

GENDER AND POWER IN THE WORKPLACE: CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN AS LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTORS

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menguji bagaimana faktor gender dan kekuasaan dapat menentukan keberadaan perempuan sebagai pemimpin di lembaga pendidikan tinggi khususnya di daerah Jakarta dan Bandung, yang dianggap sebagai destinasi favorit untuk pendidikan tinggi. Dengan adanya dukungan dari pemerintah Indonesia yang didasari oleh hukum konstitusi yaitu Undang Undang 1945 pasal 28 (2) yang menyatakan bahwa setiap orang memiliki hak untuk bebas dari segala bentuk diskriminasi, bisa dikatakan bahwa tidak ada hambatan bagi kaum pria dan perempuan untuk memperoleh tingkat tertinggi dalam karir mereka, terutama di sektor pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam dengan tiga Dekan perempuan dari Fakultas Matematika dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam (MIPA) dari universitas yang dipilih (swasta dan publik). Hasil penelitian menemukan keberadaan teori Glass ceiling yang masih dirasakan selama masa periode promosi jabatan dari ketiga Dekan MIPA yang diwawancarai. Gender, budaya, dan agama adalah tiga faktor yang memainkan peran yang sangat penting dalam menentukan apakah perempuan bisa tampil sebagai pemimpin di lembaga pendidikan tinggi. Dengan demikian, masih terbentang tantangan bagi kaum perempuan sebagai pemimpin di sektor pendidikan dimana tantangan tersebut masih merintangi kemampuan akademik dan bekerja mereka.

Kata Kunci: gender, kekuasaan, pendidikan tinggi, glass ceiling.

Abstract

The objective of this research is to examine how gender and power will determine whether women can be leaders in higher education institutions particularly in Jakarta and Bandung areas; as considered to be most favorable destination for higher education purposes. With support from the Indonesian government under constitution law article 28 (2) 1945 that states everyone has the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, there is almost no barrier for men and women to obtain the highest level in their career, especially in the educational sector. This research used a qualitative approach with data collection through in-depth interviews with three women who were deans of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MIPA) from selected universities (private and public). The interviews uncovered the existence of a thin glass ceiling theory that was still felt during their promotional period. Gender, culture, and religion play very important roles in determining whether women can perform as leaders in higher education institutions. Thus, overcoming the challenges for women as leaders in education sectors are still overpowering their academic and working capabilities.

Keywords: gender, power, higher education, glass ceiling.

Background

The condition of Indonesian women today has changed and evolved as a result of RA Kartini's aspiration in pursuing a higher education. Since then, women have gained the widest opportunity to attend school. It can be seen from the comparison of the number of girls and boys who attend elementary school (SD) and Junior high school (SMP). However, through time, as the number of schools increase, the increasing numbers of women who attend school have gradually begun to decrease again. This is caused by the persistence of discrimination against girls in the family to go to school and to pursue higher degrees. This is related to a strong patriarchal culture, which considers that "high-school girls, will finally end up in the kitchen too." With the existence of discrimination against girls going to school, the percentage of girls who achieve a minimum level of schooling (Fair 9 years) is much lower than boys; the number of illiterate women aged 15-45 years is also 2-3 times higher than men. The low education of women results in an attempt to make a living and the health care of individuals and families. All this has resulted in a low "Quality of Life for Women" (*Kualitas Hidup Perempuan* – KHP).

Discrimination against women after 63 years of independence does not only occur in education, but also in the workplace, which obstructs their ability to climb up the ladder in their career and in politics. We all know that the achievement of girls at all levels of education (from elementary to university) always ranks the highest. Although research on this subject has not been done, but based on experience, the 10 highest ranks of each level of education consisted of 60% -70% female students. Women also have been able to achieve the highest level of education, such as a bachelor, master, or doctorate degree (S1, S2, S3). The number of female professors has also been increasing. In addition, women today are also able to carry out tasks that were previously regarded as occupations for males such as

pilots, bus drivers, security guards, petroleum engineers, mechanical engineers, mining engineers, and others.

Nevertheless, there are still many barriers that women encounter in order to achieve status or increased performance as expected, especially for leadership positions or other decision-making requirements. To achieve an equal footing with the position of men, such as the position of leaders and decision makers, women are required to have the advantages of more prominent achievements, and must struggle immensely whereas these kinds of accomplishments were not considered necessary for men. It is a burden for women who struggle to achieve a certain position because many people in Indonesia still adopt a patriarchal culture which results in decisions and attitudes that are gender-biased.

