

Women Leaders in Indonesia: Current Picture and Strategies for Empowerment

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Women empowerment and equal access to opportunities have long been among the issues that need to be understood, followed by urgent action in Indonesia. Despite efforts to provide men and women with equal opportunities, of all 146 countries indexed in the *Gender Gap Report* by the World Economic Forum (2015), only a few have achieved gender equality, including the opportunity to become a leader. As explained by Cho et al., (2015), the reasons behind inequality are complex, involving traditional values that define a country or a culture in terms of who the people are and how they treat each other. These values are the forces that powerfully shape the way of thinking and behaving (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Riantoputra et al., (2013) advanced the discussion by demonstrating that the way of thinking of women leaders is also shaped by the interplay of culture and situational contexts. The complex interweave of these factors needs to be described and understood in order to achieve women's empowerment. This chapter discusses how some of these factors influence women leaders in Indonesia, a unique country with multicultural values and contextual aspects that limit or liberate women leaders.

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In this chapter, we elaborate on the cultural factors that direct the key role of family in the empowerment or disempowerment of women as leaders in Indonesia. Second, we demonstrate the important role of family in the development of women's leadership in Indonesia before its independence, the role of the New Order regime in Indonesia in limiting the role of women only to their obligation as wives and mothers, and the growing importance of education and leadership experience for women leaders today. Third, we illustrate the current state of women in leadership positions in Indonesia – both disheartening pictures and encouraging ones. Then, we outline some strategies for empowerment and offer some future research agendas. Finally, we wrap up the discussion by providing a metaphor of women's leadership development in Indonesia.

CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN LEADERS IN INDONESIA

Being an archipelago state that consists of more than 16,000 islands and more than 600 cluster tribes (Badan Pusat Statistik, *n.d.*), Indonesia is full of different values and practices. Fortunately, the ethnic fractionalized index (EFI) and the ethnic polarized index (EPOI) are 0.81 and 0.50, respectively (Badan Pusat Statistik, *n.d.*). The EFI measures “the probability two randomly selected individuals in a region are not of the same ethnic group” (Arifin, Ananta, Utami, Handayani, & Pramono, 2015, p. 232). Thus, EFI of 0.81 in Indonesia indicates that, most likely (81% probability), two randomly selected people in Indonesia come from different ethnic groups, suggesting that Indonesia is a heterogeneous country. EPOI, on the other hand, indicates the extent to which “individuals identify with their own ethnic groups, aggravating the ‘difference’ between one ethnic group and the other” (Arifin et al., 2015, p. 238). Because Indonesia's EPOI is just 0.5, in terms of ethnicities, Indonesians do not see themselves as completely different from one another. In other words, Indonesia is not polarized. There is a common thread of values and behaviors among Indonesian people even though they come from hundreds of tribes that are spread across thousands of islands.

In general, Indonesian culture is collectivist (Hofstede et al., 2010), which values the goals and harmony of a community (or a family) over the needs of an individual. In a way, this cultural tendency encourages

people to think beyond themselves and, thus, to serve their community better. However, Inglehart and Welzel (2005), over decades of research in Indonesia, have clarified that, although Indonesians have the potential to value their contributions to their community, they tend to prioritize only their family. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) referred to Indonesian culture as traditional, where family plays a key role such that the goal of Indonesian children is to make their parents happy, while parents are expected to prioritize their children's well-being even at the cost of their own. In a culture like this, family is the reason for their being and the core of their identity. This tendency can be seen in Indonesians' daily activities. Some Indonesians practice "teknonymy," which is calling a parent "the mother/father/grandparent of the first-born-child/grandchild" (Robinson, 2009, p. 15). For example, after I gave birth to my first child, a few people stopped calling me Corina and instead call me the mother of Cara (the name of my first child). The tendency is even more obvious in Batak (an ethnic group in north Sumatra) culture. In their culture, once a person has a child, it is taboo to call the parents by their first name. It is expected to refer to them only as the parents of X (their first child, particularly their first son) or by their family name. Thus, for Indonesians (women and men), their family is the base of their identity, their priority, and the determinant of their accepted roles in the community.

Interestingly, for the majority of Indonesians, family relationships are characterized as bilinear, which means that both paternal and maternal lines are acknowledged as important sources of their being (Robinson, 2009). This kind of social relationship opens up space for both men and women to have equal importance in structuring individual experiences and enabling agency for their children. Further, many Indonesians practice matrilocality, which is living with their wife's family at least for the first few years following marriage (Robinson, 2009). This practice is also prevalent in paternalistic cultures, such as Acehese (in the north of North Sumatra). Thus, even in the patrilineal lines, their wife's family is a strong source of emotional and psychological wellbeing, suggesting *de facto* acknowledgment of women's agency and their potential to be leaders.

