



**Breaking Patriarchal Gender Stereotype. Being A Female  
Rector of the Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia/ISBI Bandung,  
West Java, Indonesia**

Nina Nurmila <sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Patriarchy is a system that put adult men in the central or the most important position, while women and children are put in relation to the interest of the patriarch (adult men). The over generalised belief (stereotype) of women in patriarchal system is that women are subordinate to men and be housewife who serves her husband, does houseworks and looks after her children. This paper will elaborate the case study of a couple who break this patriarchal gender stereotype, in which the husband flexibly changes his role to adapt and support his wife's career as the Rector of ISBI. This case study shows that not all men are patriarchal and that education can be a powerful tool to break patriarchal gender relation both in private and public spheres.

**Keywords** : Gender stereotype, female leadership, Indonesian Islam, patriarchy

### **Introduction**

Indonesian current population is about 250 millions, the fourth world largest population after China, India and America, with about 87 per cent of them is Muslim. This means, about 218 million Muslims live in Indonesia, which comprise the largest Muslim population in the world, in compare to Saudi Arabia, the country where Islam was originated which has only about 31 million Muslim populations.

Islam has come to Indonesia since the seventh century.<sup>2</sup> The nature of Indonesian Islam, which has been acculturated with Indonesian tradition, is different from that of in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has patriarchal and patrilineal kinship system. Patriarchal system is a system in which adult man (the patriarch) is put in the centre of the system, while women and children are put in subordinate position to men or in relation to the interest of the patriarch. In this patriarchal system, in fulfilling the interest of the patriarch, women are expected to be the wife, who serve almost all her husband's needs and to be a mother who has to educate their children, the next patriarchal generation. Women are also expected to be at home doing all house works, other than looking after their children and serving their husband. With patrilineal kinship system, women are even more subordinated to men because within this kinship system son is preferred than daughter and descent is traced through the father's line, just as is inheritance, property, titles and group membership (Geertz and Geertz, 1975: 161).

Even though Indonesia also adopts patriarchal culture, Indonesia has various kinship systems: patrilineal system in Bali and Batak, matrilineal system in Minangkabau and predominantly bilateral system throughout Indonesia, especially in Java. In matrilineal kinship system in Padang, descent follows the female line (Reenen, 1996: 23), while in bilateral system both men and women are equally regarded to be important in continuing family lineage (Djamour, 1965: 23; Geertz, 1961: 76; Hüsken and Kemp, 1991; Koentjaraningrat, 1957: 91; Sairin, 1982: 15; Surjadi, 1974: 129-30; 132-3; Wolf, 1992: 56) and have equal rights for inheritance either from maternal or paternal lines (Brenner, 1998: 138).

Indonesia is part of Southeast Asia, which has been well-known for its high status of women since centuries ago (Firth 1966; Stoler, 1977; Strange, 1981; Reid, 1988: 146; Andaya, 2001; and Gonsoulin, 2005). This is reported, for example, by Aletta H. Jacobs (1854-1929), a Dutch suffragist who visited Dutch East Indies [now Indonesia] in 1912, who was impressed by the Indies (Indonesian) women's valuable independence and status in their society, whom she considered to be far in advance than those she had met in India (Blackburn, 1997: 12). This is similar with what Andaya has pointed out about a number of Southeast Asian cultural features that have often been cited which show gender equality in these regions:

... the importance of women in food production, especially rice cultivation; their prominence in marketing and other economic activities; complementary gender roles in ritual, and female

prominence as healers and spirit mediums; the prevalence of bilateral kinship patterns, matrilineal residence and bride wealth; the fact that women commonly inherit family property and maintain their own source of income; low population densities prior to the nineteenth century, which place a high value on women's work and female fertility; the absence of strong state structure and a low level of urbanization. (Andaya, 2001: 14677)

This is in line with Reid's argument (1988: 146) that despite the gradual increase of the influence of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism over the last four centuries, Southeast Asian women in the years 1450 to 1680 possessed relatively high levels of autonomy and economic importance. This relatively high status of women is still valid up until now in Indonesia, which is part of Southeast Asia. It is within this context, unlike Saudi Arabian women, most Indonesian women can enjoy freedom both in domestic and public spheres, and even can assume leadership in higher educational institution, the focus of this paper.

This paper will elaborate the case study of a female rector of ISBI Bandung, West Java, Indonesia: Dr. Hj. Een Herdiani, S.Sen., M.Hum, [Ibu Een], who has broken her gender stereotype by being a female leader at a higher educational institution. There are actually three female rectors of higher educational institutions in West Java that has been identified: the Rector of ISBI, the Rector of Institut Studi Islam Fahmina/ISIF in Cirebon and the Rector of the International Women University in Bandung. However, due to the space limitation, this paper will only concentrate on one case study of the ISBI Rector. All these three rectors are Muslim. Since their religion is Islam and they live in West Java, this paper will firstly discuss the controversial issue of female leadership within Islamic discourse. Then, I will describe West Java context, which has bilateral kinship system, the history and development of ISBI, where Ibu Een becomes a Rector, before presenting her case study. This case study will mainly describe factors that can make Ibu Een becomes a leader; obstacles she faces in assuming her leadership in predominantly patriarchal culture; and how she negotiates with her husband in relation to the mainstream patriarchal expectation for women to be subordinate to their husband and be responsible with the house works.