In terms of career advancements in the workplace, although women have a record of good performances at school or at work, during the process for determining career advancements, women are always defeated because of their gender. In our society, women are often seen as weak in many aspects of life. Hence, the leadership of women is often questionable. Most of the time it is due to the presumed general characteristic of that women are sensitive. Therefore, the women who become leaders are regarded as inferior to men who are leaders.

In the educational sector, especially in higher degree institutions, although there are many women who become teachers and even lecturers, the men are over-represented in management and in positions of authority, and tend to exert more power in which women are the majority staff. Therefore, the majority of decision-making power resides in the educational profession and senior management where women are vastly under-represented. Women tend to fill most of the administrative and lower-status roles in the education sector.

The above situation contradicts with Indonesia's constitution law Article 28 I (2) of the 1945 Constitution which states that, "Every person is entitled to be free from discriminatory treatment on any grounds and is entitled to protection against the discriminatory treatment." In addition to the state law, the Indonesian government is one of the world's 182 countries that have signed the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women/CEDAW) in the form of Law 7 in 1984.

As women are considered equal in the eyes of the law and have proven to be proficient in areas aside from being homemakers, women should be able to gain more opportunities in advancements to their careers and education. Despite the fact that women are viewed as "emotional" and "weak" leaders, historical events prove otherwise. In the past, there are various examples of successful women as leaders, even in old times, such as Queen Elizabeth I of England, Cleopatra, and of course R.A. Kartini, who fought and struggled for women in Indonesia. This proves that the concept of women who are leaders will not do as well as men in society is false and inaccurate.

This paper will examine the issue of gender and power in the workplace, especially in the education sector: higher degree institutions. We will also study the structures and practices of the organization, and how it reflects and produces inequalities of power between men and women due to implications of these structural inequalities. The results of this paper will enlighten the education sector as well as provide an insight on whether gender bias regarding women as leaders is very much understated.

Literature Review

Gender and Power Structure

What is gender? And how does it relate to power and leadership? According to

Barbro Dahlbom-Hall, an internationally renowned senior consultant and author of several books on gender and leadership explained the connection between the three concepts as below (Autocure, 2012):

"Gender is the culturally created idea of differences between the sexes. Gender is a culturally created order of power related to the idea of female and male. Gender is one's unaware actions that are the result of power structure – and these unaware gender related actions do not aspire to change the order of power, but to preserve them."

As for the role of gender in religion, specifically Islam, various interpretations of the Koran have led many to believe that women should not become leaders. Being a country where its citizens are dominated by Muslims, this has often caused problems for women in the workplace. They were passed by when it came to being promoted and undermined when new positions of power opened up. Up until today, Muslim scholars around the world continue to argue about the role of women as leaders.

In relation to power structures, it is very common that many women have difficulties in gaining job promotions with regards to gender. In terms of gender improvement at work, Professor Joan Bathon from John Hopkins University explained how gender would affect the workplace as follows (Autocure, 2012):

"...one of the more obvious reasons for women not making it to the top was that they simply were not nominated for promotion by their division or departmental chiefs.— The leadership structure in the academic world is still anachronistic and progress is rather slow..."

Gender barriers do not only transpire in the corporate/ industrial workplace but also in the academic world. From the explanation put forward by Professor Joan Bathon above, we can see that gender improvement for women is developing slowly and that it is quite uncommon to have women as leaders managing a division

or department in the academic world. It can be summed by the fact that gender barriers are happening across disciplines and probably across cultures and nations as well.

The above situation contradicts with the notion of gender equality. According to Global education (2012), gender equality will give lots of benefits to families, society, and nations itself. It is stated:

“Gender equality refers to the equal valuing of the roles of women and men. It works to overcome the barriers of stereotypes and prejudices so that both sexes are able to equally contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political developments within society. When women and men have relative equality, economies grow faster and there is less corruption. When women are healthy and educated, their families, communities and nations benefit”.

Gender equality can be achieved through family and workplace. However, when it comes to the application of gender equality in the workplace there is always a thin line and unnoticeable barrier that has been taking place over the time. This sometimes happens subconsciously and without any intended meaning that has been shaped by culture and society on how men and women behave accordingly.

Gender Bias in the Education Sector

Symptoms of gender segregation in the department or program studies as a form of voluntary gender discrimination into the areas of expertise are still being found. Preconceived ideas that women should belong in domestic sectors have resulted in their choice of studies when it comes education. The selection of majors for females is more associated with domestic functions, while males are expected to play in supporting the family's economy and should choose hard science skills, technology or industry. Educational placement of the

vocational and higher education shows there is still a stereotype in the Indonesian education system that resulted in no development pattern competition by gender.

