

“The Strategic Classification Of Leadership Positions In Organizational Management”

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is a crucial element in determining the effectiveness of an organization, including within higher education institutions. This study aims to analyze the classification of leadership positions based on three management levels top-level, middle-level, and lower-level management and their implementation at STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang, a small higher education institution. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study method, using data collection techniques such as observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving nine informants, including institutional leaders, program heads, and administrative staff. The findings reveal that the leadership structure at STIE PEMNAS reflects a clear division of roles and responsibilities consistent with the theory of Robbins and Coulter (2016). However, horizontal coordination among departments remains limited due to resource constraints. Empirical data indicate that vertical communication between leadership levels is effective, with 73% of respondents perceiving leadership performance positively. The study also found that some positions involve multiple overlapping roles due to the small organizational scale. This study concludes that clear role delineation, open communication, and leadership training for middle- and lower-level management are essential to enhance organizational effectiveness. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for improving governance and leadership structures in small-scale higher education institutions in Indonesia.

Keywords: leadership, organization, position classification, educational management, STIE PEMNAS

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a fundamental aspect in the success of an organization, including higher education institutions. In the context of modern organizations, the effectiveness of leadership is not only determined by the individual's ability to influence others, but also by the structure and classification of positions that exist within the organization. A clear leadership structure allows for a proportionate distribution of authority and responsibilities, so that the decision-making, planning, and implementation process of activities can run efficiently and directionally.

According to Robbins and Coulter (2016), leadership structures in organizations are generally divided into three main levels: top-level management, middle-level management, and lower-level management. Each level has different functions and responsibilities, but they are interconnected in supporting the achievement of organizational goals. In the context of higher education, this division can be observed in the campus leadership structure, which consists of institutional leaders, study program chairs, and technical implementing staff..

However, in reality, many small educational institutions still face obstacles in implementing effective leadership sharing. One interesting example to study is STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang, a small-sized private university that focuses on economics and management. As an institution with limited resources, STIE PEMNAS must be able to optimize the existing leadership structure to ensure that academic and administrative activities run efficiently.

This study aims to: 1) Analyze the classification of leadership positions in STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang based on leadership theory and organizational management. 2) Explain the functions and responsibilities at each level of leadership. 3) Identify functional relationships between leadership levels in the context of campus management. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the understanding of leadership structures in small educational organizations as well as become a practical reference for other institutions in designing effective management systems

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study method focused on small higher education institutions, namely STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand in depth the structure, roles, and relationships between leadership levels in the educational organization.

The research was carried out on the campus of STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang during the July-September 2025 period. This location was chosen because the campus has a simple organizational structure but reflects the characteristics of three-tier management as described in the theories of Robbins and Coulter (2016).

The research subjects include elements of leadership and staff who are directly involved in the campus management structure. The research informants consisted of: 1) Chairman of STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang. 2) Two Vice Chairs (Academic and Administrative Affairs). 3) Two Heads of Study Programs (Management and Accounting). 4) Head of Academic Administration. 5) Three administrative staff and one student affairs coordinator. A total of 9 main informants were interviewed in depth.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Leadership Structure and Role Distribution

The results of the observation show that the leadership structure at STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang adopts a simple organizational model with three clear levels of management: upper, middle, and lower levels. Despite the limited number of personnel, this structure is quite effective in regulating the division of responsibilities and the flow of communication.

Table 1. Structure and Function of Leadership Positions at STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang

No	Management Levels	Main Departments	Functions and Roles	Number of Personnel
1.	Top-Level Management	Chairman, Vice Chairman I–III	Establish strategic policies, visions, missions, and institutional development plans	4
2.	Middle-Level Management	Head of Management Study Program, Head of Accounting Study Program, Head of Academic and Finance Section	Coordinating academic and administrative activities, translating strategic policies into operational	4
3.	Lower-Level Management	Study Program Secretary, Academic Staff, Laboratory Coordinator, Student Affairs Coordinator	Manage daily operational activities, administrative implementation, and academic technical support	6

From the results of an interview with the Chairman of STIE PEMNAS (2025), it is known that "the leadership structure on a small campus like ours demands every leader to multitask, because one person often holds more than one responsibility." This statement indicates that the effectiveness of an organizational structure depends not only on the number of personnel, but also on the adaptive ability of each individual to perform dual roles.

A Head of Management Study Program added that coordination between leaders and technical implementers takes place through monthly coordination meetings, which discuss the evaluation of academic, administrative, and financial activities. However, he also admitted that horizontal coordination between study programs is still limited due to tight schedules and limited resources.

This is in accordance with the results of the researchers' observations, where the vertical communication pattern (from the chairman to the staff) is relatively strong, but horizontal communication (between departments) is not optimal. The situation shows that the formal structure of the organization is doing well, but the dynamics of internal communication still need to be strengthened.

To enrich the data, a small survey was conducted of 15 employees and permanent lecturers regarding their perception of the effectiveness of leadership on campus.