## The Controversial Issue of Female Leadership within Islamic Discourse

Most Muslims believe that leadership is only for men based on the Qur'anic verse 4: 34:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِبُعُوبَاتٍ لِبُعُوبَاتٍ لِبُعُوبَاتٍ ۚ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

The literal reading of the above verse resulted in the interpretation that men are the leader of women because some of them (which is interpreted as men), have been granted superiority over the other (which is often interpreted as women), and because they spend some of their wealth to support the family. This verse not only becomes the basis that men are leaders of women but also as the basis to construct idealities of men as family breadwinner. This interpretation of the Qur'an can be found in most of the classical interpretations such as the exegesis of Thabari (d. 310 H), Zamakhsyari (d. 538), Al-Razy (d. 606 H), Qurthuby (d. 671), Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H/1373) Baidhowy (d. 685 H), Mahaly and Suyuthy (d. 864) and Asy-Syaukany (d. 1250 H). They interpret the verse 4: 34 to mean that men are the leader, the educator and the protector of women because men are superior to women. This superiority, according to them, is in terms of reason (*`aql*), knowledge (*`ilm*) and physical strength, and therefore it is claimed that only men who can become prophets, *ulama* (scholars), judges and leaders. According to them, men are also superior for the money they spend to give women the *mahr* (marriage gift) and maintenance; the amount of inheritance and the number of wives that they can have. This interpretation is stated, for example, in the following *tafsir* [exegesis] of Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H/1373) (Ibn Kathir, 2012-2016), which is similar with the content of other classical Qur'anic exegesis:

يقول تعالى: { الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ } أي: الرجل قيم على المرأة، أي: هو رئيسها وكبيرها، والحاكم عليها ومؤدبها إذا اعوجت، { بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ } أي: لأن الرجال أفضل من النساء، والرجل خير من المرأة، ولهذا كانت النبوة مختصة بالرجال، وكذلك الملك الأعظم؛ لقوله ﷺ " لن يفلح قوم ولوا أمرهم امرأة " رواه البخاري من حديث عبد الرحمن بن أبي بكر عن أبيه، وكذا منصب القضاء، وغير ذلك، { وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ } أي:

من المهور والنفقات والكف التي أوجبها الله عليهم لهن في كتابه وسنة نبيه ﷺ فالرجل أفضل من المرأة في نفسه، وله الفضل عليها والإفضال، فناسب أن يكون قيماً عليها؛ كما قال الله تعالى:  
{ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ }

Different from the above literal and patriarchal approach in reading the Qur'anic verse 4: 34, there has been contextual approach in reading the Qur'anic verse 4: 34. For example, the late Asghar Ali Engineer (1939-2013), an Indian feminist scholar (1992), believes that the Qur'anic verse 4: 34 is socio-theological verse, not theological verse. This means that this verse is not rigid example of gender relation for any society, anywhere and anytime, but sociological description of gender relation at the time of revelation, which may be the same or different from the current situation. If it is theological verse, then the verse should include, for example, the word "wajib" or "kutiba `ala" or "wajaba `ala" such as: *waajibun `alar rijaal qawwaamun `alan nisa'*, but the verse only describes or informs that at that time, *ar-rijaal qawwaamun `alan nisa'*.

Similarly, the late Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid (d. 2010) (2006) believes that the verse 4: 34 is descriptive, not prescriptive. This means that the verse does not prescribe all men to be the leader of women, but a description on what happened at the time of revelation. Kiayi Husein Muhammad (b. 1953) (2011) also understands the verse as informative verse, not normative verse. This means the verse informs us that at the time of revelation, men are the *qawwam* (the economic supporter/leader) of women, not the norm that everybody should follow anytime and anywhere, even though this may be ideal for most families, because most women in certain period of their time have reproductive burdens. Therefore, it will be unjust for women who already have reproductive burdens to have additional burden of earning life hood.

Another recent Indonesian Muslim scholar, Nasaruddin Umar (b. 1959), offers a critical analysis to the wording used in the Qur'an. According to him, the Qur'an uses the word *untsa'* for female and *dzakar* for male when it refers to biology or sex, and uses the word *rijaal*, *nisa'* and *mar'ah* to refer to gender (1999). This finding is very important in re-interpreting the Qur'anic verse from equal gender perspective. Based on his differentiation of these terms, it can be understood that not all *dzakar* (male) can become *rijaal* (the masculine). To be *rijaal*, a person has to fulfil the two requirements stated in the Qur'an verse 4: 34: (1) he/she is superior to his/her spouse; and (2) he/she spend his/her money to support his/her family. Thus, being *rijaal* is not biologically pre-determined, but

should be achieved by fulfilling the two criteria. Superiority in the current context can be in the form of higher level of education and income. Any person, either male or female, who can fulfil the two requirements can be *rijaal* and therefore is *qawwamun* over his/her spouse.

Umar's differentiation between the term sex and gender in the Qur'an is powerful in challenging male biased classical Qur'anic exegesis of the verses 4: 34 (and also verse 2: 228) , which tend to see male superiority as biologically pre-determined by God, as stated in the classical Quranic exegesis above. With this new finding, it can be argued that leadership is not biologically determined, but can be achieved by fulfilling the two criteria mentioned in the Qur'anic verse 4: 34. Either male or female can be leader of his/her spouse. Thus, *dzakar* (male) will remain *dzakar* if he cannot fulfil the two criteria. In contrast, *untsa* can be *rijaal* if she can fulfil the two criteria.

Similarly, Subhan (1999) interprets the Qur'anic verse 4: 34 as not about normative male leadership, but as contextual verse concerning economic roles. Male superiority, according to her, is reduced if the male is incapable of economically supporting his family. The word *rijaal* is a plural from the word *rajul* (man) or *rijl* (foot), which means "those who walk or work to earn the money"; while those in domestic sphere are *nisa'*. Therefore, whoever active in the public sphere to earn the money can be called *rijaal*; while whoever is at home can be called *nisa'*.

