

Exploring Self-Efficacy in Women's Leadership: A Case Study of the Subdistrict Head of Tegal Barat, Tegal City, Central Java

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the self-efficacy of Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, the female subdistrict head in Tegal Barat, and its impact on leadership performance in public administration. This research explores how self-efficacy influences a woman's ability to succeed in leadership roles within a male-dominated public sector. Using a qualitative approach, this study employs techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings show that Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy, shaped by her professional experience, social support, and strong self-belief, plays a crucial role in her success in leading and making confident decisions. The study also reveals how family support, education, and role models contribute to strengthening women's self-efficacy in public office. The implications of this research highlight the need to strengthen gender equality by empowering women through education, social support, and the removal of structural barriers. The study suggests that women with high self-efficacy can play a significant role in improving the quality of governance. This research contributes new insights to the study of female leadership in Indonesia and offers practical insights for policies aimed at creating a more inclusive environment for women in government.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy; Women In Leadership; Gender Equality; Public Administration; Empowerment.

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efikasi diri Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, camat perempuan di Kecamatan Tegal Barat, serta dampaknya terhadap kinerja kepemimpinan dalam administrasi publik. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana efikasi diri mempengaruhi kemampuan perempuan untuk sukses dalam posisi kepemimpinan di sektor publik yang didominasi laki-laki. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menggunakan teknik wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa efikasi diri Teti Kirnawati yang dibentuk oleh pengalaman profesional, dukungan sosial, dan keyakinan diri yang tinggi berperan penting dalam keberhasilannya memimpin dan membuat keputusan dengan percaya diri. Penelitian ini juga mengungkapkan bagaimana dukungan keluarga, pendidikan, dan figur teladan berkontribusi pada penguatan

efikasi diri perempuan dalam jabatan publik. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa untuk memperkuat kesetaraan gender, pemberdayaan perempuan melalui pendidikan, dukungan sosial, dan penghapusan hambatan struktural sangat diperlukan. Penelitian ini menyarankan bahwa perempuan dengan efikasi diri tinggi dapat memainkan peran penting dalam memperbaiki kualitas pemerintahan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi baru dalam studi kepemimpinan perempuan di Indonesia dan menawarkan wawasan praktis bagi kebijakan untuk menciptakan lingkungan yang lebih inklusif bagi perempuan dalam pemerintahan.

Kata Kunci: Efikasi Diri; Perempuan dalam Kepemimpinan; Kesetaraan Gender; Administrasi Publik; Pemberdayaan.

INTRODUCTION

Tegal City, located on the coast of Central Java, has experienced significant social development, both in demographics and gender equality. The city covers an area of 39.68 km² and has a population of 294,477 people in 2024, with a nearly balanced gender distribution: 148,668 men and 145,809 women (Sulaeman, 2024). Additionally, Tegal City has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) of 0.318 in 2024, which is aligned with the national average, indicating efforts to achieve gender equality across various sectors of society, including government (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025).

Although gender equality in Tegal City has shown promising results, challenges remain in achieving equal roles between men and women in the public sector. One of the challenges is the presence of female leaders in Tegal City's government. For example, Tegal Barat Subdistrict is the only subdistrict led by a woman, Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, who serves as the subdistrict head. This phenomenon raises deep questions about the factors influencing Teti Kirnawati's success in holding this important public office and how self-efficacy can play a key role in this achievement. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to overcome challenges and achieve specific goals (Graham, 2022). For a female leader, self-efficacy is a crucial factor that drives them to act confidently, make the right decisions, and overcome obstacles in leadership roles (Ulfert-Blank & Schmidt, 2022).

In the study of self-efficacy in women, several studies have highlighted the importance of women's confidence in carrying out public duties. One key concept here is self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to achieve specific goals. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy affects how individuals respond to challenges and adapt to difficult situations. Research by Al Ghifary et al. (2022) shows that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to succeed in completing tasks and achieving set goals. This is relevant in the context of female leadership in government, where self-efficacy can be a determining factor in their success.

The first trend in the literature is research on women's leadership styles. Marina & Utari (2019) found that women's self-efficacy directly influences their leadership styles, which in turn impacts their performance and outcomes. They demonstrated that women with high self-efficacy tend to be more confident in making decisions and leading with integrity.