According to a report from the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) on the Achievement of Millennium Development Goals 2012 (*Laporan Perkembangan Pencapaian Tujuan Pembangunan Milenium Indonesia 2012*), the field of social sciences was generally dominated by female students, while the field of technical sciences was dominated male students. In the academic year 2000/2001, the percentage of female students who attended schools in Vocational School industrial technology courses reached 18.5 percent, agriculture and forestry courses 29.7 percent, whereas for the 64.6 percent was for the field of business and management.

Gender bias in Indonesia can be seen from early educational stages such as preschool, elementary school, junior high school, up until high school. A simple example of gender bias in elementary school is text book examples of conditions where the father leaves the house to go to work and the mother leaves the house to go to the market. This implements a preconceived notion in the subconscious of how women should place themselves in fields related to domestic issues or position themselves as the supporting role in life instead of a leader. This also causes men to believe that they should be the breadwinner and protector of the family and work in hard labor fields or any other field where they would be able to earn more for their family.

Aside from that, there are still many cases in schools where females do not get equal rights as males. For example, in some schools, a pregnant high school student is not permitted to attend classes and is sometimes even expelled from school. However, the male who impregnates a student may continue his studies as usual. Aside from that, high school females who are married are not expected to complete their high school education, whereas males are.

This case was revealed by a Professor from STAIN Salatiga, Dra Siti Zumrotun MAg in an Educational Seminar Based on Gender Equality in Salatiga in the year 2011. She believed that gender issues starts at the earliest stage of life, which is the home. She encouraged all to provide an example by having parents respect one another in front of their children in order for their children to grow up respecting one another despite of their gender.

In order to overcome gender bias, early implementation is crucial. Parents should teach their children how to respect others and provide examples on how to do so. Society should also be educated to be more open minded so when it comes to students choosing a major or course in their life, they would not be restricted to certain subjects. By banning these restrictions, society would be able to benefit by having equal opportunities for both genders in various areas, thus resulting in producing more skilled workers in their respective fields.

The Glass Ceiling Theory and the Workplace

The invisible barrier between men and women in the workplace has been a prolonged debate in both industrial and academic world. This invisible barrier is known as “The Glass Ceiling”. According to Wood (2011) cited from “Trouble at the top, 1991”, the glass ceiling was identified as a barrier to a woman’s progress in profession.

Furthermore, Wood (2011) cited from Ceci & Williams (2007) also stated stereotypes that would lead to discrimination such as:

“It might be the stereotype of women as mothers that leads an executive to assume that a working mother would not be interested in a major new assignment that could advance her career. It might be seeing a woman in sexual terms so that her competence is overlooked. It might be misinterpreting an inclusive, collaborative style of communication as a lack of initiative. It might be assuming that women don’t have math and science abilities so cannot handle positions that require these aptitudes.”

According to explained Dr. Rainer Strack, senior partner and global leader of the HR topic at Boston Consulting Group (BCG):

“The greatest challenge for organizations lies not in a lack of awareness about the diversity topic, but rather in an inability to appropriately identify a company’s own glass ceiling. The lack of women in leadership positions is primarily a problem of internal talent management; women receive considerably fewer promotions.”

Interestingly, the glass ceiling phenomenon has had a profound impact on the issue of women in the workplace for several decades. According to Morrison and Von Glinov (1990: 200) cited by Miller (2012: 212):

“The glass ceiling is a concept popularized in the 1980s to describe a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up in the management hierarchy”.

The glass ceiling theory proves how women in the workplace face several obstructions that are not based on their abilities or competency. The development of new laws, regulations, or advancements in women’s rights for equality is still difficult to implement thoroughly. Society and cultures have formed a certain image of women, thus resulting in assumptions of how women will perform in the workplace regardless of their achievements or capabilities. Women are then forced to struggle and work harder in order to achieve the same status or opportunities as men.

The Education System in Indonesia

Education in Indonesia covers the entire education held in Indonesia, either in a structured or unstructured system. In structured systems, education in Indonesia is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. The education system in Indonesia has undergone significant changes. During the leadership of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the appointed minister was Prof. Dr. Bambang

Sudibyo, MBA. This position was then handed over to Prof. Dr. Ir. Mohammad Nuh. In 2011 the term was changed to the Ministry of National Education, and in 2012 the field of education and culture merged back together and is again named the Ministry of Education and Culture.