Other than Quranic verse 4: 34, the following hadith narrated by Bukhari has often been used to reject women's leadership:

" لن يفلح قوم ولوا أمرهم امرأة "

Those who entrust their affairs to women, will never reach prosperity.

Fatima Mernissi (1991) did historical analysis of the above hadith. According to her, this hadith was firstly narrated by Abu Bakra, whose position was elevated after he converted to Islam. Abu Bakra was the only person narrated this hadith and was only being narrated by him about twenty five years after the Prophet Muhammad died. It was firstly narrated by Abu Bakra, in the context of the defeat of Aisyah by Ali bin Abi Thalib in Jamal/Camel war. Before the war, Abu Bakra was one of the supporters of Aisyah. However, after the war, since Aisyah was defeated, Abu Bakra wanted to move his support to Ali. Mernissi assumed that this hadith was narrated to justify his moving position from the defeated camp into the

winner. According to Mernissi, even though this hadith was finally compiled by Bukhari and included in the *Shahih*, this does not mean that this hadith is *shahih* or acceptable because Abu Bakra cannot be regarded to be morally acceptable to narrate the hadith. During the Khalifah Umar period, Abu Bakra accused a woman of committing *zina* [fornication], but he could not provide four witnesses to support his conviction. Consequently, he was punished by being flogged.

The above contemporary and contextual approach in reading the Quranic verse and the critical analysis of the origin of the above mysoginistic hadith has opened the door for women to be leader both in domestic and in public based on their achievement, not based on biology. The next part of this paper will firstly describe the context of West Java in general and then the context of campus where Ibu Een becomes leader.

### **The Context of West Java**

West Java is located in the west side of Java Island, surrounded by the Province of Banten in the West, Indonesian Capital City of Jakarta in the North West and Central Java in the East. It consists of 26 districts/cities reside on 35.377, 76 KM<sup>2</sup> (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2015). It is the most populated area in Indonesia due to its closeness with the capital city of Indonesia. Most people in West Java speak Sundanese (about 75 per cent), except those who live in Cirebon and other northern parts of the island such as Indramayu who speak unique Javanese language similar with the Javanese language spoken in the close neighboring province of Brebes, Central Java. The majority religion is Islam (about 97 per cent) with Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Confucianism as the minority religions.

As part of Java, West Java adopts bilateral kinship system, in which both male and female are equally regarded to be important in continuing the lineage; and inheritance is mostly shared equally between male and female.<sup>1</sup> In fact, West Java culture tend to be matrifocal, in which ties among female kinship network is stronger than male kinship network. West Java culture also tend to be uxori-local, in which a husband generally moves to his wife's natal household (Blackwood, 2005: 10) after their marriage, before they can live independently in a separate nuclear family. In other words, in compare to women in Saudi Arabia where Islam was originated, West Java Muslim women, like most other women in Indonesia, tend to

---

<sup>1</sup> Except those who read the Quranic verses on inheritance literally. They tend to copy exactly what was practised in Saudi Arabia regardless of the different kinship system that Saudi Arabia adopts, which is patrilineal.

have more freedom in participating in public spheres and in accessing higher education.

There are at least 19 state higher educational institutions and 53 private higher educational institutions in West Java. In fact, West Java has the highest number of higher educational institutions in Indonesia. The case study of the female rector who will be presented in this paper is the Rector of ISBI, Bandung, one of the state higher educational institutions under the Ministry of Education and Culture. To know more about ISBI, the following part will describe briefly about its history and development.

### **Brief history and development of ISBI**

ISBI Bandung was founded in 1968 with its initial name as Konservatori Tari/KORI and was under the management of local government of Kota Bandung. In 1971, it was developed into Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia/ASTI [Indonesian Dance Arts Academy], Jurusan Sunda [Department of Sunda], a formal education which was part of ASTI Yogyakarta. In 1976, ASTI, Department of Sunda, together with other arts higher educational institutions such as ASRI and ASTI Yogyakarta, was taken over to be managed by the Directorate General of Department of Education and Culture, and in 1995, its name was changed into Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia/STSI. It was further developed by opening three years Diploma Program of Pure Fine Arts in 2011, and by opening four years Diploma of Make Up and Clothing, four years Diploma of Television and Film Studies; four years Diploma of Angklung and Bamboo Music in 2012. In 2014, STSI Bandung was developed into Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia/ISBI to increase society access to higher education and to improve educational quality especially Cultural Arts. It was not only STSI Bandung which was changed into ISBI but also that of Papua and Aceh (ISBI, 2015).

Since its foundation as KORI, like most other institutions, ISBI was led by male leaders except in 2012. Beginning 2012, it was led by a female leader, Prof. Dr. Endang Caturwati, S.ST, MS [Ibu Endang], who was previously the Director of the Postgraduate Program, which was recently opened in 2011. Ibu Endang won 19 out of 26 votes in the election leader by defeating the other two male candidates: Dr. Anis Sujana, M.Hum and Dr. Jaeni, M.Si. Ibu Endang was actually elected to be the leader for the period of 2012-2016. However, in 2013, she was promoted to become the Director of the Development of Arts and Film, General Directorate of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Culture [Direktur Pembinaan Kesenian dan Perfilman Ditjen Kebudayaan, Kemdikbud], and then was

promoted again in 2015 [up to now, 2016] to become the Director of Arts, General Directorate of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Culture [Direktur Kesenian Ditjen Kebudayaan, Kemdikbud] (Pikiran Rakyat, 2015 and Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2015).

