Women's Leaderships in Indonesia:

Current Discussion, Barriers, and Existing Stigma

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Abstract

Indonesian women's leadership in the public domain is not well promoted and sustained. This research examined women's perspectives on female leaderships in Indonesia, barriers to women's leadership and qualities of an ideal female leader. Qualitative interviews, focus group discussions and informal dialogues were conducted with 30 female community members, university students, lecturers, professionals, and women's activists. Respondents were between 19 and 60 years of age, literate, and were working or living in *Jabodetabek* – Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi areas. Findings from this study suggest a narrow symbolic idealization of a heroic woman leader. Women's perspectives and inspiration were also explained by an embodiment of female-gendered qualities of being patience, sincere, being approachable and having a strong interest women-focused issues. In turn, this conceptualization may also poses barriers to a large scale of creative social change process in women's empowerment in public leadership. This research offers in-depth understanding of the complexity of current barriers to and consistent stigmatization against women's leaders in Indonesia.

Keywords: gender, women's leaderships, collective leadership, barriers.

Introduction

Following the latest presidential election of Mr Jokowi Widodo in 2014, nine female cabinet ministers were announced. Those ministers include the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Ms. Pudjiastuti; whom ever since had caused controversy in public and political arena (Politik. kompasiana.com, 2014; Unilubis.com. (2014). Ms Pudjiastuti, as often pictured as a single mother of multiple unsuccessful marriages, a smoker, a motorbike rider, has challenged the public's opinion about what a female leader should look like. Some saw her as an inappropriate choice for the ministry. However, many public leaders admitted that she was one of the most performed cabinet ministers. In the last decade, other well-known female public

leaders also include the former President Megawati Soekarnoputri and former ministries, of health, Nafsia Mboi; trade, Mari Pangestu; and Sri Mulyani, the current Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer of the World Bank (Siahaan, Tisnabudi, & Rachman, 2010; Suharmoko, 2010; The Jakarta Post, 2014).

Like many countries in the Southeast Asia region, Indonesian women's advancements in education, health, and economic development, are yet to be followed by women's empowerment in politics (Parawansa, 2005; The World Economic Forum, 2014; Tuminez, 2012). Leadership in Indonesia continues to be associated with men. Significant gender leadership gaps remain unchallenged. Barriers to women's participation in public leaderships varies across

different level of political system, organizational structures, and cultural norms (Shvedova, 2005). Those barriers include existing male-dominated values and norms; lack of supportive organizational structures for working women; and lack of organizational knowledge on gender differences in working priorities, patterns and decision making styles. For example, women tend to give priorities to social welfare, national security, children's and health issues (Andajani-Sutjahjo, Chirawatkul, & Saito, 2015; Setiawati, 2010; Shvedova, 2005). Other barriers may include the conventions of marriage, poverty and low education levels of women which limit women's participation in leadership (Evans, 2014; Parawansa, 2002, 2005; Shvedova, 2005; Suryakusuma, 1996). Within the convention of marriage, a married female parliamentary member is expected to fully commit to not only her party and constituency work, but also continue to play the roles of a good wife and dedicated mother (Shvedova, 2005).

Also, women are often excluded from a leadership position in infrastructure or technology industries. Women are often viewed as physically smaller and weaker than men and incapable of solving technical problems (Andajani-Sutjahjo et al., 2015); hence the majority of them are given only the administrative roles (Andajani-Sutjahjo et al., 2015; Ongsakul, Resurreccion, & Sajor, 2012; Zwarteveen, 2008).

There is no shortage of highly educated women with great talents in Indonesia. More than half of university graduates are women and they are participating in the labor force (Utomo, 2015; *Women matter: An Asian perspective*). About 52% of women in Indonesia are working in services industry (52%), followed by agriculture (33%) and manufacturing or infrastructure industries (15%). Interestingly, educated young women in Indonesia today, continue to hold the belief that once they get married their career aspiration shall come second to their roles as a wife and mother. This way of thinking is often referred to the term *women's kodrat* (God's will) as a wife and a mother (Andajani-Sutjahjo, 2003; Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, 1992; Suryakusuma, 1996; Utomo, 2015)[1]. A report from the World Bank (2014) shows that only 9% of top managers in private firms in Indonesia are women, compared to those 48% who work as unpaid family or domestic workers (48%).