Indonesia is also a high power distance culture (Hofstede et al., 2010), where people tend to accept that power is spread unequally: older people have more power than younger ones; people with position have more power than those without position; people with educational degrees

have more power than less educated ones. This culture tends to value obedience by those less powerful (e.g., children) more than their independence and assertiveness (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Robinson (2009) argued that social relationships in Indonesia previously were defined only in terms of generational differences, such as parents versus children and seniors versus juniors, but now is also defined in terms of gender. The high power distance between men and women, according to Robinson (2009), occurs because of state intervention during Soeharto's era (see elaboration in the next section). Therefore, today, high power distance culture also shapes non-egalitarian gender roles and limits women's agency. In some rural parts of Indonesia, for example, it is common for families to choose to educate their sons rather than their daughters, because sons are expected to have leadership roles, while their primary expectation for daughters, in some areas of Indonesia, is still to get married and raise their children.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN INDONESIA

Before Dutch colonization of Indonesia, there were only scattered examples of women in leadership positions, and those who rose to that challenge were those who gained access to leadership through family ties. History notes Ratu Maharani Shima (611–695 CE), the Queen of the Kalingga Kingdom, as a leader who was famous for her honesty, and Tribhuwana Tunggaladewi (1325–1351 CE) as one of the leaders of the Majapahit Kingdom, which was the most powerful kingdom in Indonesia's history before Dutch colonization (Munandar, 2009). During the struggle for Indonesian independence, women emerged as leaders. The Indonesian Directorate of Heroism, Pioneer, and Solidarity (2010) lists 12 women (8.16%) as national heroes, recognizing, however, that such lists are typically compiled by men. Historical records demonstrate that those who became leaders were, again, women with access through family ties. For example, both Cut Nyak Dien (1848–1908 CE) and Martha Christina Tiahahu (1800–1818 CE) were highly influenced by their fathers (Ibrahim, 1996; Zacharias, 2012) who were respected leaders and war heroes in their municipalities.

Both Cut Nyak Dien and Martha Christina Tiahahu developed their identity as leaders and gained access to leadership through their interaction with their fathers. Kartini (1879–1904 CE), on the other hand,

became an influential leader through education. Kartini dreamt of equal access to education for women (Robinson, 2009); this was expressed through her letters to her friend, Rosita Abendanon-Mandri, the wife of J. H. Abendanon, the Minister of Education and Industry at the time. Kartini's letters demonstrated her life as a curious woman who longed to be independent and modern but was caged by traditional values. Although Kartini fought for equal access to education, she struggled to live according to her own views and could not continue her education because her father did not allow her to do so (Taylor, 1989). Kartini, who fought against child marriage and polygamy, was powerless to prevent herself and her sister (Kardinah) who were given in marriage to men who were polygamous (Taylor, 1989).

After Indonesia's independence, there were changes that made Indonesia less egalitarian. First, there was a slight change in the use of its national language. Before independence, Indonesia's elite politicians chose the Melayu language to be Indonesia's national language (Bahasa Indonesia), although the majority of them were Javanese and Sundanese. Bahasa Indonesia was chosen because of its egalitarian nature compared to Javanese and Sundanese languages. Javanese and Sundanese languages use different words for different classes of people. For example, the word *eat* in English can be used for parents (e.g., My mom eats), for friends (e.g., My friends eat), and for drivers (My driver eats). Sundanese language, however, uses different words for these groups of people (*tuang/nda/dahar*), and each word reflects and emphasizes the extent to which that group of people should be respected. Bahasa Indonesia, on the other hand, is egalitarian. That is, it uses only one word (i.e., *makan*) for every group of people. Further, during the struggle for independence, men called each other *bung* (meaning *dude*), which reflected mate-ship. However, after independence, people referred to their older fellow worker as *bapak* (father) or *mas* (big brother), forcing generational distance and a paternalistic atmosphere. Before independence, when two Indonesians met, they would shake hands, indicating equal importance. Today, however, many Indonesians feel the need for younger people to show respect by kissing the hand of older ones. This atmosphere leads to gender role non-egalitarianism as well. Many wives call their husbands *mas/abang* (big brother) irrespective of who is older. The slightly different uses of language and gestures, including how a wife should call/talk to her husband, have changed Indonesia to be less egalitarian.