Ibu Endang was not only the first female Leader [Ketua] at STSI [now ISBI], but also the first STSI Leader who has the highest educational degree and academic rank. Educationally, she has doctoral degree and academically, she has become a professor, the highest academic rank. Before her leadership, all these institution leaders were male with the highest educational degree of master level. The previous male Leader just before Ibu Endang was Drs. Enoch, M. Hum. According to Deputy Rector II, Dr. Retno Dwimarwati, S.Sen., M.Hum [Ibu Retno], Ibu Endang was not only the first female Leader of STSI Bandung but also the first person who changed the inward looking Leader to the outward looking Leader who see the important of cooperation with outsider, nationally and internationally, or in Ibu Endang term is *gaul* [getting involved with other parties] (Dwimarwati, interview with the author, 11 July 2016).

The appointment of Ibu Endang, as the first top female leader at STSI shows that there has been a progress in the way people see women, from patriarchal value which obliges men to always be superior than women, or from seeing women just in term of their biology, into their educational qualification and academic position. This can also be a sign of fairness and democracy at STSI, positive sign as modern and professional institution, which other institutions should follow.

### **Being a Female Leader: The Case Study of ISBI Rector**

Being top female leader in a predominantly patriarchal culture is still extraordinary. As stated above, in patriarchal culture, women are expected to be subordinate to men, to be always below men in both public and domestic spheres. Therefore, this extraordinary phenomenon is interesting to be explored to know what factors that can make Ibu Ean becomes top female leader in ISBI; what obstacles she faces in assuming leadership in predominantly patriarchal culture; and how she negotiates with her husband in relation to the existing patriarchal gender roles between men and women, in which women are expected to serve their husband, to take care of the children and to do houseworks. Women who do all of these expected works, in addition to their roles in the public spheres, have double burdens, which is one of the forms of gender inequality (Fakih, 1996). Women who have double burdens are unlikely to

be successful in their public sphere due to their limited time and energy in undertaking these two roles at the same time.

The description of this case study is based on the interview with Ibu Een, her husband: Bapak Drs.H. Ono Karyono, M.Pd and her daughter, M (13 years). The first interview was with Ibu Een in her rectorate room on Friday, 1 July 2016, while the interview with her husband and daughter took place in the mosque near Ibu Een's house on Sunday, 3 July 2016. Both Ibu Een and her husband are talkative persons, who are eager to explain and share their life experiences. It was enjoyable process of interviewing them: one short question was answered elaboratively. In addition, I was also interviewing Ibu Retno, the Vice Rector II of ISBI on 11 July 2016. I have been given permission to use their real name but I choose to use initial name for Ibu Een's daughter's name.

### **1. Pathway to be ISBI Rector: the higher your education, the more likely you are selected as leader**

In this part of the paper, I will describe how Ibu Een gained her leadership position at ISBI to know what factors that led her to become the current Rector of ISBI. When I asked Ibu Een what factors that can make her becomes top female Leader in ISBI. She was laughing and explained elaboratively:

First, it was luck [she was laughing]. It was a journey of achievement. I was not directly being a Rector, even though I did not start my position from the lower position of being Head of Department. I was appointed to become Leader 1 [*Ketua 1* or Deputy Leader] when ISBI was still STSI. At that time, the new appointed Leader, Ibu Endang, was looking for her deputy. She was looking for the deputy who has doctoral degree. I just gained my doctoral degree, and was selected to be Leader 1 who was in charge of academic affairs. During her leadership, Ibu Endang undertook 6 months education at Lemhanas [in Jakarta], so that I mostly in charge and do what STSI Leader should do.

During my appointment as Leader 1, Ibu Endang often invited me to come along with her in attending many national events and I was introduced to many top national officials in those occasions. Therefore, when Ibu Endang was promoted to become the Director of the Development of Arts and Film, General Directorate of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Culture, in Jakarta, I became temporary Leader of STSI for one month. In the mean time, the Ministry asked three names of the STSI leader candidates and I

was the one who was selected among the three names given to the Ministry. Therefore, on 14 February 2014, I was no longer temporary Leader but was chosen as Leader of STSI, replacing Ibu Endang who was promoted into the Ministry. I am so grateful with the guidance of Ibu Endang, who often invited me to come along to many events and this has smoothen my process to be a Rector (Herdiani, interview with the author on 1 July 2016).

From the above explanation, it can be understood that the main factor that led Ibu Een to be a Rector was her higher educational degree. Ibu Een was lucky that she could finished her doctoral degree earlier than her other co-workers, who were even more senior than her. Ibu Een gained her doctoral degree on June 2012 and was appointed as Deputy Leader in July 2012.

In my understanding, there has been a good friendship and trust between Ibu Endang and Ibu Een during Ibu Endang's leadership at STSI. There was also mentoring process, in which Ibu Endang tried to connect [and promote] Ibu Een to her national networks. Therefore, when Ibu Endang was promoted into a new higher position at national level as Director of the Development of Arts and Film, General Directorate of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Culture, it was Ibu Een, her deputy and mentee, who was being selected by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The above quote from Ibu Een informs that the process of her appointment was that the Ministry of Education and Culture asked names of three candidates for the Leader of STSI and then one of the three was chosen. According to Ibu Retno, the three names sent to the Ministry of Education and Culture at that time was Ibu Endang, Ibu Een and Bapak Iyus [Dr. Mohamad Yusuf Wiradiredja], who at that time was STSI Leader II. Ibu Een, who at that time was Leader 1, was chosen because Ibu Endang was needed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In Ibu Retno's view, Ibu Een is like Ibu Endang, who is smart in seeing the opportunities for cooperation with outsider. This is in contrast with another male candidate, who, according to Ibu Retno, seems to be inward looking person because he is busy with his profession as an artist. On 6 October 2014, STSI was changed into ISBI and then two weeks later on 14 October 2014, Ibu Een was formally appointed as ISBI Rector. Now ISBI is currently still in the transition process from *Sekolah Tinggi* into the *Institut*, not an easy process and therefore is a big challenge for the new Rector, Ibu Een (Dwimarwati, interview with the author, 11 July 2016).