There was an increase in the number of women's candidates participated in the last 2014 parliamentary elections (from 30% to 37%), totaling to 2467 women. Yet only 94 of them were elected in the 560-seat of the House of Representatives for the 2014-2017 period (Fardah, 2014). This is far from the targeted 30% seats for women, set at the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2011). The Electoral Law 10/2008, article 55, stipulates that women's legislative candidate should compromise at least 30% of the total candidates. Yet there is no enforcement to guarantee the achievement of this ideal quota of women's legislators. Women's representation also varies across different parliamentary committees, with the lowest of 7% in Parliamentary of Defense, Human Rights and Regulations Commission (Komisi III). The highest women's representation of 43% is in the Parliamentary of Labor, Transmigration, Population, Health, and Food and Drugs Commission (Komisi IX). Only 23% of the members of the Parliamentary of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Commission, are women. The majority of the members of the Indonesian National women's Commission are women (87%). No women's representation in the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commissions, nor in the Judicial Commission. Only 3.5% of the members of the Indonesian Police Force are women. Women are underrepresented in the Indonesian judicial system. Only 11% of the members of the Attorney General's office; 29% of attorneys are women. Only 20% of judges in the Indonesian religious courts are women.

The predominance of male leaderships in the national government level continue to trickle down into the micro-politics of regional, local governments as well as other institutions and organizations. Less than 4% of village headmasters are women and only 9% of those top seniors at the national government level are women. (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2011, 2013).

Literature acknowledges that women's empowerment in top leadership can be painstakingly slow and hindered by ever existing stigma, discrimination against women, and obstacles in social, political and cultural systems (Evans, 2014; Tuminez, 2012). Recent Transformational Leadership model however, stressed on empathetic and altruism

characteristics which lead to women's values and intrinsic characteristic (Evans, 2014; Goleman, 1995; Latu, Mast, Lammers, & Bombari, 2013). Therefore, women can play more significant roles in future of global leaderships with a better targeted approach, supportive social structure environment (Evans, 2014). For example, in France, women's leaders are given more flexible working arrangements. They can work from different power bases which in turn foster a better team cohesion and collaboration in working transnational setting (Evans, 2014; Tuminez, 2012). Women's peculiar personality traits; their abilities to multi-task and be empathetic, are favourably perceived in a transnational company globally.

Methods

Four focused group discussion were conducted with a total of 30 women, aged 20 – 60 years. Participants included university students and lecturers, housewives, professionals, labor-workers, and members of non-government women's organizations. Participants were recruited with the assistance from the Kalyanamitra Women's Organization and researchers from the University of Krida Wacana (UKRIDA), Jakarta. All focus group discussions were conducted between August and October 2014. Each group discussion took about 90 minutes. Group discussions were conducted either at the UKRIDA campus, a meeting room at the Kalyanamitra office, or a local café. Participants included 10 undergraduate students, 7 university lecturers, 7 women's activists, 4 factory workers and 2 housewives. 17 of them were married and 13 were single. All were literate and of middle income status. They had completed at least a high school education, with a few had some tertiary qualifications. All participants either lived or worked in Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi) areas.

Group discussions were conducted using social dialogue techniques which aimed to facilitate shared knowledge, experiences and understanding of the topics being discussed. Topics ranged from participants' perceptions of an ideal and qualities of a female leader; barriers to women's leaderships in Indonesian context. Discussions were conducted in mix Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese dialect, audio-taped and transcribed, then translated into English. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterned meaning of the participants' transcriptions as

comprehensively and accurately as possible (Berg, 1998; Liamputtong & Douglas, 2005). The two co-authors (OH and YAS) worked together to bring fragments of ideas, identify patterns in the text and examine recurring or commonalities or differences presented in the text. This initial analysis then was discussed with the other co-author (SAS); a more experienced qualitative researcher for feedback and discussion. The final decision was made involving all of the co-authors.