In Indonesia, all residents must follow the compulsory education program for nine years, namely: six years in elementary school/madrasah and three years of middle school/madrasah tsanawiyah. Currently, education in Indonesia is regulated by the Indonesian Constitution Law Number 20 Year 2003 on the National Education System. According to the regulation, the education system in Indonesia is divided into three main areas, namely formal, non-formal, and informal education. Education is also distributed in three levels, namely: basic education, secondary education, and higher education. The basic curriculum for education in Indonesia is developed by the Ministry of National Education and Culture.

The education policy in the era of the reformation, among others, has experienced several changes such as the Teachers' Training College becoming a university, education reform law with the birth of Act No. 20 of 2003, the National Examination (UN), the certification of teachers and lecturers, the School Operational Assistance (BOS), character education, and other so on.

Many laws protect the right of Indonesian citizens to education. The basic right to education in is protected by Constitutional Law 31 (1) 1945 which states that every Indonesian has the right to education. In paragraph 2 of that law, it states that every citizen must obtain basic education and the government must fund their basic education. Law No. 20/2003 Article 5 includes the rights and obligation of citizens, parents, the community, and government in relation to education. This law states that every citizen has equal rights to receive good quality education, citizens with physical, emotional, mental, intellectual and/or social deficiencies shall have the right to receive special education, citizens in the remote or less-developed areas,

and isolated areas have the right to receive education with special services, citizens who are proven intelligent and especially gifted have the right to receive special education, and every citizen shall have the right to enhance his/her educational ability in the process of life-long education.

According to a global league table published by education firm Pearson in 2012, based on data of graduates from 2006 - 2010, the education system in Indonesia was ranked at the lowest along with Mexico and Brazil. Despite all the regulations the nation has formed, the educational system in Indonesia is still considered poor compared to the rest of the world. This is due to many factors such as the various destitute areas in the nation, the government's inability to implement the regulations thoroughly, corruption cases that have exploded in various sectors influencing the people's support for education, and many others. Poor teaching conditions and under qualified teachers have also become a huge factor to the poor education condition in the nation. Gender bias in education has also contributed to this because preconceived notions have resulted in people to be close minded when it comes to selecting the best educational path for the citizens.

The Higher Education System

After graduating from high school or *madrasah aliyah*, students can enter college. Higher education in Indonesia is divided into two categories: public and private. Both are guided by the Ministry of National Education. There are several types of institutions for higher education such as universities, colleges, institutes, and polytechnics. There are several levels of degrees that can be achieved in higher education, namely Diploma 3 (D3), Diploma 4 (D4), Strata 1 (S1), Strata 2 (S2), and Strata 3 (S3). Strata 1 is equivalent to a bachelor/ undergraduate degree, Strata 2 is equivalent to a master/ graduate degree, and Strata 3 is equivalent to a doctoral degree.

Currently, there are many Indonesian citizens who have not obtained the opportunity to grasp a higher education. This is a result of costly higher education fees and a lack of scholarships provided by the government or private owned entities.

The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia is still authorized and responsible for overseeing higher education in Indonesia, which is managed by the management of public and private colleges or universities. In general, public universities are mostly funded by the government and private universities are mostly managed and funded by foundations or institutions.

Considering the different sources of funding and types of management above, the management of the institutions should also be different. However, overall, the structures of higher level institutions are generally the same. It is headed by a Rector, aided by a Vice Rector and Dean of faculties, who are then aided by the Heads of the Departments of each major for daily operational activities.

In order to obtain a more comprehensive description of how a faculty is managed, below is the organizational structure of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences from one of the universities in Indonesia:

The following data is taken from UIN Maliki Malang regarding the duties and authority of the dean of the faculty (<http://tarbiyah.uin-malang.ac.id/home>) cited by ZulfaLaily Jufri (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/54502668/JOB-Tarbiyah-UIN-Malang>):

Duties:

1. Creating the vision and mission of the faculty;
2. Planning and making policies and quality objectives of the faculty
3. Creating a faculty development plan;
4. Ensure the implementation of education, teaching, and service and guidance to students

5. Directing the science faculty through research and community service activities;
6. Fostering career faculty and administrative staff;
7. Carry out the administration and faculty of management;
8. Formulate, implement search and collaboration with faculty at UIN Malang and agencies / institutions/ related industries.
9. Signed and ratified the documents and report in accordance with applicable procedures.