The second trend relates to women's roles in public office, which is discussed by Maulana (2025) in his research on the urgency of self-efficacy in women's careers. This research shows that women's self-efficacy is more influential than men's in the context of career success, with a significant impact on their career achievements. This proves that women's self-belief in their abilities can enhance their performance in leadership positions.

The third trend is the relationship between self-efficacy and education. Research by Rossanty et al. (2024) indicates that a solid education can strengthen women's self-efficacy, which in turn contributes to their ability to achieve life goals. A strong educational background and the courage to face challenges are key factors in boosting women's self-efficacy in the public sector.

Although many studies explore self-efficacy in women across various aspects, there is limited research focusing on women in public office at the local level, particularly in Tegal Barat, Tegal City. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing the self-efficacy of Teti Kirnawati as the female subdistrict head in this area, which serves as a real-life example of a woman holding public power at the local level.

Thus, this study aims to identify and analyze the self-efficacy of Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, as the subdistrict head of Tegal Barat, Tegal City. The primary focus of this research is to examine how Teti Kirnawati's optimism and self-efficacy play a role in achieving gender equality in the government sector. This study also assesses the impact of female leadership in local public office on achieving optimal results, as well as its contribution to gender equality in Tegal City.

Therefore, this paper argues that high self-efficacy in female leaders, particularly Teti Kirnawati as the subdistrict head, positively contributes to leadership success and better performance in local government. Self-efficacy, characterized by confidence in one's abilities and the willingness to grow through effort, is believed to strengthen women's commitment to public duties. Thus, this research also argues that female leadership, such as that of Teti Kirnawati, can serve as a model for gender equality in politics and governance at the local level.

METHOD

This study focuses on the self-efficacy of Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, as the subdistrict head in Tegal Barat, Tegal City, Central Java. The main unit of analysis in this research is the individual, specifically Teti Kirnawati, as a female leader in a public office at the local level. This research also examines the interactions between the subdistrict head, her superiors, subordinates, and the local community to gain a deeper understanding of how her self-efficacy influences her leadership and gender equality in governance.

The study adopts a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, aimed at describing and analyzing Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy in performing her duties as the subdistrict head (Maxwell, 2009; Rahim & Dilawati, 2022). A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of an individual's experiences, beliefs, and perceptions regarding self-efficacy within the context of female leadership. According to Sadewo (2016), this method is highly suitable for examining complex social phenomena, such as how women in public office face challenges in performing their duties at the local level.

The data sources for this study include the primary informant, Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, and supporting informants, such as her superiors, subordinates, and members of the local community who have direct interactions with the subdistrict head. Additional data were obtained from relevant administrative documents related to government policies in Tegal Barat Subdistrict. This data provides a more comprehensive picture of the context and dynamics of female leadership in local government.

Data collection was conducted using complementary techniques: first, in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Teti Kirnawati, her superiors, subordinates, and several community members with direct experience of her leadership. These interviews aimed to explore their understanding of the subdistrict head's role and self-efficacy in leadership, as well as the challenges she faces. Second, participatory observation. The researcher observed the subdistrict head's work dynamics and interactions with staff and the community in the field. This observation provided contextual and authentic data regarding the effectiveness of the subdistrict head's leadership. Third, document analysis. Relevant documents, such as annual reports, policy documents, and administrative records related to government activities in Tegal Barat Subdistrict, were analyzed to complement the interviews and observations in illustrating Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy in performing her duties.

The data analysis was conducted qualitatively using a deductive descriptive approach, allowing the researcher to draw conclusions based on theories and the data obtained. The data analysis process involved three main stages: first, data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 2013). In this stage, the data collected from interviews, observations, and documents were filtered and selected to focus on themes relevant to self-efficacy in women holding public office. This process also involved simplifying and categorizing the data to make it easier to analyze. Second, data presentation. The reduced data were presented in a structured narrative format. This presentation of data made it easier for the researcher to understand the overall findings and identify emerging patterns. Third, conclusion drawing. The final stage of analysis involved drawing conclusions, which included identifying key themes and relationships between variables found during the analysis. These conclusions are tentative and will be strengthened by the existing data to demonstrate how self-efficacy influences Teti Kirnawati's role as the subdistrict head in Tegal Barat Subdistrict.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Self-Efficacy of Teti Kirnawati in Public Office