Generally, the pre-existing idea of an ideal 'woman' leader was convoluted by women's social status, the provision of marriage, social norms and expectation of women within the conception of women's 'kodrat (God's will) as a wife and mother. Participants were also aware that their ideal expectation of a woman's leader could somehow be disadvantaging to women. Within the conception of a women's kodrat and the provision of marriage, a woman's primarily roles as a wife and a mother should come first before her public commitment. Consequently, women's leaders are then expected to continue negotiating and balancing their commitments between the binary domestic vs public domains.

A Woman's Kodrat (God's Will)

All participants maintained the importance of women's kodrat. An aspiring leader should follow her kodrat as a caring and nurturing mother. She is expected to be halus (gentle), peduli (caring), pengertian (empathic), melayani (giving service to others) and mengayomi (nurturing and protecting) her family. A failure to comply with her kodrat, will make her an 'incomplete' woman and it can affect the harmony in her family.

> Here I give you an example of a woman who is keluar (out of) her kodrat. She is too busy for her children and her children become her nanny's kids. She leaves for work when her kids are still asleep. I think wouldn't it be good for the family to have breakfast together. Also what happens if the father are also very busy, and he gets home late, so whose children are they? (Ayunda, Focus group (G) 1).

Participants also explained that a woman who follows her kodrat, should be astute and observant. She should be able to adjust her behaviors accordingly within different social situations. As a wife, she ought to obey her husband. Any decision making should be made with the approval from her

husband. 'If a woman doesn't realize her position that she is someone's wife … that she needs to serve her husband and when she fails, it would have severe consequences to her and her family.' (Elok, G3).

The Indonesian society places a high demand on women to follow her duties as a wife and mother, but gives women little authority: *'she has all the responsibility to manage and run the household'* (Elok, G3); yet still *'her decision of her life, her interest, her aspiration and of her family must be decided by the man, the husband, the leader in the family'* (Iffah, G4). A woman might be given a opportunity to give advice on family matters, yet it would be her husband who has the final say.

According to Bening (G1), *'women's devotion [to her family] will never cease;'* followed by Cempaka (G1) *'When I become a wife, my household will be my first priority.'* This view and the understanding of women's *kodrat* is likely to be taught across generations. A girl is taught to be a good wife, a loving mother and a dedicated home maker by her mother, grandmother and female relatives. Cempaka (G1) learned that: *'We women are the key of a successful family, why many families are failing? That's because the women are not motivated and wise*. Careers outside home or public participation hence should become secondary to her duties as a wife and a mother. Her merit will continue to be judged by how well she cooks for the family, cleans the house, serves her husband and nurtures her kids.

> *Ah … yes as for a mother, even though she is already in her 70s, still she needs to wake up early in the morning [before everyone else], prepares breakfast for her husband, do the laundry, cooks and fulfills all the husband's needs. But her husband, at about the same age as her … he would be retired and gave his pension money to her. He will be regarded as a hero, he doesn't need to do any [household] chores but sitting around doing nothing and gets all the credit. (Bening, G1)*

As wife and a mother, a woman is expected to always look after others. As a girls, she learns to take care of her parents and younger siblings. As a wife, she looks after her husband, children, parents and in-laws. As a grandmother she looks after her grandchildren. She ought to be loyal to her husband and children, to uphold a high moral standard (Firdaus, 2010). Any failure to maintain harmonious relationships in marriage and family will be socially condemned and is often unforgiven by the society.

Consequently, a woman's achievements outside home are not yet to be praised unless she could balance between her domestic and public commitments. Talented and aspired women are firstly expected to accomplish her domestic commitment before moving to the public domain. Not surprisingly, participants who worked outside homes often felt being pulled between the never-ending hard-to-balance commitment for her family and work. Many believe that a success outside the homes should come hand in hand with being a good wife and mother; yet many also experience some frustration in their effort.