## **2. Obstacles of being young female leader**

Because of her relatively junior age (Ibu Een 49 years in 2016), one of the main obstacles in leading her institution was to deal with the strong culture of seniority, as she described below:

Other than being a woman, I was still young and there are many of my seniors. At that time, I was lack of confident of being Leader and there are some oppositions in the lower level. However, I believe that as long as I am on track, I will just move forward and I am grateful that I can do the job (Herdiani, interview with the author on 1 July 2016).

The obstacles of seniority that Ibu Een explained was emphasised by Ibu Retno, the Deputy Rector II who is in charge of financial affairs. I interviewed Ibu Retno later in separate occasion, in which she also explained the strong culture of seniority in her campus, which some time can be obstacles to achieve the progress of the institution.

The obstacle of being Rector in this institution is not whether the Rector is male or female but the tradition of seniority. Ibu Een was being intimidated by her seniors because she is young. Their intervention is strong enough, for example, in deciding certain positions in campus. It can be clearly seen that Ibu Een was strongly affected by the seniors. Sometimes, we have drafted certain regulation, but because it was commented negatively by the seniors, then it could not proceed into its enactment. The domination of the senior does not prevent ISBI to have progress but it disturbs [the process of the campus governance] [in Sundanese language she terms *ngarudetkeun* “*Dominasi senior itu tidak menjegal ISBI untuk maju, tapi ngarudetkeun*”] (Dwimarwati, interview with the author, 11 July 2016).

Both Ibu Een and Ibu Retno also realised that other than those who support their leadership, some may oppose them. Ibu Een told me that when the Ministry asked three candidates for the Rector, Ibu Een was called by someone in the Ministry that she should submit her CV [Curriculum Vitae]. She told me that she has already included the CV, but someone may have taken the CV without her knowledge. Before being Leader 1, Ibu Een told me that she was also about to be appointed as the Head of Department, but another person suddenly took over the position because she was regarded to be too young for the position (Herdiani, interview with

the author on 3 July 2016). Ibu Retno also said, “I think the availability of the opposition party is common, not only in ISBI campus”. This shows her acknowledgment that some of ISBI academicians or staff may disagree with the leadership of Ibu Een, even though she notes that this opposition is not due to the femaleness of Ibu Een but is due to her junior age.

There is interesting thing to note from the interview with Ibu Retno on female leadership. There are two opposites opinion of Ibu Retno on female leadership. On the one hand, she seems to have no problem with female leadership, as she stated above, as long as the leader is capable of leading and dealing with the existing problems. On the other hand, she believes that in Islam, women are prohibited to become leader. According to her, “In Sundanese arts tradition, women are dominant and are in good position, such as Sunan Ambu.<sup>3</sup> It is different from Islam, in which women cannot become leader” (Dwimarwati, interview with the author, 11 July 2016).

The above quote shows that Ibu Retno acknowledges Sundanese tradition, which supports women to be leader, but as a Muslim, even though she is female, Ibu Retno may not be the only person who believes that women cannot be leader. The majority of Muslims, either male or female, still believe that women cannot be leader, except those who have access to the contemporary contextual approach to the Quranic verse 4: 34, as described above.

Other than seniority and the existing opposite parties, which is commonly occurred in most other campuses, Ibu Een initially seems to be affected by the existing cultural construction that women are emotional:

As a woman, I was weepy and emotional. However, everyday experiences have educated me to be stronger and then I can show my achievement that lead them [her seniors and those who are under her leadership such as Deans] appreciate my achievement (Herdiani, interview with the author on 1 July 2016).

Ibu Een seems to realise the negative side of being emotional, the habit that she finally could get rid of as she explained below that she no longer being emotional. In stead, she uses her soft character as her strength in leading ISBI:

I tend to solve problems by using soft approach and not being emotional. For example, when STSI became ISBI, there was a big demonstration by students who opposed this change. I face the demonstration by keeping smile. I was not afraid of them. I approached them, I stroke their back and suggested them not to

have negative reaction to this change. If someone came to me with a problem and was being emotional, I tried not to be emotional. I faced them by keeping smile. I believe that any problem can be solved. I also often asked the opinion of the seniors in solving the problem, so that they try to help me by giving suggested solution (Herdiani, interview with the author on 1 July 2016).

In the middle of our conversation, there was a man knocked at the door of the Rector room. Ibu Een stopped our conversation to speak with the man. She showed her respect to him. She told me that it was Professor Iyus, one of the seniors whom she also seeks his opinion if there is any problem. This was one of Ibu Een's strategies in dealing with the seniors. She involves them in campus decision making process, the process which according to Ibu Retno is the sign of the seniors' domination over Ibu Een's leadership.