Second, during Soeharto's era (the New Order regime, 1967–1998 CE), non-egalitarian gender roles were specifically strengthened. This effort occurred through a new way to refer to women, from *perempuan* to *wanita*. *Perempuan* originated from *empu*, meaning someone with competence, while *wanita*, short for *wani-ditata*, refers to someone with the willingness (*wani*) to submit (*ditata*) (Budiman, 2002), arguably for the greater good of her family. Non-egalitarian gender roles were also strongly encouraged through the establishment of Dharma Wanita, an organization for all wives of civil servants (Suryakusuma, 2002). Membership was compulsory, and each member was expected to promote her husband's career. This organization was not based on competence or merit (Budiman, 2002; Robinson, 2009). Instead, every woman's position depended on the level of her husband's position. Thus, an intelligent and competent woman may have had a lower position than less-competent woman simply because of her husband's comparatively lower position. These practices limit how Indonesian women view their roles, status, and competence, leading to disempowerment. As Welzel (2013) stated, "When universal freedom has little utility, low value and no effective guarantee, a society is trapped in a cycle of disempowerment" (p. xxiv). To confirm how women perceive their importance, Mangunsong (2009) conducted a survey of 216 women leaders from four major ethnicities with different family lines in Indonesia: Javanese (a bilineal family line), Minangkabau (a matrilineal family line), and Batak and Balinese people (patrilineal family lines). Her research demonstrated that women leaders from all tribes, irrespective of their family lines, view their primary roles as to support their husbands and to be the mother of their children. Her research verified that, for many Indonesian women, their significance depends on their family.

Non-egalitarian gender roles put a lot of strain on women as they grow and function as leaders in communities. Riantoputra et al., (2013) conducted an empirical study of 303 women leaders in three provinces in Indonesia. Using case-scenario questionnaires that represented hypothetical but realistic cases, they examined women leaders' perceptions of whether they were able to manage key challenges of their organizations. The research showed that women leaders tended to have confidence in their leadership and perceived that they were able to manage their challenges if they have been brought up in a society that treats women and men equally. In other words, gender role egalitarianism is essential for the development of women as competent and confident leaders.

CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN INDONESIA

Soeharto's era ended in 1998 CE, and, since then, many aspects of Indonesian society have been transformed. The *Global Gender Gap Report 2015* confirms the progress of women leaders in Indonesia. In 2015, Indonesia moved up five ranks from 97th to 92nd of 142 countries due to the doubled number of women in ministerial positions (World Economic Forum, 2015). Women's participation as legislators, senior officials, and managers slightly improved from 27% in 2014 (World Economic Forum, 2014) to 30% in 2015 (World Economic Forum, 2015). Interestingly, Grant Thornton's research showed that 36% of senior managers in Indonesia are women (Priherdityo, 2016). Thus, by numbers, Indonesia is the country with the sixth largest number of women in a senior manager position in the world (Priherdityo, 2016).

According to Grant Thornton's report, many women rise as leaders because of their willingness to make a difference (47%) and to influence others (32%) (Priherdityo, 2016). Many women in urban Indonesia have internalized their identity as leaders, suggesting their ability to construct a positive identity as leaders. To verify this, Riantoputra, Bastaman, and Duarsa (2016) conducted research on 315 men and women leaders in two large cities in Indonesia (Jakarta and Bali). They found that positive identity as a leader, defined as a person's evaluation and her/his perception of others' judgment about their role as leaders, is positively related to traits (extraversion and conscientiousness), but not to gender. This research suggested that, at least in large cities in Indonesia, men and women are equally able to construct a positive identity as leaders because leader identity requires the integration of each person's personal and social identity (Chrobot-Mason, Ruderman, & Nishii, 2013). Riantoputra et al., (2016) suggested that in large cities in Indonesia, women are able to manage their multiple identities as a person, a part of their family, and a leader of their community or organization.

Indeed, there has been a major improvement of women's participation in leadership positions in Indonesia, especially in big cities. Indonesia's score for overall gender equality in 2015 was 0.681 with 1 being perfect gender equality, with improvement in all sub-indices (World Economic Forum, 2015). Women have achieved leadership status as CEOs of cosmetic companies (e.g., Martha Tilaar, the founder of PT Martine Berto and Nurhayati Subakat, the CEO of PT Paragon Technology and

Innovation), as well as CEOs of male-dominated companies, such as telecommunication companies (e.g., Dian Siswarini, the CEO of XL-Axiata) and transportation companies (e.g., Noni Sri Ayati Purnomo, the CEO of Blue Bird Group). At the governmental level, Megawati Soekarnoputri, Indonesia's president 2001–2004, proved that a woman can reach the position of the country's president. The achievements of these women leaders demonstrate that women in Indonesia are able to reach leadership positions in both male and women-dominated industries.