Women's facing the double burden

Some participants argued that it would be very difficult to succeed in both domestic and public domains, without experiencing frustration or conflict. In facing these competing priorities, women are often left unsupported; making them feel frustrated:

> *My husband's only principle is that I am are free to do anything outside (the house), but first I must not neglect my job as a wife and mother'. So he gave me the freedom, still on the other hand he also give me a set of responsibility I need to fulfill and cannot ignore. This often makes me feel frustrated and annoyed (Firza, G3, 560-563).*

Women are often blamed for a marriage breakups and disharmony in the family. She can be the object of social gossips by her neighbors, friends, and relatives. These social condemnation and gossips are disheartening for women:

> *But not all the women like doing domestic chores. My friend, she is more 'bule' (westerner) type, working all day. We women must be careful because not all men like to be treated that way. This friend of mine, oh … her husband was way too nice, and he always helps around the home. Even he sometimes cooks his own dinner after work, but it turns out he has been having an affair with another woman. (Elok, G3, 545-549).*

Respondents admitted that balancing between the domestic vs public worlds had been very challenging. Some women might give up –the very likely it would be her public career. For many participants, to be successful in both domains, a woman needs to be a 'super woman'.

Being a super woman

The imaginable 'super woman' leader, according to Gandari (G3): '… *when she already can lead herself in the home, and also leads her subordinates in her workplace, then I will categorize her as a super woman.'* Participants gave a characters list of an 'ideal' women's leader. A woman's leader ought to be communicative, open to suggestion and able to develop partnership with others. She can motivate her subordinates, share her experiences, has a clear goal, and able to transfer her knowledge and expertise to the people she works with. She evaluates her subordinates but at the same time needs to be righteous, courageous, humble, firm, and down to earth. She ought to have the willingness to know her community well[2]. She needs to be quick, discipline, timely, paying attention to details, and has *'enormous amount of energy to be spent as a leader'* (Iffah, G4). A woman's leader is also expected to be self-motivated, wise, confident, brave, decisive, smart, strong and able to survive any calamities faced at work. Most participants realized that it is very challenging for a woman to have a leadership position in a male-dominated public domain: '*she has to prove that she has the ability to lead or enhance her organization, she needs to show that she has more knowledge compare with men in a similar position.'* (Iffah, G4).

Those list of a 'super woman' leader, on the other hand, might also suggest women's struggle in balancing between her public and domestic commitments. Being entrapped in the patriarchal point of view which endorses women's *kodrat*, and the convention of marriage which limit women's roles as a wife and mother, is disadvantaging to women. Success in the public domain has relatively a clear measure. Success in the domestic domain however, is often never-ending, demanding, and with no clear measure.

> *I'm so flabbergasted, what kind of women would she be?! When she wants to work outside the home … she still needs to be responsible in managing her house, takes care of her children, it still a woman's responsibilities. I don't think that kind of duty can be passed on to men [sigh], [they] say' let it be the woman's duties. (Elok, G3)*

Some respondents were adamant that a successful woman's leader ought to follow her *kodrat*. '*she is ought to mengayomi* (Ind: nurturing and protecting) *and educate her staff, just like a mother.'* (Delima, G1). She is expected to be gentle and compassionate, patient, helpful, serving and caring towards her subordinates; able to encourage, support and help her staff reaching their full potential. The 'motherly' quality of a female leader and the conception of *mengayomi* includes altruistic qualities of selflessness.

> *Women had the nature to care towards her subordinate, she is having that gentle side. So with this kind of leadership (care for and serve others) which is on trend right now, it resonates well with women. (Hayu, G3)*

Indonesian women's struggle to success in public domain will continue to be challenged by the society itself, as long as the binary distinction between women's domestic and public domains remains uncontested. Respondents' expectations, perceptions of attributes of a good female leader maintained the message that 'the public space is not for women' and it is not within a woman's nature. A woman's leader generally is often closely watched, easily scrutinized, trapped in a 'super woman' illusion:

> *So you can imagine how difficult the challenges are for a woman to be a leader, whatever judgements are made against her would be around her inferiority to men… so it is hard for a woman who attempt to bring a new spirit in her leadership. For example, if she is very meticulous and demanding for perfection, her workmates would think she was a single or lacking of 'love'. If she were single, the gossip would be around her not having a date or a boyfriend, which make her more emotional at work. (Iffah, G4)*

A woman's leader ought to make extra efforts to sustain her leaderships. First, she needs to fulfill all of the requirements set up by her society, then she needs to work on stigmas which can be belittling her leadership role.

