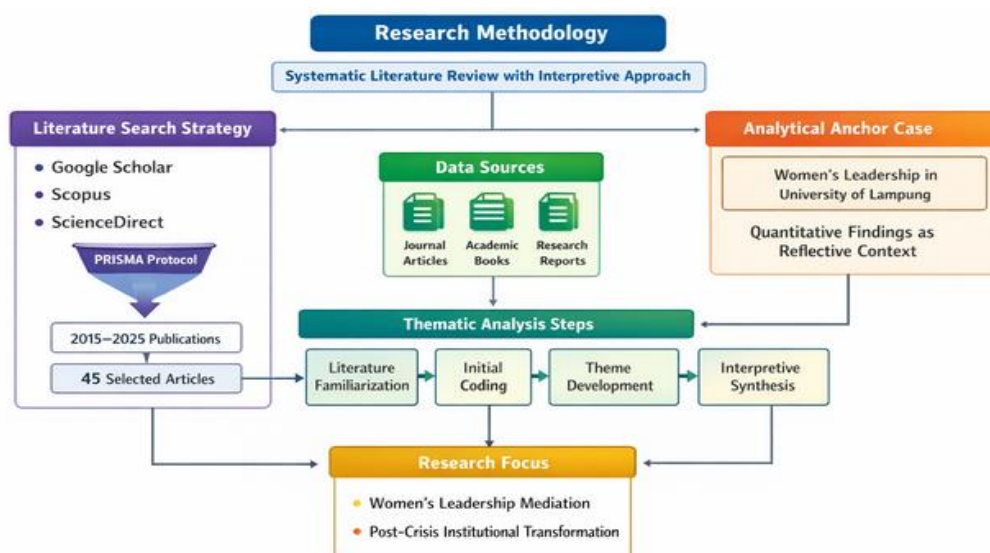


Figure 1. Research Method Flow Chart

This method was chosen because it can explain conceptual relationships that are not linear and provide a deep understanding of the post-crisis organizational transformation process. Substantively, this research urges strengthening the theoretical basis of system-based women's leadership and has implications for the development of more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable public institution governance models.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relational Mediation Mechanism

The literature analyzed shows that the contribution of women's leadership in post-crisis governance transformation mainly works through strengthening organizational social relations [31]. The thematic synthesis shows that women's leadership tends to emphasize empathic communication, collective participation, and trust building as the foundation of institutional stability [32]. In the context of public organizations that are experiencing a crisis of legitimacy, this relational dimension serves as a mediation channel that connects leadership with the recovery of organizational performance. Thus, leadership effectiveness

does not lie in instant structural interventions, but in the ability to build internal cohesion as a prerequisite for institutional change.

This perspective aligns with Bass's theory of transformational leadership, which emphasizes the formation of a collective vision and organizational commitment [33]. The literature shows that women's leadership tends to activate the intrinsic motivation of organizational members through a collaborative and participatory approach. This relational pattern strengthens the symbolic legitimacy of the organization, especially in the early phases of post-crisis recovery, which is marked by the need to reconstruct internal and external trust [34].

Previous empirical findings on leadership dynamics at the University of Lampung indicate an increase in women's representation in organizational structures along with efforts to stabilize governance. In the framework of relational mediation, this phenomenon can be understood as the process of strengthening institutional trust through leadership practices that emphasize integrity, open communication, and organizational consensus. The literature also shows that transparent communication acts as a stabilization mechanism in crises.

Research on emotional intelligence in women's leadership confirms that empathy, social sensitivity, and the ability to read collective emotional dynamics serve as strategic tools in building sustainable organizational engagement [35]. This relational capacity allows leaders to create a safe and inclusive space for participation, so that members of the organization not only play the role of policy implementers, but also as active actors in the institutional recovery process. In a post-crisis context, where organizational legitimacy and stability are in a vulnerable phase, the quality of social interaction built through empathy and interpersonal communication has been shown to strengthen internal cohesion and increase collective commitment to organizational goals [36]. Therefore, the influence of women's leadership is more accurately understood as a process of strengthening the capacity of the organizational work system that takes place gradually through social mechanisms, rather than as a direct determinant of instant institutional achievements.