This study demonstrates that the self-efficacy of Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, as a female leader in public office in Tegal Barat Subdistrict includes several key indicators that shape her confidence and success in carrying out leadership duties. Based on in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, several important findings were identified:

First, confidence in decision-making and problem-solving. Teti Kirnawati shows strong confidence in her ability to make strategic decisions and solve complex problems in her area. This is reflected in the initiatives she has

taken in facing challenges in public service and subdistrict administration. As the subdistrict head, she does not only make decisions based on procedures but also with careful consideration that takes into account the public's interests.

Second, experience as a learning tool and competency enhancement. Teti Kirnawati, who previously served as the Lurah of Tegal Selatan, Lurah of Tegalsari, and Secretary of Margadana Subdistrict, reflects on these experiences to improve her competencies. These experiences not only involve successes but also learning from failures, which she uses as a foundation for continued growth. She is also open to constructive criticism from her subordinates and takes the initiative to continue learning and developing herself. According to her, education plays an important role as a driving factor in developing competency and preparing women to compete with men in leadership.

Third, resilient leadership amidst challenges. As a woman in a leadership position, Teti Kirnawati faces various challenges, obstacles, and pressures. However, she demonstrates a high level of leadership and extraordinary perseverance in achieving organizational goals. She is able to overcome the pressures by showing steadfastness in her decisions and not giving up easily in difficult situations. This attitude proves that women can have an equal career position, with the spirit to prove themselves in the roles they hold.

Fourth, ability to manage stress and pressure. As the subdistrict head, Teti Kirnawati is able to manage stress and pressure effectively. In high-pressure situations, she remains calm, keeps her focus on the tasks at hand, and maintains the quality of her performance. This demonstrates a high level of professionalism, where self-efficacy plays a key role in maintaining consistency and performance quality under pressure.

Fifth, environmental support in strengthening self-efficacy. Teti Kirnawati also recognizes the importance of support from family, superiors, and subordinates in strengthening her self-efficacy and optimism. The support provided by those around her, whether in the form of appreciation for her work or moral support, has been a crucial factor in boosting her confidence and belief in performing leadership duties. As a woman, this support is essential in overcoming the challenges present in leadership positions.

Table 1. Key Indicators of Self-Efficacy of Teti Kirnawati in Public Leadership

Key Indicator	Description
Confidence in decision-making and problem-solving	Teti Kirnawati demonstrates strong confidence in making strategic decisions and solving complex problems in her area.
Experience as a learning tool and competency enhancement	Previous experience as the Lurah of Tegal Selatan, Lurah of Tegalsari, and Secretary of Margadana Subdistrict has strengthened her competencies and opened up opportunities for learning from both successes and failures.
Resilient leadership amidst challenges	Teti Kirnawati shows extraordinary perseverance in facing various challenges and obstacles, proving that women can have equal career positions as men.
Ability to manage stress and pressure	As the subdistrict head, Teti Kirnawati effectively manages stress and pressure, maintaining calmness, focusing on tasks, and sustaining the quality of her performance.
Environmental support in strengthening self-efficacy	Teti Kirnawati recognizes the importance of support from family, superiors, and subordinates in strengthening her self-efficacy and optimism in carrying out leadership duties.

In an interview with a relevant informant from the Tegal City Government Secretariat, it was revealed that the city government has made significant efforts to promote gender equality in governance. One concrete step has been the appointment of an experienced female subdistrict head, Teti Kirnawati, in Tegal Barat Subdistrict. The following statement illustrates this support:

“The Tegal City Government has made substantial efforts to ensure gender equality in governance to support the performance and work of the institutions, so that the results of their work can be maximized. Among the four subdistricts in Tegal City, Tegal Barat is the only subdistrict led by a female subdistrict head with extensive leadership experience.” (Azmi Fiqoh, Interview, June 3, 2025).

Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy as the female subdistrict head in Tegal Barat includes aspects such as confidence in her abilities, reflection on past experiences, ability to manage stress, and the support received from family,

superiors, and subordinates. These factors work together to strengthen her leadership and self-efficacy, which ultimately contribute to the success of her duties in local government.

Self-Efficacy of Teti Kirnawati in Performing Her Duties in Public Office

Self-efficacy is a fundamental concept in leadership, especially for women holding public office positions. Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, as the subdistrict head in Tegal Barat, Tegal City, demonstrates that high self-confidence plays a crucial role in the success of leadership duties. Self-efficacy is not only related to subjective feelings or perceptions about one's abilities but also affects effort, resilience, and success in overcoming challenges. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy influences the amount of effort an individual will put forth in facing difficulties, as well as the resilience in sustaining these efforts. In the context of Teti Kirnawati, high self-efficacy shapes her confidence to always be ready to address any issues that arise in performing her duties as subdistrict head.

An interview with the Vice Mayor of Tegal City, Tazkiyatul Mut'mainah, reinforces this finding, stating that the Tegal City government not only promotes gender equality but also supports competent women to play a role in the city's progress. In the interview, Tazkiyatul emphasized the importance of strong self-confidence, extensive knowledge, sufficient experience, and relevant academic background in selecting leaders. She said:

"As leaders, we certainly encourage gender equality in Tegal City in governance and politics. Not only do we encourage it, but the Tegal City government also supports competent women to contribute to the city's advancement towards becoming a developed and self-reliant city. Furthermore, the government does not place someone in a strategic position haphazardly; it must be based on strong self-confidence, adequate knowledge, sufficient experience, and relevant expertise to ensure that the person can carry out their duties as directed." (Interview, June 7, 2025).

This statement confirms that strong self-efficacy is one of the main criteria used by the government to place a female leader in a strategic position. It also aligns with the self-efficacy theory proposed by Maddox et al. (2024), which states that individuals with high self-efficacy are better able to adapt, influence situations, and demonstrate their abilities more effectively, thus avoiding negative psychological reactions. Therefore, Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy is not only a psychological aspect but also plays a role in her performance and success in executing her duties as the subdistrict head, as self-efficacy is closely related to the performance of female leaders (Judge & Bono, 2001).

Furthermore, an interview with one of the neighborhood heads (RT) in Tegalsari Village, Mr. Robin, illustrates Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy in the direct context of her leadership in the community. In the interview, Mr. Robin stated:

"Ms. Teti uses a leadership style that directly engages with the community to align the subdistrict's objectives with those of the areas under her. Her confidence as a leader, despite being a woman, and her ability to integrate with the community are key advantages in her leadership." (Robin, RT Tegalsari Village, Interview, June 10, 2025).

This statement indicates that Teti Kirnawati's leadership style, based on high self-efficacy, allows her to build strong relationships with the community and support the achievement of government goals. This aligns with the view of Permana et al. (2016), who stated that self-efficacy is directly related to an individual's confidence in their ability to achieve goals and control the surrounding circumstances. Teti Kirnawati demonstrates that as a female leader, she is able to overcome obstacles and challenges, using her self-confidence to design and implement policies successfully.

Thus, the findings show that self-efficacy plays a very important role in the success of female leadership in public office. The self-confidence Teti Kirnawati possesses not only helps in completing her duties but also fosters optimism and resilience in facing the challenges that come her way. By delving into Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy, this study reveals how female leaders can overcome various obstacles to advance in their careers and actively contribute to governance, while also serving as an example for other women aspiring to hold similar positions.

Factors Influencing Teti Kirnawati's Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a crucial factor that drives success in leadership. As a woman holding the position of subdistrict head in Tegal Barat, Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, demonstrates that high self-efficacy plays a major role in achieving goals and enhancing the performance of the organization she leads. Based on the findings of this study, self-efficacy in Teti Kirnawati is influenced by both internal and external factors, which strengthen her self-belief in performing her duties as a female leader.

First, the internal factors. Internal factors that influence Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy include self-confidence in her abilities. This self-efficacy arises from her personal belief that she can carry out the duties of the subdistrict head, even while holding a female leadership position in the public sector, which is still predominantly male. Bandura (in Simaremare, 2018) states that self-efficacy stems from an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in the face of challenges, and in Teti Kirnawati's case, this is clearly reflected in how she manages the various challenges in her public office.