Authority:

1. Arrange for instructions and guidance on the implementation of education, teaching, and service to the Assistant Dean of students;
2. Provide instructions and guidance on the implementation and evaluate the financial arrangements to the Assistant Dean of faculty II;
3. Provide instructions and guidance on the implementation guidance to the Assistant Dean III;
4. Provide instructions and guidance on career faculty and administration.
5. Provide an assessment of academic achievement and skills faculty and staff;
6. Evaluate the implementation of community service.

From the above explanation of the duties and authority of a dean of a faculty, it can be seen how extensive and difficult it can be. It requires a person who has vast knowledge of the programs included in the faculty, high management, operational and organizational skills, and others.

Article 43 (1) of Law No. 20/2003 also supports the appointment of educators based on their personal abilities. It states:

“Promotion of and recognition for educators and educational personnel are organized,

taking into consideration educational background, experience, abilities, and performance in the field of education.”

Therefore, the person chosen for this position should be based on their capabilities, not just their gender.

Method

This research was based on a qualitative approach research where the use of in depth interviews for data collection was applied. The period of data collection was from June until August, 2012. Informants for this research were three deans from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences from various universities in Indonesia. Based on a report issued by the High Education Directorate General from the Ministry of National Education entitled *Perspective on Universities in Indonesia 2009 (Perspektif Perguruan Tinggi di Indonesia Tahun 2009)*, females had a tendency to choose majors under the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and or Faculty of Health. Therefore, this study was based on informants from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. This was conducted as a basis to prove that despite the fact that these women held high positions in a faculty that is dominated by females, some of them still encountered difficulties when it came to their promotion.

The first informant was Dr. Helena Margaretha, who was appointed in 2011 as the Dean of Faculty of Science and Mathematics in Pelita Harapan University. With an educational background from Twente University, Netherland for her master's degree in applied mathematics and doctoral degree, Dr. Helena was able to help her students achieve medals in Biology for the Directorate General for Higher Education's (DIKTI) National Mathematics and Natural Sciences Olympics 2011 and 3rd place in Mathematics, Best Theory category, for the National Science Olympics sponsored by PERTAMINA.

The second informant was Dr. Ir. Sri Nurdiati, M.Sc. as the first female dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences in the Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) since it was first established in 1982. Dr. Sri was just recently appointed to fulfill her duties from 2011-2015. Same as Dr. Helena, Dr Sri finished her Doctoral degree in mathematics in Twente University, Netherland.

The third informant was Prof. Dr. Budi Nuraini Richjana, MS. as the dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences in Padjajaran University (Unpad). She graduated with a Doctoral degree in mathematics from ITB in 2002, and pursued her post-doctoral in Delft, Netherlands in 2004 and 2007. She has joined Unpad since 1988 starting as a young lecturer and worked her way up to be a senate of the faculty in 2003 and university senate in 2007.

The key informant for this study is the rector of Universitas Bakrie, Prof. Ir. Sofia W. Alisjahbana, M.Sc., Ph.D. She obtained her Master of Science (M.Sc) degree in Engineering Mechanics, Department of Engineering Mechanics, and University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA in 1988. Two years prior in 1986, she managed to finish her studies and get a bachelor degree in Civil Engineering from the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Indonesia. In 1992, Prof. Sofia obtained her Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) title at the Department of Engineering Mechanics and Astronautics, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.

Prof. Sofia started her career in the academic field as a Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant at her alma mater, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, Engineering Mechanics Department, in 1988. When she returned to her homeland, Prof. Sofia then became a lecturer at the Department of Civil Engineering at Tarumanegara University in 1993. Throughout the years, she then went up the ladder to become the Deputy Head of the Civil Engineering Magister Program, Deputy Rector for Administration and Finance, Head of the Civil Engineering Magister Program, Head

of the Doctorate Civil Engineering Program, Director of the Graduate Program, up until the Deputy Academic Rector of Tarumanegara University where she remained until 2009. Since March 2010, Prof. Sofia joined Bakrie University as a Rector. Aside from being active in universities, Prof. Sofia also once held the title of Research & Development Manager at PT Wiratman and Associates from 1993-1995, and was also the Senior Assessor for the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (BAN-PT) of the National Ministry of Education since 2001 until now.

Working her way in the engineering department, her field study was also considered as one of the non-popular fields among women students during the 1990s. With her achievements and outstanding career path as one of the professors in the engineering field who became a university rector in 2010, she is qualified as the key informant for this research.