Based on this framework, relational mediation mechanisms can be positioned as the main conceptual pathway that explains the relationship between women's leadership and post-crisis governance transformation. Social cohesion formed through the practice of empathetic leadership serves to strengthen institutional trust, while increased trust creates the organizational stability necessary to carry out structural reforms in a sustainable manner [37]. In other words, the contribution of women's leadership lies in its ability to build a relational foundation that allows organizational systems to function more adaptively and resiliently. In this perspective, governance transformation does not occur as a result of individual leaders' interventions, but rather as a consequence of a collective process mediated by the quality of social relations, internal legitimacy, and institutional stability built gradually.

Table 3. Relational Mediation Mechanism for Women's Leadership

Mediation Dimensions	Forms of Leadership Practice	Organizational Impact
Empathetic communication	Open dialogue, policy transparency	Institutional trust increases
Social cohesion	Collaborative leadership	Organizational stability
Symbolic legitimacy	Integrity and participation	Restoration of legitimacy
Member engagement	Relational approach	Strengthening collective commitment

Women's leadership plays a role in driving governance transformation through strengthening the quality of social relations within the organization, which serves as a key mediation mechanism in the post-crisis process of institutional legitimacy. Through the practice of empathetic communication, collective participation, and trust building, women's

leadership helps to stabilize organizational systems while creating a social foundation that enables institutional reform to take place sustainably.

Structural Mediation Mechanisms

Literature review shows that the influence of women's leadership on institutional achievement does not take place directly, but works through strengthening the capacity of organizational systems. The thematic synthesis identifies that organizational performance and institutional innovation are the main structural pathways that mediate leadership's contribution to governance transformation [38]. Within this framework, women's leadership is not positioned as a single determining factor, but as a driving force that activates the organization's collective work system. This activation occurs through strengthening coordination, improving the quality of decision-making, and establishing a work environment that encourages sustainable adaptation [39]. Thus, institutional change is understood as the result of strengthening the organization's internal systems mediated by inclusive and collaborative leadership practices.

The adaptive leadership literature asserts that effective leaders create the structural conditions that enable organizations to transform through the distribution of authority, empowerment of organizational actors, and cross-functional collaboration. In the post-crisis context, this approach plays an important role in building organizational capacity to respond to environmental uncertainty and pressures [40]. Women's leadership, which tends to emphasize participatory and relational approaches, contributes to the creation of a more flexible and adaptive work structure. This adaptive structure increases organizational resilience, accelerates the institutional learning process, and opens up space for governance innovations that are more responsive to the demands of change.

Empirical findings related to the dynamics of post-crisis institutional performance at the University of Lampung show the achievement of relatively high performance indicators in the early phase of institutional recovery. The organizational transformation literature describes this phenomenon as the initial reform momentum that usually emerges after a crisis, when organizations are encouraged to strengthen systemic capacity before entering a more consolidation-oriented stabilization phase [41]. In the framework of structural mediation, the performance achievements do not merely reflect the results of individual leaders' interventions, but rather show the functioning of a more adaptive and coordinated organizational system. This strengthens the argument that women's leadership plays a role in accelerating the process of institutional capacity consolidation through strengthening collective work mechanisms.

Phuong's research provides additional insight into the gradual nature of women's leadership's contribution to organizational structural change. Institutional barriers, organizational cultural norms, and limited access to strategic resources cause the impact of women's leadership to not always be seen instantly in institutional achievements [42]. Instead, these influences accumulate through improving the quality of organizational processes, strengthening internal governance, and forming more adaptive work patterns. This perspective confirms that organizational performance serves as a mediating variable that explains the indirect relationship between women's leadership and institutional transformation. In other words, organizational change occurs through systemic processes that are gradually strengthened by leadership practices.