### **3. Breaking Gender Stereotypes**

As stated earlier that in the dominant patriarchal culture, a wife is usually expected to serve her husband, take care of the children and do houseworks. When women participate in the public sphere, this public role does not usually free women from doing their domestic duties, which creates double burdens for women and may hinder women from having successful public career due to their limited time and energy to do both well. Looking at the success of Ibu Een who can become the Rector of ISBI, I was wondering how she negotiates with her husband in relation to the existing gender idealities between men and women. Before I asked her how she negotiates with her husband in relation to women's role in the family, I asked her about her husband's response when he knows that she was appointed as a Rector, whether or not he supports her. Surprisingly, she answered my question elaborately to show how well her husband's support to her by describing her marital history, which is extraordinary:

My husband's response was very good. My husband was graduated from the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Bandung. I met him in 1986, when I was 18 and was studying in grade 4 SMKI [Arts Senior High School], Bandung. He asked me my future planning after I graduated from SMKI. I told him that I would go home and work as Junior High School arts teacher because I was offered this teaching position.

I came from a poor family and had no money to continue my study. I could continue my study at SMKI because I got scholarship based

on my achievement of having top rank in the class. In addition, the West Java Governor at that time [1982-1986] was very concerned with Sundanese traditional arts and instructed that all hotels should provide Sundanese entertainment. Therefore, I was often invited to dance in the hotels and received honorarium to cover my living expenses.

In response to my answer about my future plan, my husband who could see my potential persuaded me, "If you want to continue your study, let me marry you". I was confused with that offer. On the one hand, I was happy with that offer but I still have two older siblings who did not get married yet and at that time I was 19, still very young to get married. My husband and I then went to my parents' home to ask their permission to get married, but my parents were angry with my husband, "How dare you ask to marry her while you do not work yet, how could you feed her?" However, my husband was determined in his decision to marry me, so he took me to his parents' home and marry me there. He invited my parents to come to our wedding and provided my parents with the car, so that they finally was attending our wedding ceremonial. Our relationship with my parents was not good for a year, but it changed in the second year when they saw my seriousness in continuing my study (Herdiani, interview with the author on 1 July 2016).

At the end of the interview, Ibu Een offered me if I would need to interview her husband. She seems to understand very well the importance of triangulation. I responded positively and arranged the interview during the weekend in the mosque, near her house, accompanied by her and her daughter. I heard similar story with that of being told by Ibu Een. Here is the next story after the wedding, that I intentionally present in detail for others to learn from their careful planning of their future, discipline, hard working and strong self determination as well as their flexible gender roles. During my interview I could observe how proud her husband was of Ibu Een. I saw how he loves and adores Ibu Een for her talent, her distinctive educational achievement and her good morality.

I wanted to marry her because I wanted her to be able to continue her further education. I knew that she has great potential. I realised I have broken the tradition by getting married in my parents' home. The wedding was so simple that made my parents a bit sad because they are rich and respected family. We went to Bandung the next day after the wedding. We promised our selves that we would

continue our studies as high as possible and would not have any children before one of us find the job. I keep supporting her to continue her studies because I can see her talent, potential and her great achievement. We lived modestly by renting a room. She took pills to prevent pregnancy. It was my parents who mainly support our life expenses until 1993, when I got a job as a teacher. I usually go home to Karawang every month and my parents usually gave me some money (Karyono, interview with the author on 3 July 2016).

This is very unusual marriage arrangement within Sundanese culture in which wedding ceremony usually takes place in the bride home, even when it currently takes place in the rented building, it is usually arranged by the bride family, not the groom's. This shows how Ibu Een's husband has broken many traditions: by getting married in his own parents' house and by living separately from both sides of the parents, not moving into his parents-in-law's home.

Ibu Een continued her marital story which shows their determination to continue their studies even though they have been married. Ibu Een took Diploma 3 at Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia/ASTI [Indonesian Dancing Arts Academy] in 1986-1989. None of her friends knew that she is married until the time when she could not receive scholarship which required that the recipients should remain unmarried during the scholarship period. After completing her Diploma, she continued to take her first degree in Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia/ASTI Solo/Surakarta [Indonesian Arts Higher Education] in 1989-1991, but the class was conducted in Bandung. In 1993, both of them were employed as civil servant. Ibu Een teaches at ASTI Bandung, while her husband teaches at SMK 10 Bandung. After fulfilling their promise to continue their studies and have jobs, they asked a blessing from both of their parents in order they could have children. They had the first son in 1994 and the second daughter in 2003. According to Ibu Een, "They are all wonderful and independent children. They gain the top rank in their school. We are as parents just there to support them" (Herdiani, interview with the author on 1 July 2016).

After having the first child, in 1997, Ibu Een took Masters studies on Performance and Fine Arts Studies at Universitas Gajah Mada Yogyakarta, which she completed in 2000. During her studies, it was her husband who often went to Yogyakarta to visit her to show his support to her studies. In 2008, Ibu Een started her doctoral studies at Universitas Padjadjaran on the History of Arts, which she completed in June 2012, a

month before she was appointed as Leader 1 of STSI. To ballance with her education, her husband also took Master studies at Sanata Dharma, in 2003.

According to Ibu Een, it was also her husband who mainly look after their children and do houseworks. Her husband confirmed this information that he is the one who does the housework and takes care of the children:

I am the one who look after the tidyness and cleanliness of the house. I try to position myself [as home maker]. My wife is busy and I realise I am the one who made her busy. I do not want her to see the house untidy when she comes home very tired. There is nothing wrong if the husband want to take over the reward that is usually given to the wife who does the housework. The Prophet [Muhammad] stitched up her own clothes. I want to make my wife surprised with the tidiness of our kitchen and bed room [*Saya ingin mengejutkan dengan dapur dan kasur beres*]. She already gave me many surprises by telling me that she has been invited to go here and there [to have dance performance] such as to Australia, Netherland, England, Malaysia, Singapore, Italy and Austria. Therefore, when my wife comes home and want to wash dishes, I directly take over this job by saying, "Please do not do this, this is my job". When she woke up and went to the bathroom, I wanted to surprise her by quickly tidying up our bed. I do not want to give her anymore burden at home. I do not mind at all doing all of these, because I want her to be successful, I am the one who want her to be like she is now. If she is just at home, it means that no body need her, and I will not like it (Karyono, interview with the author on 3 July 2016).