This confidence is also reinforced by her personal experience in her career in government. Before serving as subdistrict head, Teti Kirnawati had extensive experience as the Lurah of Tegal Selatan, Lurah of Tegalsari, and Secretary of Margadana Subdistrict, which provided valuable lessons in managing governance and public service. As Teti Kirnawati shared in an interview:

"Before assuming my current position, I started my career from the bottom, beginning as a social services staff member, Lurah of Tegal Selatan, Lurah of Tegalsari, Secretary of Margadana Subdistrict, and Secretary of Tegal Barat Subdistrict before reaching my current position." (Interview, June 5, 2025)

This experience has formed a strong self-efficacy, allowing Teti Kirnawati to advance to higher leadership positions. As a woman, she demonstrates that success at each stage of her career is heavily influenced by her commitment and perseverance in carrying out her duties, despite the pressures and challenges she often faces.

Second, external factors. While internal factors play a key role in strengthening self-efficacy, external factors are also crucial in motivating Teti Kirnawati to achieve optimal results. One of the major external factors influencing her is the support from her family, work environment, and inspirational figures who encourage her to continue developing. In an interview, Teti Kirnawati explained that the support she receives from her parents, husband, children, as well as from her work environment, has been instrumental in developing her self-efficacy:

"The self-efficacy I feel today is greatly supported by my parents, husband, children, family, work environment, and inspirational female figures such as Sri Mulyani Indrawati. As a woman in public administration, education plays a significant role in the work I do because the understanding gained comes from education and experience. The emotional management aspects of a woman's character are also important to support professionalism in the workplace." (Interview, June 5, 2025)

This external factor aligns with Estiane's (2015) theory, which states that social support—from family, friends, or other social groups—plays an essential role in strengthening self-efficacy. This is also supported by Bandura (1997), who emphasize that self-efficacy is shaped by experiences of success, as well as the support and reinforcement received from close individuals. With the emotional and instrumental support from her family, Teti Kirnawati feels more prepared to face the challenges that arise.

Additionally, her previous experience as a female leader, both as the Lurah (village head) and the Secretary of the Subdistrict, enriched Teti Kirnawati's competencies, which in turn enhanced her self-efficacy. This is also related to her ability to learn from both failures and successes. By learning from these experiences, Teti Kirnawati has been able to develop the managerial and emotional skills required in performing her duties as the subdistrict head.

Third, the support from family and the work environment. Social support is also reflected in the harmonious relationship with her family, which serves as a major driver in maintaining emotional balance at work. In an interview with Ibu Endang Retnowati, an employee at Tegal Barat Subdistrict, it was revealed that Teti Kirnawati has good communication with her family, which provides significant emotional support. Ibu Endang stated:

"Ms. Teti has good communication and a harmonious relationship with her family and children outside of working hours." (Endang Retnowati, June 10, 2025)

The emotional support provided by her family, as well as appreciation from subordinates and superiors, strengthens Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy in carrying out her leadership duties. As a female leader, Teti Kirnawati is able to maintain a balance between her personal and professional life, which ultimately enhances her performance as the subdistrict head.

These findings indicate that Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors that support and reinforce her leadership capabilities in public office. The internal factors, including experience, self-confidence, and the ability to learn from both failures and successes, interact with external factors such as social support from family, work environment, and inspirational figures. All of these factors together shape her strong self-belief, enabling her to not only persist in her role as subdistrict head but also to grow and bring about positive change in Tegal Barat Subdistrict.

This study directly relates to the goal of analyzing self-efficacy in women holding public office and how these factors can drive gender equality in local government. By strengthening self-efficacy, women like Teti Kirnawati are able to play an equal role with men in achieving better and more inclusive governance goals.

Implications of Self-Efficacy on Teti Kirnawati's Performance

Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in success and performance achievement, especially for women in public office. In this case, Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, as the subdistrict head in Tegal Barat, demonstrates that high self-efficacy has a significant impact on successful performance and the achievement of set goals. A strong self-efficacy fosters optimism, perseverance, and readiness to face existing challenges, all of which positively affect individual performance, particularly in the context of female leadership.