Thus, structural mediation mechanisms place women's leadership as a systemic catalyst that strengthens organizational capacity through institutional innovation and organizational performance improvement. Leadership contribution is not measured by instantaneous structural changes, but by its ability to build an adaptive, resilient, and sustainable organizational system. In this perspective, the post-crisis governance transformation is the result of a collective process mediated by strengthening organizational structures, increasing

innovation capacity, and consolidating work systems that are more effective and responsive to changes in the institutional environment.

Table 4. Structural Mediation Mechanism of Women's Leadership

Mediation Pathway	Organizational Process	Transformation Impact
Leadership distribution	Cross-unit collaboration	Organizational adaptation
Institutional innovation	Governance reform	System capacity increased
Organizational resilience	Policy adjustments	Post-crisis stability
Time lag changes	Gradual adaptation process	Long-term structural impact

The influence of women's leadership on institutional achievements does not take place directly, but is mediated by strengthening organizational performance and developing institutional innovation as part of the systemic transformation process. Through participatory, adaptive, and collaboration-oriented leadership practices, women leaders encourage increased work process effectiveness, decision-making quality, and organizational capacity to innovate. Strengthening performance and innovation forms a structural foundation that allows organizations to adapt sustainably to the demands of change, so that institutional achievements are achieved as a cumulative result of strengthening organizational systems, not solely as a result of direct leadership intervention.

Cultural Mediation Mechanism

The Gender and Development literature emphasizes that the effectiveness of women's leadership cannot be separated from changes in power relations and organizational cultural transformations that encompass governance practices. In this framework, women's leadership is understood not just as a numerical representation in a formal structure, but as a normative force that drives changes in organizational values. Leadership practices that emphasize integrity, transparency, and inclusivity form the ethical foundation of more accountable governance [43]. The transformation of these values serves as a cultural mediation mechanism that explains how women's leadership contributes to the restoration of post-crisis organizational legitimacy through the reconstruction of institutional trust and the strengthening of collective norms.

A study of gender theory shows that the effectiveness of women's leadership is greatly influenced by structural and organizational cultural barriers that still maintain inequality in power relations. However, when organizations provide adequate institutional support through inclusive policies, access to decision-making, and recognition of the legitimacy of gender-diverse leadership have been proven to improve the quality of innovation and the accuracy of strategic decision-making. This shows that the influence of women's leadership works through changes in organizational structural and cultural conditions that allow governance practices to develop more responsively and adaptively.

In the post-crisis context, the dynamics of leadership at the University of Lampung reflect the emergence of a pattern of renewal leadership, namely the involvement of new actors in the process of reconstructing organizational values. This phenomenon shows that the crisis not only triggers the need for structural reform but also opens up space for a transformation of norms and leadership orientation. Women's leadership in this context plays a role as an agent of cultural change that encourages a more inclusive, participatory, and oriented governance orientation towards the restoration of institutional legitimacy in a sustainable manner.

The authentic leadership literature asserts that leadership effectiveness is measured by the legacy of value systems left behind in the organization, not solely by short-term performance achievements [44]. In this perspective, organizational culture change is a key indicator of leadership success, as internalized values will shape organizational behavior patterns in the

long run. Cultural transformations that emphasize integrity, transparency, and collective responsibility serve as a mediation mechanism that strengthens the sustainability of post-crisis governance reforms.

Thus, the cultural mediation mechanism places women's leadership as an agent of value transformation that builds the foundation for the sustainability of public organizational governance. The contribution of women's leadership does not lie solely in immediate structural changes, but in their ability to reconstruct organizational norms, strengthen institutional legitimacy, and create an adaptive and resilient governance system in the face of post-crisis dynamics.