Although there are indications of improvements, there is still major work to be done. The Asian Development Bank reported that in 2014 women's wages in Indonesia were 30.8% lower than men's, with urban areas having a wider wage gap than rural areas (31.5% and 29.9%, respectively), and that gender discrimination was the key component of the wage gap compared to socioeconomic characteristics, especially in rural areas (Taniguchi & Tuwo, 2014). In urban areas, despite the pressure of non-egalitarian gender roles, some women in Indonesia are able to develop a positive identity as leaders and perform well. It seems that support from their families plays a crucial part for some women to develop as leaders and for others to gain access to leadership positions. However, more work needs to be done for gender equality, especially in rural areas.

STRATEGIES FOR EMPOWERMENT

Several strategies that could be undertaken have been discussed by many scholars. For example, many have highlighted the importance of educating men to accept dual roles in their family and thus share domestic chores with their wives (Greenstein, 2009; Oshio, Nozaki, & Kobayashi, 2013). This section, however, focuses on empowerment strategies that are related to the development of identity as a leader at the family, as well as organizational levels.

As previous empirical work in family dynamics has demonstrated (Hargrove, Creagh, & Burgess, 2002; Shin & Kelly, 2013), family relations and family-supported goals are substantial in the development of vocational identity. In the Indonesian context, as demonstrated in this chapter, the role of the father is to empower the construction of women's identity as leaders. Many women leaders in Indonesia, such as Cut Nyak Dien, Martha Christina Tiahahu, and Megawati Soekarnoputri, have embraced their role as leader with the encouragement of their fathers. Kartini, on the other hand, had to let go of her dream for education

because of her father. Therefore, fathers, as the generally accepted leaders of families in Indonesia, play a key role in shaping the extent to which women accept their identity as leader. It is extremely difficult for women to imagine that they are capable of leading if their family (especially their fathers as decision makers) limit their opportunities to obtain equal education and experience in leadership. Thus, we propose that educating fathers to take part in the development of positive identity as leaders for their daughters may be powerful in fostering gender equality.

A national movement to educate and motivate fathers to see the potential of their daughters is very important. With the goal to overcome identity blindness (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2013), good role models (i.e., respected men who have high leadership positions in their community and who believe in their daughters) are essential in this national movement. Fathers need to be educated to be open-minded and to accept that their daughters may have leadership characteristics, even though these characteristics may differ from the typical leaders of their culture. It will be easier for women to integrate their multiple roles as a person, a part of their family, and a leader when their fathers are able to accept and embrace women to have multiple identities. Because of the wider gender gap in rural areas (Taniguchi & Tuwo, 2014), the movement should target rural Indonesia in particular. Tribal leaders and government officers, as respected leaders, especially in rural areas, need to be at the front of this national movement.

Second, strategies to empower women leaders should take part in organizations. Although, currently, Indonesian organizations have acknowledged the positive impact of women leaders, which is evident by the number of women leaders at senior manager positions in Indonesia (Priherdityo, 2016), women are still paid lower than men. To foster gender equality further, we argue that organizations need to be encouraged to define themselves as diverse organizations. Organizational identity reflects the characteristics of an organization that are central, distinct from other organizations, and relatively stable (Albert & Whetten, 1985). It plays a powerful role in directing the activation of certain concepts in their members' minds (Riantoputra, 2010). Thus, organizations that define themselves as diverse may encourage their members to think, discuss, and learn more about diversity, including the potential for their women members to rise as leaders. By doing so, members of that organization may improve their awareness of the issues, get a better understanding, and

become more ready to accept women as leaders. Thus, organizations may play a role in progressive change.

Organizations that define their organizational identity as diverse organizations need to formulate policies and practices that reflect their organizational identity. An example of a human resource policy/practice that is essential for the development of women leaders in Indonesia is to provide women with mentoring opportunities and leadership experiences. Mentoring plays a substantial role; mentors may function as role models and sparring partners for women leaders, such that they can perceive themselves as capable and thus more willing to take on challenges and gain experiences as leaders. Further, mentors may share tips to manage challenges and thus assist women leaders in performing, as experienced by Dian Siswarini when she climbed the ladder to become a CEO (Siswarini, *n.d.*). History has shown the importance of having friends and mentors to share concerns about managing women's multiple roles. For example, Kartini had several hats to wear, including a modern woman being equal to men with a dream for further education and a man's subordinate who should be obedient to her family's expectations. To manage her inner conflict, Kartini gained support from her friend (i.e., Rosita Abendanon-Mandri) and her sisters who were her partners in her struggle for equal access to education (Coté, 2008). Having mentors and relationships with other women who face similar challenges are substantial for the growth of women leaders. Mentors may serve as inspiration, idea generators, and sources of encouragement for women leaders to manage their multiple identities, just like Kartini's sisters and friends.