> *When a woman wants to be in a leadership position, it will be a double fight for her, she must double her efforts too. She must fight those stigmas, work hard to prove her ability, and also her ability to lead or advance her organization. (Iffah, G4)*

Domesticated leadership & Convention of Marriage

Existing patriarchal view applies double standard of leaderships for men and women. Men's success in public domain, has never been judged according

to his roles as a husband or a father. Men seem to be living in two unrelated domestic and public domains. Men's accomplishment in public is highly valued disregard of his accomplishment in the domestic domain. The illusion of 'a super woman' leader suggests that women's public roles are being highly domesticated. The concept of a super woman would easily make women fall into the trap of feeling exploited and overburdened. Women might pressure themselves to be a perfect housewife, mother and successful public figure. They cannot afford the option of failing in either domestic or public domain.

As an executive of the state, the government does not have the right to interfere with 'domestic' affairs of its people. The legalization of Marriage Law -which regulates the role of husband and wife in the family - would be interpreted as what husband and wife ought to do. Although there is no penalized to the people who violate it, but it would minimized the dialogue between husband-wife and father-mother because the standard have already been settled upon by the state.

> *Marriage Law is about of what the role of wife and the role of husband are. As the head of family, house wife. What are the duties of housewife is written in that law. … (thus) the burden (from the law) need to be scrapped and not standardized in that law (Marriage Law), because it (the duties) more like roles in household that can be compromised and negotiated by both sides, not supposedly regulated by the law. (Kemala, G4).*

Indonesian Marriage Law No 1/1974 (UU No. 1/1974) stipulates that 'the right and position of the wife are equal to the right and position of the husbands.' However, the status and authority of a woman in the family is limited as 'the husband is the head of the family while the wife is the mother of the household.' Further, a married woman, according to the Indonesian Civil Code (1847), articles 106, 108, 110, shall obey her husband, follow him and cannot have any legal ownership over joint of her property. She also needs the permission or written consent from her husband for making any legal action (Andajani-Sutjahjo, 2003; *Indonesia: Civil Code [Indonesia]*, 1847; Parawansa, 2002). These regulations hence become the standard on how the role of a woman in her family is defined and managed by the state.[3] A husband is the leader and main decision maker in the family, often women

are at a disadvantage as 'they *are not accustomed to make decisions about anything'* (Iffah, G4), even if it is about her own matter. Jingga explained that women's commitment in public is often seen as '*only as an extra thing, a cry for self-existence, not being regarded in terms of what she earns, the autonomy she achieved or her other achievement.'* (Jingga, G4).

Women's continuing struggle to be a leader in the public domain was explained by Kemala, a young educated female university student:

> *Once I was inclined to follow that pattern [male working pattern]… most of the members of the students' board are men and meetings are held in the evenings and could go after midnight. At that time, we female students were struggling to find a position of leadership and participate in the campus politics, we tried to go forward with our female leadership in our Students' Executive Board (BEM). The meeting would not last until 12pm or 1 am, but I could only join till 9 pm. (Kemala, G4)*

A similar challenge was faced by women candidates in the parliament. Some participants explained that women had been used as 'a beautiful doll' or political 'tools' for 'the *party to fulfill the 30% quota of women's candidates'.* Later she would receive minimal or no internal support or be discouraged by other women or male constituents to pursuing an electorate membership:

> *The women would be without any further aid. Let alone financial aid, none of them get any assistance when (she) collides with an incumbent senior, they (the party) would likely siding with the senior, especially if the senior is a man. (Jingga, G4)*

To stay in power, a woman need to adjust to the habitus[4] of male-made world, domination and power. A woman's struggle to maintain and sustain her leadership role in public could become impossible, too hard of an effort, and risking women to social condemnation and scrutiny.