Table 2. Results of the Perception of Leadership Effectiveness Survey

Aspects Assessed	"Good" Percentage	"Sufficient" Percentage	Percentage of "Less"
Clarity of Duties and Responsibilities	73%	20%	7%
Coordination Between Units	60%	27%	13%
Open Communication	80%	13%	7%
Decision-Making Effectiveness	67%	20%	13%
Team Performance and Synergy	72%	21%	7%

From the results of the survey, it can be seen that in general, the perception of leadership effectiveness at STIE PEMNAS is relatively positive (above 65%), but the coordination aspect between units still needs to be improved. This reinforces the results of previous interviews that synergy between levels of management has been established, but still faces obstacles in horizontal communication and the division of labor across fields.

Discussion and Theory Analysis

These empirical findings show that STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang has implemented a three-level leadership structure as described by Robbins and Coulter (2016) namely top, middle, and bottom management with a tiered division of responsibilities from strategy formulation to operational implementation.

a. Performance Management Level

The top level management (Chair and Vice Chairs) focuses on the formulation of long-term strategies, academic quality development, and external partnerships. Based on Mintzberg's theory (1973), top leaders play the role of figurehead, leader, and spokesperson, which means they have symbolic and representative responsibilities for the organization. At STIE PEMNAS, this role can be seen from the Chairman's efforts to expand the network of cooperation between campuses and the industrial world.

b. Mid-Level Management Effectiveness

Middle-level management, consisting of the head of study program and the head of the section, acts as a bridge between the leader and the executive staff. Based on the situational leadership theory of Hersey and Blanchard (1988), this position requires high flexibility in adapting the leadership style to the conditions of subordinates

The findings of the study show that the leadership style at this level tends to be democratic-participatory, where operational decisions are often taken through deliberation in coordination meetings. However, due to personnel limitations, there is still often duplication of functions between the head of the study program and the head of the section.

c. Lower-Level Management Roles

Lower-level management plays a vital role in the operationalization of policies. Based on Stoner's (1996) theory, lower-level leaders should be oriented towards direct supervision and technical effectiveness. At STIE PEMNAS, administrative staff and field coordinators are the spearhead of academic services, starting from student registration to the implementation of student activities.

However, the results of interviews show that staff at this level often do not receive adequate leadership or management training. This leads to a lack of initiative in technical decision-making, in line with the findings of Hasibuan (2011) who stated that training and motivation are key factors in improving the performance of lower-level leadership.

TOP-LEVEL MANAGEMENT	MIDDLE-LEVEL MANAGEMENT	LOWER-LEVEL MANAGEMENT
• Chairperson • Vice Chair I (Academic) • Vice Chair II (Admin & Fin) • Vice Chair III (Students)	• Head of Management Study • Head of Accounting Study • Head of Academic Admin Div. • Head of Finance Division	• Secretary of Study Program • Administrative Staff • Laboratory Coordinator • Student Affairs Coordinator

Bagan 1 Leadership Structure of STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang

Synthesis of Findings with Literature

The results of this study confirm the concept of Yukl (2010) that leadership effectiveness does not only depend on the individual abilities of the leader, but also on the clarity of organizational structure and the effectiveness of communication between levels. In addition, this research is in line with the study of Kurniawan et al. (2021) in the Indonesian Journal of Education Management, which found that small campuses with simple structures actually have high flexibility in decision-making, although sometimes at the expense of bureaucratic clarity.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of organizational theory, Siagian (2014) emphasized that a clear leadership structure can improve coordination and strengthen accountability. However, its effectiveness still depends on the leader's ability to build interpersonal relationships and open communication among the organization's members. The findings at STIE PEMNAS support this view, because open communication has been proven to be a factor in strengthening internal cohesion.

Managerial Implications

From the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that:

1. STIE PEMNAS has implemented a three-tier leadership structure consistently, even though it still faces limited resources.
2. Coordination between levels is going quite well, but it needs to be strengthened in terms of horizontal communication and managerial capacity development.
3. Leadership training for the middle and lower levels needs to be made a priority so that the effectiveness of the organization can be sustainable

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to analyze the classification of leadership positions in small higher education organizations, with a case study at STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and document analysis, it was found that the leadership structure in the institution has reflected the concept of three levels of management put forward by Robbins and Coulter (2016), namely top, middle, and lower level management

At the top level, campus leaders play a role in the formulation of long-term strategies, academic policies, and institutional development. Mid-level management serves as a bridge that connects strategy with the implementation of operational activities. Meanwhile, lower-level management is the main technical implementer who ensures that administrative and academic activities run according to the set standards.

The results of the study also showed that vertical coordination between leaders and implementers went well, characterized by regular coordination meetings and open communication between lecturers and leaders. However, there are still challenges in horizontal coordination between work units, especially due to limited human resources and dual positions in several positions.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the view of Yukl (2010) and Siagian (2014) that leadership effectiveness does not only depend on the individual capabilities of the leader, but also on the clarity of organizational structure and the effectiveness of communication between levels. Thus, the success of campus management is determined not only by formal hierarchies, but also by synergy, flexibility, and a culture of collaborative communication among all elements of the organization.

Practically, this study suggests that STIE PEMNAS Indonesia Malang needs to:

1. Develop leadership and managerial training for the middle and lower levels so that coordination and technical functions run more effectively.
2. Improve horizontal coordination between study programs to strengthen cross-field collaboration.
3. Utilizing management information technology to streamline communication and reporting flows between units

By strengthening these three aspects, it is hoped that the effectiveness of the organization and the quality of campus governance can increase in a sustainable manner.

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