More than mentoring, organizations need to actively provide women with leadership experiences. Through experience, qualified women may receive affirmation of their capabilities as leaders (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010) and thus become more able to construct positive identity as leaders. Without experience, women may not be aware of their capabilities. Susi Pudjiastuti, who has been Indonesia's Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries from 2015 onward, showed that she, as a high school dropout, perfected her leadership identity and competence through experience. Susi has proven that she is one of the best performing ministers in the cabinet. Experience and opportunities to prove themselves are essential in grooming women leaders. Although Susi Pujiastuti's experience is impressive in that she did it all by herself, organizations should not play a passive part in perfecting women's leadership abilities. Instead, organizations should encourage sponsorship, that is, an activity that goes beyond giving advice. Sponsors need to take active roles in

making sure that the protégé gets better leadership experiences and more positive publicity (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010). By defining their organizational identity as diverse, members of that organizations may be more willing to do mentoring and sponsorship to provide women with advice and leadership experiences to sharpen these women's leadership characteristics.

PROPOSED RESEARCH AGENDA

To enable the first empowerment strategy, future research needs to investigate and map how different tribes respond differently to the suggestions that fathers need to be the change agents for young girls to develop positive identities as leaders. Understanding this aspect will assist any intervention strategy in this area. Future research may also explore whether the opportunity to be a leader is also influenced by the type of position: traditional vs. nontraditional. For traditional positions, such as a Sultan, anecdotal evidence suggests that people still have difficulty in accepting women in leadership. This tendency is demonstrated in the difficulties of people in Jogjakarta to accept a woman as the Sultanah (i.e., queen) but not as a legislator (Dewan Pertimbangan Daerah, 2014). As a former capital city of Indonesia, Jogjakarta has the right to appoint a Sultan as their governor, which, traditionally, is the first son or male with noble lineage to the existing Sultan. The current Sultan (Sultan Hamengkubuwono X) does not have a son, but, unlike his predecessors, he chose not to have a second wife (and conduct polygamy) to ensure that he have an heir suited to be a Sultan (a son). Instead, he changed his first daughter's noble title and appointed her to sit in the *watu gilang* chair, both of which are traditional rites for a crown prince (Rudiana, 2015). Until now, the people of Jogjakarta have shown strong dissent against this controversial act (Wicaksono, 2015), and only time will tell whether there will be a Sultanah in Jogjakarta. It seems that, for Javanese in Jogjakarta, traditional values and practices are preferred, especially for a traditional position, such as a Sultan. Future research may delineate the extent to which Indonesians are ready to accept women as leaders and how to encourage fathers to take active roles as sponsors for their daughters to develop as leaders.

Further, a better understanding of potentially different ways to establish organizational-level strategies in men- versus women-dominated industries is needed. Future research may want to investigate, for example, different

symbols that are used and how these symbols may have different meanings in different organizational contexts (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Further, organizations need to pay attention to the potential of women leaders experiencing identity conflict (Karelaia & Guillén, 2014) in organizational contexts in Indonesia and effective ways to manage cognitive dissonance and multiple identities.

CONCLUSION

The development of women leaders in Indonesia is similar to the growth of a tree. Like a tree that is expected to grow its branches to cover and provide shade for others, women leaders will influence and bring betterment to their societies, as well as their families. However, for them to grow, their roots need to absorb nutrients, and sunlight is needed to enable photosynthesis. For women leaders, their roots are their (positive) identity as leaders. The roots need to expand, grow, and absorb nutrients. Sometimes these roots are blocked by hard rocks (e.g., non-egalitarian gender roles and non-egalitarian government policies) or challenging situations (expectations to focus only on family). Other times, these roots reach good soil, full of good ingredients for the tree to grow. This soil takes the form of bilineal family lines, egalitarian culture, and supportive families, especially fathers who believe in educating their daughters and have visions for their daughters as leaders as well as husbands who view their wives as equal counterparts. Therefore, educating men, especially fathers and husbands, is essential in changing gender inequality in Indonesia, and in providing suitable situations for women leaders to grow. Empowerment strategies, such as education, leadership assignments, and mentoring, are similar to providing sunlight for the leaves to produce food needed for the tree to grow. Indonesia needs to create more initiatives to nurture the soil and provide the sunlight for every woman leader to flourish as leaders, alongside their male counterparts.

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