Similarly, their daughter, M (13 years), confirmed the above information that her father has taken over domestic work since her mother was busy at her work as Leader 1:

Previously, it was Ibu who washed the dishes, but Ayah has taken over this work. Ayah has taken over domestic works since Ibu became Leader 1. We are happy that Ibu becomes a rector, we support her. The main factor that she could become a rector is her talent and love of arts. Ibu loves arts and we support her. It was Ayah who dominantly supports Ibu. After Ibu becomes a rector, she has lack of time to be with us, but we are not complaining, we are happy with Ibu's achievement. During the weekend, Ibu still does

this and that [cook what we like] for us (M, interview with the author on 3 July 2016).

The above explanation shows that the absence of double burdens and the family support are important factors in making Ibu Een successful in her public sphere. This absence of double burdens is still rarely found in Indonesian predominant patriarchal culture in which husbands usually expect their wife to be their subordinate, serve all their needs and are reluctant to do housework and take care of their children, even when they do not contribute at all for the economic well being of the family, resulting in too many works to do for the wife.

For Karyono, Ibu Een's husband, the commitment to support his wife is more important than his own career, as reported also by Ibu Een. This can be seen, for example, when he was instructed to participate in a week training which requires him to leave the house. He would refuse the order by saying:

"I am very sorry, but my wife is very busy. She often leaves the house for her work. If I leave the house, who will look after my children? " When they were small, my children were a bit notty, may be because they were lack of attention from their mother. I was lack of sleep to look after them. My son even pointed his foot to my face when I was giving a speech in the mosque (Karyono, interview with the author on 3 July 2016).

Karyono was not afraid if because of his refusal, he would lose his job. For him, family is more important than his job. In response to this information, I asked Ibu Een whether or not she would agree if her husband leave his job as a teacher. Ibu Een still expect her husband not to leave his job: "I tend to support him to keep his job as a teacher, even though if he resigns from his job as a teacher, he still have other income sources", which for me it shows that she still has traditional gender expectation that husband should give maintenance to his wife, just as she tried to fulfil traditional expectation as a wife.

Even though her husband has been flexible in his gender role, by taking over childcare and houseworks, Ibu Een seems to try to fit with the existing patriarchal gender expectation. She tried not to look superior or in a dominant position as leader in her campus by positioning herself as housewife when she is at home and not to take active role within her neighbourhood unless she is being asked her opinion so that her neighbours enjoy communicating with her without any hesitation regardless

of her high position in her campus as a rector. She respects her husband by asking much of his opinion in solving the problem in her campus and emphasises the role of her husband as family leader and as the person who is active in the nearby mosque, respected by his surrounding communities. Similarly, her husband, even though he shows humbleness, but he does not feel inferior to his wife, stressing that what Ibu Een achieves is what he wanted her to achieve, in which he has important role in making her achievement possible, positioning himself as her mentor and supporter (Herdiani and Karyono, interview with the author on 3 July 2016).

In addition, as her senior, Karyono still position himself as family leader and breadwinner, even though his income is currently less than that of her wife. He told me that he gives all his monthly salary to Ibu Een, who then manages the family income. This shows that even though both Ibu Een and her husband have broken the traditional gender stereotype, to some extent they still negotiate and adapt with the existing gender construction.

## **Conclusion**

There are at least four factors that lead Ibu Een becomes the current Rector of ISBI. First, she was lucky to have great momentum of finishing her doctoral study a month before the selection of being Ketua 1 of STSI. Being Ketua 1 of STSI has easily led her to become Ketua of STSI, which then becomes the Rector of ISBI. Second, she has doctoral degree earlier than her other senior colleagues. Third, Ibu Een was trusted by her mentor, her previous superior, Ibu Endang, who might be impressed by Ibu Een's ability in assuming the leadership of STSI during Ibu Endang's absence in Jakarta for 6-months Lemhanas education and for Ibu Een's talent in connecting ISBI with the outside campus networks. Last but not least is her family's support, especially the support of her beloved husband who is willing to break the traditional gender roles by taking over most of the domestic works and childcare. It is the absence of these double burdens [the burdens of doing all houseworks and childcare at home and doing public responsibilities such as teaching and studying at the same time], together with Ibu Een's hard work and potential that lead her to become successful academician, artist and leader.

There are at least two obstacles that Ibu Een face as a young female leader in her campus: the dominant influence of the seniors and the opposing parties. The seniors might tend to undermine the ability of the junior but Ibu Een tried not to avoid the seniors' influence. In fact, she

often seek their opinion in solving campus problems so that the seniors feel that they have important position within Ibu Een's leadership.

As a woman, Ibu Een does not need to negotiate with her husband in order she could be free from the traditional gender expectation of doing housework and childcare. It was her husband who has mainly broken many existing traditional gender constructions such as that they were getting married in Bapak Karyono's parents' home, not in Ibu Een's parents' home; he is taking over housework and childcare; he prioritises his family over his own career; he is not feeling inferior to have a wife whose level of education is higher than his own level of education. In fact, he is the one who eagerly supports Ibu Een's education and is very proud of her achievement. Ibu Een herself, even though she has broken patriarchal tradition of being the top leader in her campus, to some extent, she still tries to fit with the existing patriarchal expectation that women need to be subordinate to her husband, by positioning herself as a wife when she is at home and not to show her leadership position within her neighbourhood. She said that she does not want to take a dominant position within her neighbours and would only speak when she is being asked opinion. She did this in order that she could be close with her neighbours.