In an interview with Endang Retnowati, an administrative staff member at Tegal Barat Subdistrict, it was revealed that professionalism and a responsive leadership style are key characteristics of Teti Kirnawati in performing her duties. Ibu Endang stated:

"In her work, Mrs. Teti is always professional and positions herself as a work partner, guiding and providing understanding to subordinates who lack knowledge. Her motto of being responsive in service, even frequently going directly to the community, is a strength in her leadership." (Interview, June 10, 2025).

From this interview, it is evident that Teti Kirnawati applies a collaborative leadership style, where she not only relies on formal structures but also directly engages with the community. This indicates that her strong self-efficacy facilitates the achievement of performance that aligns with expectations, through a responsive and professional approach. High self-efficacy gives her the confidence to take initiatives and motivate her team to achieve the shared goals.

A statement from Ahmad, one of the neighborhood heads (RT) in Kraton Village, also provides further insight into Teti Kirnawati's leadership quality. In his interview, he explained:

"The current subdistrict head, Mrs. Teti, is seen as quite effective because she is professional in her work, does not position herself as a woman, but as a leader when performing her duties, and upholds fairness in policy implementation, especially in the Kraton area." (Interview, June 10, 2025).

This demonstrates that Teti Kirnawati prioritizes fair performance and leads with high confidence, without being hindered by her gender. In this case, high self-efficacy contributes to a results-oriented leadership, while maintaining fairness and professionalism in the policies she implements.

One of the employees in Tegal Barat Subdistrict also added:

"The success of Mrs. Teti's performance can be seen from the managerial approach with the village heads in the Tegal Barat area, which is well-integrated. Every week, she takes the time to visit the villages according to a well-organized schedule." (Devi Septi, Interview, June 10, 2025).

This statement highlights Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy in managing her leadership effectively and demonstrates her hands-on approach in ensuring the success of the subdistrict's administrative processes.

This statement highlights the importance of direct coordination and active supervision by Teti Kirnawati over her subordinates. By engaging directly and ensuring smooth communication, Teti Kirnawati optimizes the overall performance of the organization, demonstrating that strong self-efficacy allows her to remain actively involved in

her work and ensures that every part of the organization functions efficiently. This also reflects how a leader with high self-confidence is able to manage a team and organization in a proactive and structured manner.

Further, in an interview with Teti Kirnawati herself, she expressed:

“With strong self-efficacy and optimism in my abilities, I have the courage to carry out my duties. I do not lose heart as a woman, and I am ready for the challenges and competition ahead.” (Interview, June 2025).

This statement affirms that optimism and self-belief in facing challenges are at the core of the self-efficacy that Teti Kirnawati possesses. By having confidence in her abilities, Teti Kirnawati is not only prepared to face the challenges but also capable of involving all elements of the organization in achieving larger goals. This aligns with the theory proposed by Sukatin et al. (2023), who state that individuals with high self-efficacy and optimism see success as an achievable result and build a supportive ecosystem within the organization. Teti Kirnawati's high self-efficacy not only impacts her but also positively influences her team members, creating a more positive and productive work atmosphere.

Based on the self-efficacy indicators identified in this study, it can be concluded that Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, has a fairly high level of self-efficacy, placing her in the moderate category. This indicates that despite the challenges and obstacles in her duties, her strong self-efficacy enables her to directly engage in solving community issues, regardless of whether the tasks are easy or difficult. When encountering failure, she views it as valuable experience for future improvement, with a strong motivation to continue developing and enhancing her competencies. The self-efficacy she possesses has a positive impact on the performance of the organization she leads, demonstrating that women with high self-efficacy can play a key role in the advancement of governance.

These findings reveal that self-efficacy plays a significant role in Teti Kirnawati's performance as the subdistrict head of Tegal Barat. With confidence in her abilities, she can manage the team more effectively, maintain strong relationships with the community and subordinates, and take direct initiative in solving problems. The optimism and professionalism displayed by Teti Kirnawati have proven to enhance performance at the subdistrict level, while also reinforcing gender equality in public office, which is the primary goal of this study.

DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the self-efficacy of Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, as the female subdistrict head of Tegal Barat and its impact on her leadership performance. Based on in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study found that self-efficacy plays a significant role in shaping her leadership abilities and performance. Self-efficacy is formed by various factors, both internal, such as self-confidence and work experience, and external, such as family support, the work environment, and inspirational figures. Teti Kirnawati demonstrates courage in facing challenges, a high commitment to her duties, and strong self-confidence in making decisions and managing her team. Additionally, the influence of social support and prior leadership experience further strengthens her self-efficacy in achieving effective governance goals.

Why does Teti Kirnawati's self-efficacy have such a significant impact on her performance? The findings of this study show that high self-efficacy creates a strong belief in one's ability to face challenges, make strategic decisions, and achieve organizational goals. With her extensive experience in government leadership, Teti Kirnawati utilizes her work experience and family support to reinforce her self-belief in performing her duties. This study indicates that self-efficacy is not merely a matter of personal belief but is closely tied to external support, such as the influence of family and inspirational figures, which helps strengthen intrinsic motivation and commitment to goals. Overall, Teti Kirnawati's self-belief leads to better performance because she has mental preparedness, the ability to manage stress, and the courage to face high-pressure situations.

This study aligns with previous research on the influence of self-efficacy on the performance of women in public office. For example, Simaremare et al. (2023) and Permana et al. (2016) show that high self-efficacy is positively correlated with an individual's ability to overcome challenges and achieve success. Similar findings were made in the research by Bernabei et al. (2023), which states that individuals with high self-efficacy exhibit greater perseverance and have strong motivation when facing tasks. This study enriches the existing literature by demonstrating how external factors, such as social support and work experience, significantly strengthen self-efficacy in women in public office. Teti Kirnawati's success in facing challenges as a female subdistrict head offers a new perspective on female leadership in local government in Indonesia.

Historically, the role of women in Indonesian governance has evolved significantly, although challenges still remain. Since the early days of independence, Indonesian women have been active in advocating for suffrage and participation in politics, although their roles were often constrained by patriarchal norms. In the first general election in 1955, women not only participated as voters but also as candidates and campaigners (Dewi, 2019). While women began to gain space in governance post-independence, their involvement in strategic positions was still limited by the belief that men were the more ideal leaders in the public sector (Salebaran & Amini, 2022). This study shows that despite these barriers, women with high self-efficacy, like Teti Kirnawati, are able to overcome such challenges and play a significant role in local governance, proving that women also have the capacity to lead successfully, even in a system that often prioritizes men.

Socially, the findings of this study show that gender equality can be achieved through the empowerment of women in strategic positions within government. The success of Teti Kirnawati as the female subdistrict head illustrates that with education, social support, and self-confidence, women can make significant contributions to social development and public administration. Previous research also supports the idea that women's participation in leadership positions enhances inclusive decision-making and democracy (Van der Walde et al., 2019). Although progress has been made, cultural barriers and gender stereotypes still hinder women from reaching higher positions, indicating that women's empowerment in the public sector still requires further effort.

With proper empowerment, women like Teti Kirnawati can overcome these barriers and lead effectively. In line with Yigit (2016), empowered female leadership contributes to more inclusive governance and positively influences policy-making. Therefore, to achieve more tangible gender equality, policies that support women's empowerment and reduce social barriers are essential, as recommended in previous studies (Degu & Hando, 2024; Manhas, 2025).

Ideologically, this research supports the view that gender equality is not only a normative right but also a practical strategy to improve government performance. As demonstrated by Teti Kirnawati, empowering women in strategic positions in government can improve the quality of decision-making and foster more inclusive policies. This study reinforces the finding that self-efficacy plays a significant role in achieving more effective governance, where women, with education, social support, and self-confidence, can contribute meaningfully to social development and public administration. This aligns with previous studies that show that increased female representation in leadership positions can lead to more responsive decision-making, particularly in areas like social services and economic justice (D'Agostino, 2015; Stotsky, 2007). Therefore, gender equality not only promotes social justice but also enhances overall government performance.