All of the informants in this research are qualified educators based on the regulations implemented by the University and the Indonesian government. Aside from obtaining various forms of higher level degrees, they obtained those degrees in universities abroad which resulted in them being more open minded towards the views on women. This makes their views and findings regarding women crucial to the development of women in education and the workplace.

Findings and Discussion

As each hold an educational background of at least a doctoral degree, we can see that the three deans of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences: Dr. Helena, Dr. Sri and Prof. Budi have more than what is qualified in order to obtain a position as a leader of a faculty. As we can see from the previous description, the duties and authorities of a dean of a faculty entails vast and complex responsibilities in governing the departments included in their faculty.

Having to govern departments that each have a head of is somewhat challenging especially when the head of departments are men. This was explained by Dr. Helena when she was appointed as the dean of a faculty, where one of the head of the departments was previously her close friend. She explained her situation as follows:

“We were already friends. Thankfully, he wouldn’t take anything I say personally. But the point is, I realized he also needed a sense of security. He had a new leader. How would this new leader react to his ideas? Will I use my authority as a new leader to crush him? Or to dictate him? When we were both heads of departments we often had arguments, we were both stubborn. The problem with his pride was that he did not want to be dictated by me. You know the pride of a man.”

She explained how in the beginning, she felt her friend was quite resistant when she requested him, as a subordinate, to do a number of tasks such as the budget. She understood how it seemed odd in the beginning to have a friend, a woman who was more inexperienced, become his boss.

Dr. Sri also had a point of view regarding this matter. Having men as her subordinate was also challenging considering IPB is known as a public university for its bureaucracy, resulting in a long process when it came to being promoted as a leader. Therefore, not many people, especially women, would undergo that path and risk. She explained:

“In front are all men. Some talk behind your back. Oh, how it is dominated by men. This is true. It’s actually not because no one has the courage to step up. It is because the procedure to become a Dean requires steps that are not easy. It starts from networking, then the initial selection. The toughest part is during the Senate phase. The three names who win in the Senate are given to the Rector. So it is the Rector’s prerogative to choose one, either 1, 2, or 3. At that time, the Rector was really pressured to choose

incumbent number 2 or number 3. Out of the 3 candidates, I was number 1, a woman. All three of the candidates were qualified, very qualified in my opinion. Number 2 was an incumbent. Number three was the Director for TPB. These candidates were experienced; their capabilities were not undermined so it was quite hard for the Rector. Well, that is what I felt. “

With most public universities in Indonesia upholding its strong values, culture and religious (Muslim) orientation, Prof. Budi from Universitas Padjajaran Bandung explained the challenges during her promotional period. She explained:

“I believe that, for example being in the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, even though there is women’s emancipation, even though we all have a PhD that is a potential. Our quality. Yet the biggest challenge was that we live in an eastern culture. That still exists, especially for Muslims. Not too seem negative or anything, I’m sorry for stating this, but Muslims are viewed by how religious they are. There is no choice on whether or not a leader should be a man or a woman there is a belief that a leader should be a man. Some people are still like that. So we must be able perform better. What can we do so a man will see that we have the capacity to do the job. As for me, it does not matter whether or not a leader is male or female, I see their capacity. Their working capacity, performance. But honestly, there are still some who still view it that way. For example, during the last elections for Dean, the issue was gender, then it was discussed from a religious point of view. Well, if you are more open minded, it is not a problem. It could be considered a challenge. If you try a woman for the first time, you can see that a woman can do it as well. So that is good. That is how it is.”

The stereotype of having a woman as leader was also discussed during the promotion of Sri. The rector of the university asked her whether being a woman would become a disadvantage for becoming a leader in the faculty. She explained that:

“There are definitely pros and cons. There is even a belief. A woman cannot be a leader because that is just the way it is. And here, that belief is very strong and a large group of people believe in that. However, in order to counter that belief I received support from everyone. We did it together.”

Support from colleagues and especially the senate are considered important during both Prof Budi and Dr. Sri’s promotional periods. Dr. Sri explained:

“I am here because there is a belief in a certain religion that states that women are not allowed to become leaders because there is a concern that their irrational emotions may affect the decision making process. I even read that belief. There is even a hadith that says do not choose a women. That is how its meaning was portrayed. The Rector even asked me about it, and I told him of course it would not happen. I guarantee that I will always communicate in a good way. I will communicate important things.”