Table 5. Cultural Mediation Mechanism of Women's Leadership

Cultural Dimension	Transformation Process	Institutional Impact
Value of integrity	Authentic leadership	Organizational legitimacy
Gender inclusivity	Leadership representation	Organizational innovation
Trust reconstruction	Renewal leadership	Governance restoration
Power relations transformation	GAD Approach	Systemic changes

Women's leadership contributes to governance transformation not primarily through direct structural interventions, but through changes in organizational values and cultures that serve as a mediating mechanism in the restoration of post-crisis institutional legitimacy. Leadership practices that emphasize integrity, empathy, inclusivity, and accountability encourage the reconstruction of collective norms that reinforce internal and external trust in institutions. This cultural transformation creates an organizational environment that is more adaptive to change, improves the quality of work relationships, and rearranges the orientation of decision-making towards a broader public interest. Thus, the restoration of legitimacy is not understood as the result of a single policy, but as a consequence of the internalization of new values in organizational systems that gradually stabilize governance and strengthen institutional sustainability.

Analysis

The findings of this study reveal that the contribution of women's leadership in post-crisis institutional governance operates through a complex mediation process rather than through direct causal influence on organizational outcomes. Based on the synthesis of literature and empirical observations from the University of Lampung, women's leadership plays a catalytic role in strengthening the organizational system through relational, structural, and cultural mechanisms. These mechanisms collectively facilitate the recovery of institutional legitimacy and the transformation of governance in the aftermath of a crisis. From a relational perspective, the study demonstrates that women leaders tend to prioritize empathetic communication, collective participation, and trust-building practices within the organization. Such leadership behavior strengthens internal cohesion and fosters a collaborative environment in which organizational members feel psychologically secure and engaged in institutional recovery efforts. In post-crisis conditions, where trust in leadership and institutions is often fragile, the relational dimension becomes a critical stabilizing force. Through transparent dialogue and participatory decision-making processes, women leaders help rebuild the legitimacy of governance structures and create a supportive organizational climate that encourages collective responsibility for institutional reform.

Structurally, the research indicates that women's leadership contributes to institutional transformation by enhancing organizational performance and promoting governance innovation. Rather than acting as a single determining factor, leadership functions as a facilitator that activates the organization's internal capacities. Inclusive leadership practices encourage distributed decision-making, cross-unit collaboration, and adaptive problem-

solving, all of which strengthen the organization's ability to respond to uncertainty and external pressures. The improved performance indicators recorded at the University of Lampung during the early recovery phase illustrate how organizational systems can become more effective when supported by collaborative leadership practices. This structural mediation suggests that institutional achievements emerge from the consolidation of systemic organizational capacity rather than from individual leadership actions alone.

The cultural dimension further explains how women's leadership influences long-term governance transformation. Leadership practices emphasizing integrity, transparency, and inclusivity gradually reshape organizational norms and value systems. Such value transformation plays an essential role in restoring public trust and strengthening the moral legitimacy of institutional governance. In post-crisis environments, cultural change is particularly significant because it ensures that reforms are internalized within the organizational system rather than remaining temporary policy adjustments.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the mediation mechanism of post-crisis women's leadership works multidimensionally through relational, structural, and cultural channels that jointly strengthen organizational capacity and restore institutional legitimacy, as reflected in the dynamics of governance at the University of Lampung. Women's leadership contributes to governance transformation primarily by building social cohesion, institutional trust, and collective participation as the foundation of organizational stability; at the same time activating performance improvement and institutional innovation that strengthens the resilience and adaptive capacity of organizational systems; and reconstruct values, norms, and governance culture that affirm integrity, transparency, and inclusivity as the basis for new legitimacy. These findings confirm that the influence of women's leadership on institutional achievement is indirect and takes place gradually through the strengthening of the collective work system, so that post-crisis governance transformation is understood as the result of an institutional process mediated by the quality of social relations, organizational structural capacity, and the continuous internalization of cultural values.

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Author's Contributions

Ina Iriyana conceptualized the study, conducted data collection, and drafted the manuscript. Dian Kagungan contributed to research design, theoretical framework development, and supervision of the study. Devi Yulianti assisted in data analysis and interpretation of findings. Intan Fitri Meutia reviewed the manuscript, refined the discussion, and ensured overall academic quality and consistency.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this research and its publication. The study was conducted independently without financial or institutional influence that could affect the research process or findings. All analyses, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this article are the responsibility of the authors.

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