The results of this study highlight the important function of self-efficacy in improving the performance of a female leader. Self-efficacy plays a major role in increasing commitment, motivation, and the ability to face challenges, which in turn leads to better performance within an organization. However, there are also potential dysfunctions. One negative challenge is that while self-efficacy strengthens the performance of female leaders, some social and cultural barriers within society may still create inequality. Even with high self-efficacy, women in public office may still face discrimination or gender stereotypes that hinder their access to strategic positions. For example, women in leadership roles often face barriers in male-dominated organizations, such as unequal gender interactions and internal organizational arrangements that perpetuate inequalities (Bishu & Headley, 2020). Moreover, women who break through the glass ceiling in public managerial positions often face additional challenges, such as less favorable evaluations, reduced support from peers, and exclusion from important networks, a phenomenon known as the "glass cliff" (Kabir & Hossain, 2021).

Nevertheless, social and cultural barriers, including patriarchal norms and limited access to resources such as education and training, continue to restrict women's roles in government. Negative stereotypes and gender perceptions about women's abilities hinder their advancement to higher leadership positions (Sanbonmatsu, 2006). While efforts to increase women's participation in government through affirmative policies and empowerment initiatives have been made, hidden discrimination still persists, as seen in countries like Afghanistan and Vietnam, where cultural and institutional barriers continue to limit the effectiveness of policies aimed at increasing female participation in public service (Karadzhe & Ngoc, 2022; Mosamim & Villeneuve, 2023). Therefore, while self-efficacy contributes significantly to individual success, a more inclusive and supportive social and structural environment is still needed to maximize the potential of women in the public sector.

Based on the findings of this study, several policy actions need to be considered to address the social and cultural barriers that continue to hinder the development of self-efficacy in women in public office. First, training and

empowerment focused on developing women's leadership is crucial. The government should provide training programs that cover managerial skills, stress management, and self-efficacy strengthening, so that women can have the confidence and capability to face existing challenges of discrimination in the workplace. Second, strong social support is necessary. Building a support system that includes mentors, professional networks, and family support will help women overcome stereotypes and patriarchal norms that still hinder their advancement to higher leadership positions.

Next, gender equality policies should be more firmly implemented at all levels of government. These policies should include fair promotions, meritocracy, and the elimination of hidden discrimination in public office selection processes. Such policies will ensure that women not only have equal opportunities but also have the freedom to develop and lead without social or cultural hindrances. With these policies, it is expected that women in government will be able to maximize their self-efficacy, which will, in turn, enhance overall government performance and bring greater benefits to society.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully identified that self-efficacy has a significant impact on the performance of women in public office, focusing on Teti Kirnawati, SKM, MH, the female subdistrict head of Tegal Barat. The main findings show that high self-efficacy strengthens leadership success, as it enables Teti Kirnawati to face challenges, make confident decisions, and lead her team with professionalism. Internal factors, such as leadership experience and self-confidence, along with external factors, such as social support from family and the work environment, significantly contribute to the formation of high self-efficacy. This illustrates that women with strong self-belief can overcome social and structural barriers to succeed in leadership positions in the public sector.

This research makes a significant scientific contribution to the study of female leadership in the context of local government by highlighting how self-efficacy influences women's performance in public office. This study enriches existing literature by introducing external factors, such as social support and inspirational figures, as crucial elements in strengthening women's self-efficacy. Furthermore, this research provides a new perspective on the influence of incremental work experience and how such experiences reinforce self-confidence in facing challenges in leadership positions. Another contribution is the discovery that gender equality in public office, as demonstrated by Teti Kirnawati's success, can be achieved through the development of women's self-efficacy, which, in turn, supports more inclusive and equitable governance goals.

Although this study provides important insights into the influence of self-efficacy on women's performance in public office, there are several limitations that must be acknowledged. This study focuses solely on one individual, Teti Kirnawati, which, while providing an in-depth picture, does not fully represent all female leaders in public office. Additionally, the data collected is primarily based on interviews and observations, which are subjective and may be influenced by personal bias. Therefore, further research is needed with a larger sample and a quantitative approach to obtain a more representative picture of the influence of self-efficacy on women's performance in the public sector. Future research could also explore more deeply the relationship between cultural and social factors that influence female leadership in a broader context in Indonesia.

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