Interestingly, in case of Prof. Budi, colleagues and members of the senate were thrilled at having more women join the force. She stated:

“I feel extremely lucky because I was supported by Senators who are women. It is time for women professors. I became enthusiastic as well. It was different from the first time. When I participated I had to show that, hey, there is a woman. My target lost and that was fine. This second time around, I was really prepared. I generally aided by the professors. It was time. They also saw my abilities. Imagine, the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences is basic and vast knowledge. This is where you get the most knowledge. My predecessors included Professor Barizi, then Professor Andi Hakim Nasution. All big names of Mr Siswadi. So the senators of the faculty would never hand over its leadership to a person who they think is incapable. This is not a game or a trial. Maybe they considered me

competent. Well, if there are some who do not support this decision, I think that is just natural.”

Having a balanced life between family and work, as well as full support from your family is the key to a successful career according to Prof. Sofia. She explained:

“When I nominated myself to become a Rector, thankfully my husband supported my career. But I also had to set limits because I was too busy to become a Rector. For example, sometimes I get home at 9, late in the evening because of the traffic, and others. Sometimes there are meetings, something comes up, and sometimes I work on Saturday or Sunday because of entry examinations. Well, that is going to be a problem if I do not communicate it well with my husband. Even now I feel like my time with my family has decreased. That is why you need balance. So now, if I do not need to go work on Saturday or Sunday, I won’t because that is family time. That is all, actually.”

The above situation has also emerged as one goal to be pursued by women scientists in other countries. As stated by Rosser (2004, 1):

“Women scientist and engineers like women in other professions and their male counterparts in science and engineering, desire to have a satisfying career that enables them to explore the secrets of the physical, natural world while also leading a rewarding family life, rearing children, having a stable relationship with a partner, fulfilling obligations to their community, or pursuing interest important to them.”

This refutes the image of women who strive to climb the ladder of success as cold hearted, non-maternal females. A balance in life among work, family and pleasure is crucial for one’s sanity and security. This is not only true for women, yet for all individuals. Those leading a balanced life have been proven to be more content and pleased with them, thus becoming

more productive in the work place. However, as women are considered more attached to family values than men because of their maternal side, women struggle to achieve this balance more than men. This becomes another obstacle when striving to achieve success in the work place while leading a stable home life.

When discussing the pros and cons of having a woman as a leader, Dr. Ir. Sri Nurdianti, M.Sc. had an interesting view regarding this matter. She admitted that women may be irrational and emotional when making decisions, yet that could be overcome by delegating certain decisions to her subordinates. The advantages of being a woman leader, however, are amazing, thus making her believe that a leader should be a woman. She revealed one of those advantages as follows:

“Because we’re used to managing our household parallel to our work, the process of doing many things simultaneously. So we can think of the details. Some that men may not see. When I have time, I always go around. Men usually focus on only one thing, women don’t. So when, for example, I come and see something wrong. Like why the electricity is still on at 6 pm when I happen to pass by. So we notice the details too. Not only the big picture. We discuss the big picture. So I believe that details are far more comprehensive. It is handled well.”

Prof. Ir. Sofia W. Alisjahbana also had an interesting view regarding the difference between men and women in positions of power. Similar to Dr. Ir. Sri, she also believed that emotions often get the better of logic when it comes to women. Therefore, a balance is necessary in a board of leaders when it comes to an institution, as she stated:

“So there should be a balance. In a board of leaders, there should also be a man (so there is a balance between the two).”

However, when it came to discussing the advantages of having a woman as a leader, including her emotional aspect, instead of incorporating the views of many that the emotions of a woman can be a disadvantage,

she found it to be an advantage when it comes to making a decision. She stated:

“Women are usually better at finding a middle ground. They are not too drastic in making a decision. Some may consider the decision making process to be so slow, yet emotions can signal a woman to say, hold on, let me think about it.”

From the above information and statements made by the three women in positions of power in universities, it is clear how women encounter several barriers that men do not. Aside from having to fulfill their complete responsibilities in the workplace, they are expected to also fulfill their responsibilities as wives and/or mothers to their husbands and / or children. Their capabilities are also often questioned not by their intellectual levels, but by their emotions. Religious values also come and play a role in the decision making process on whether or not a woman should be elected as a leader. When a woman finally does obtain a position of power, she is also forced to find her balance in her work and family life. This reveals how woman in positions of power are often strong mentally, emotionally and physically in order to be able to execute all her duties and responsibilities well, yet still obtain the respect she deserves from her subordinates, colleagues, and superiors.