Both Ibu Een and her husband seem to have never study about gender but they have already had flexible gender roles and are almost free from patriarchal tradition. Therefore, they have successful and peaceful family life, in which all of them support and respect each other. It is this successful and peaceful family life, together with other leadership qualities, that make Ibu Een can be a successful leader.

---

<sup>1</sup> About the author: *Nina Nurmila* is a lecturer at Islamic Education and Teaching Faculty, Universitas Islam Negeri/UIN (State Islamic University) Bandung, since 1994.

<sup>2</sup> There has been a debate on when Islam came to Indonesia whether it was in the seventh century soon after the birth of Islam in Arab and was brought by Arab traders or in the thirteenth century and was brought by traders from Gujarat, India. Azra argues that Islam may have started to come to the Indonesian archipelago in the seventh century brought by Middle Eastern traders, but in the twelfth and thirteenth century Islam was spread by sufi teachers from the Middle East, who concentrate themselves on teaching Islam, and therefore the influence

of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago has become more apparent after the twelfth century (Azra, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Sunan Ambu in the Sundanese mythology is the female ruler of the heaven. Ibu Retno originally comes from Central Javanese. She is a Javanese, not Sundanese, but through her education and her long period of living and working in West Java, she knows well Sundanese arts tradition.

## References

- Abu Zaid, Nasr (2006). 'The Nexus of Theory and Practice'. In: Mehran Kamrava, *The New Voices of Islam. Rethinking Politics and Modernity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Andaya, B. W. (2001). 'Southeast Asian studies: Gender', in Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (eds), *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences* 22. Amsterdam; Oxford: Elsevier Science, pp. 14676-80.
- Azra, Azyumardi. 1994. *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII. Melacak Akar-akar Pembaruan Pemikiran Islam di Indonesia*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Blackburn, Susan (1997). 'Western feminists observe Asian women: An example from the Dutch East Indies', in Jean Gelman Taylor (ed.), *Women Creating Indonesia: The First Fifty Years*. Clayton, Vic.: Monash Asia Institute, pp. 1-21.
- Brenner, Suzanne A. (1998). *The Domestication of Desire: Women, Wealth, and Modernity in Java*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Djamour, Judith (1965). *Malay Kinship and Marriage in Singapore*. London: Athlone Press.
- Dwimarwati, Retno (2016). Interview with the author, 11 July 2016 in ISBI vice rectorat room.
- Engineer, Asghar Ali (1992). *The Rights of Women in Islam*. London: C. Hurst & Co.
- Firth, Rosemary (1966). *Housekeeping Among Malay Peasants*. New York: Humanities Press.

- Geertz, Hildred (1961). *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization*. USA: The Free Press of Glencoe.
- Geertz, Hildred and Geertz, Clifford (1975). *Kinship in Bali*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Gonsoulin, Margaret (2005). 'The Islamic frontier: Islam and gender equity in Southeast Asia', *Hawwa: Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World* 3, 1 (March): 9–39.
- Herdiani, Een (2016). Interview with the author on 1 July 2016 in ISBI rectorat room.
- Ibn Kathir (2012-2016). *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-Kariem*. [Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought](http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=7&tSoraNo=4&tAyahNo=34&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1), retrieved July 10, 2016, <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=7&tSoraNo=4&tAyahNo=34&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.
- ISBI (2015). 'Sejarah ISBI Bandung', retrieved July 10, 2016, from <http://www.isbi.ac.id/index.php/2015-03-30-05-27-49/sejarah-isbi-bandung>.
- Karyono, Ono (2016). Interview with the author, 3 July 2016 in Al-Jamiah Mosque, Bandung.
- Fakih, Mansour (1996). *Analisis Gender & Transformasi Sosial*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Mernissi, Fatima (1991). *The Veil and the Male Elite. A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (Harem Politique. Translated by Mary Jo Lakeland). Great Britain: Perseus.
- Muhammad, Husein (2011). *Ijtihad Kyai Husein. Upaya membangun keadilan gender*. Jakarta: Rahima.
- Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat (2015). "Penduduk," retrieved July 10, 2016, from <http://jabarprov.go.id/index.php/pages/id/75>.
- Pikiran Rakyat (2015). Prof Dr Endang Caturwati Ketua STSI Baru, retrieved July 10, 2016, from <http://www.pikiran-rakyat.com/pendidikan/2012/01/25/174297/prof-dr-endang-caturwati-ketua-stsi-baru>

- Reenen, Joke van (1996). *Central Pillars of the House: Sisters, Wives, and Mothers in a Rural Community in Minangkabau, West Sumatra*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Research School CNWS.
- Reid, Anthony (1988). *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680. Volume One: The Lands below the Winds*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Stoler, Ann (1977). 'Class structure and female autonomy in rural Java', in Wellesley Editorial Committee, *Women and National Development: The Complexities of Change*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 74–89.
- Strange, Heather (1981). *Rural Malay Women in Tradition and Transition*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Subhan, Zaitunah (1999). *Tafsir Kebencian: Studi Bias Jender dalam Tafsir al-Qur'an*. Yogyakarta: LKiS.
- Umar, Nasaruddin. (1999). *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender. Perspektif Al-Qur'an*. Jakarta: Paramadina.