Conclusion

Although we now live in modern times where women’s emancipation has evolved greatly, gender is still a great issue in the lives of women, especially in the workplace. Women have obtained the right to a higher education and higher positions of power in their occupations, yet still face many obstacles when striving to climb the ladder of their careers. They encounter several complications that can obstruct their career based on discrimination such as character presumptions, religious beliefs and the basic responsibilities they are considered to retain as women. When women do finally obtain higher levels in the workplace,

they are then faced with the challenge of reassuring their colleagues, subordinates and superiors that they deserve that position.

In the education sector, women still face various forms of bias and discrimination. These forms are derived from society and also from the woman herself resulting in multiple challenges to overcome. In the case of society, women must prove themselves worthy of taking majors or courses that may not be deemed suitable for them such as hard science skills, technology, and/ or industry. They are often categorized to take majors in supporting roles or majors that are based in domesticated fields such as the home industry, business/ management, and others. On the other hand, the habit of educating children from early on that mothers go to the market and fathers go to work has implemented a preconceived notion in women that they should only develop in domesticated fields. This causes them to be more close minded when it comes to choosing a major in a higher educational institution, thus forming their path in life.

In the workplace, women are forced to face that they most likely will be judged by the fact that they are indeed women. This includes others, especially men, assuming that they are emotional, moody and sensitive. Therefore, not able to make fair decisions and actions based on logic despite the various cases that have proven this fact to be untrue. This highly affects their ability to move to a higher position in their career. Aside from men, other women also may be an obstacle to women succeeding in the workplace. Preconceived notions that were implemented since birth of how women belong at home and men in the workplace have resulted in a number close minded views and opinions about how men should be leaders and women should be the followers or subordinates. These close minded women believe that women in high positions may not deserve it and opt to vote for a male replacement when it comes down to it.

Aside from having to deal with character discrimination based on their gender, women

may also be challenged with religious beliefs when being considered for a promotion. As Muslims dominate the Indonesian society, several believe that women should not be leaders because it is not encouraged in the hadith. In the hadith, Imam Bukhari reports from Abu Bakrah the following:

“Allah provided me with considerable benefit during the battle of the camel with one word (or one statement). When news reached the prophet (S.A.W.) that the Persians had appointed Chosroe’s daughter as their ruler, he said: “A nation which placed its affairs in the hands of a woman shall never prosper!”

Until today, there are many Muslim scholars who still have debates on the interpretation of the hadith that insinuates men should be leaders and women are not allowed to be leaders. Many believe that the quote is taken out of context resulting in men having an excuse to eliminate women from the possibility to obtain positions of power. Scholars have since then provided many examples of women leaders, especially in Islam, who have succeeded. Despite various protests from the community, many women have successfully become leaders bringing the institutions or nations prosperity and respect. Thus, women must strive and be able to prove themselves worthy more than men when trying to obtain a higher position in their career.

Finally, women who have families are also sometimes viewed negatively and do not receive support from their families when trying to achieve the career they desire. Women leaders are also expected to fulfill their duties as homemakers, such as taking care of their husband, children and affairs of the home. As a result, many consider women to be less dedicated to their workplace because they believe that the women’s minds will be preoccupied on matters of the home. However, if a woman is too dedicated to her workplace, her husband and children might demand her

to create more time for the family. There are also many positions that require a woman to be single/ unmarried. This is an obvious example of discrimination against women who have families. A successful woman who has a family is also often considered a workaholic and cold hearted. Many times, it is difficult for a society to believe that a woman can be extremely successful in the workplace, yet also fully dedicated to her family. These results in an internal conflict in women because they must strive for success, yet also prove to their family that they still uphold family values and have not eliminated their maternal nature due to their career. As a result, women in high positions must take extra effort to prove herself to the world. Thus, she must be able to find a balance that will reassure others of her position as a leader and a wife and mother.

On the other hand, a single woman in a high position who is single/ unmarried at a certain age also invites negative views from society. They are often considered to be cold hearted and abstained from family values, when this may not be the case. A man in that same position could be viewed as just successful inviting admiration from the community. A woman however, may be admired, yet also scorned for not believing in family values. The woman must then work extra hard to form an image that is acceptable to society despite her string of achievements. A woman’s image is much harder to form and easier to destroy than a man.

Women will face many challenges when they acquire a leadership position in the workplace. Aside from honing their intellect, they must be strong and clever enough to face all the obstacles they may encounter in order to be able to achieve and maintain that position. They must find a balance between career and family so they will not abandon their duties to either. Overall, the modern woman must be an emotionally and mentally strong person who will be able to do anything she sets her mind to.

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