Visioning a collective leadership

Participants were well aware of the continuing structural and social barriers faced by women in public domain. Women might deliberately choose not to take a leadership role due to competing priorities of being a wife, a mother and a leader. Ascribed norms of women's leaderships were either too difficult, unrealistic. There has been a lack of support for women's participation in Public. In their

forward looking, participants offered insights and possible solutions to women's empowerment in public:

> In my perspective, women's leadership is about how that leadership role can be fulfilled jointly. It is about how we lead together. History has shown that women were never considered as a leader, so the leadership form when she is appointed as a leader needs to be a new kind of leadership. (Kemala, G4)

Participants offered the conception of 'collective leadership' when the authority, patronage of a leader is being shared and distributed to the team members. The process of making decision and responsibilities, therefore include all of the team members. Working within women's strengths, this collective leadership relies a working culture which fosters negotiation, collaboration and networking. Others commented that this form of collective leadership would contest the myth of a 'super woman' leader. A few respondents expressed their dislike of being imposed toward the idealization of 'a super woman'.

> An image of a woman with many hands or a woman who is able to perform multiple tasks at once imposes that super woman idealization. Actually, women do not want that kind of image. Not the super power, but gives her some space and give her a space to negotiate her needs, which she thinks can be shared, and what supports she needs from others, … not a super mom. So the 'super women' image is misleading. It is just re-fostering the idealization of 'women with multiple hands,' which is not real (Kemala, G4, 686-691)

Women's struggles to balance commitment in the binary separated domestic vs public domains continue to persist and uncontested. Indonesian women's achievement in education and health is yet to be followed by their access to women's empowerment in politics (Parawansa, 2005). At the same time, the conception of a woman's leader as a 'super woman' has been largely convoluted by the characterization of male leaders. This study shows that women, due to some of them, the conception of women's *kodrat* and the convention of marriage, have been socialized to occupy mainly the domestic domain and to play a role as a wife and a mother. Women may have the talent and great interest to take a leadership role in the public domain, yet lacking access to social and institutional support, and time, energy due to her domestic commitments.

Findings from this study confirm (Evans, 2014); barriers to women's leaderships include women's commitment to family, stereotyping and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities. Women in this study offered to explain attributes of an ideal leader as a 'super woman.' Women's leaders would find it challenging to balance success in domestic and public domains within the hard –to-fulfil 'super woman' model.

In this study, women's ideation, conception, and understanding of women's leadership continues to be narrowly focused on the state defined roles of a woman as a wife and mother. Discourse on women's equal opportunities and empowerment for public leaderships is not well supported. The provisions of marriage, existing patriarchal values and domestication of women's roles place a strong barrier to any efforts to empower women in public leadership. The state gender ideology provides a very limited space for any discussion, programmes or policies to promote women's participation in public leaderships. Failure to address this gender-discriminative state ideology and the conception of women's roles within the 'woman's *kodrat*' will continue to put women at a disadvantage because there would be limited or no access to women's participation in public leaderships.

The conception of 'the super woman' may imply general belief that women are inferior to men in public leaderships. This may relate to the 'glass cliff' phenomenon (Ryan & Haslam, 2005) which acknowledges the existence of the double-standard leadership applied to women and that women's skills and capabilities are always 'second' to men's. This precarious context would make it even more difficult for women to succeed, when they are being judged using double standard and compared to their male peers. Some also viewed that often a woman would be brought into a top leadership ladder when her man counterpart had failed and the situation was irredeemable (Cuddy et al., 2015; Evans, 2014; Ryan & Haslam, 2005). With the advantage of men dominating in both global economic and political areas, not surprisingly male-stereotypes of a leader are mostly valued (Glick et al., 2004). These social and cultural construction of leadership traits associated with men rather than women, would easily make women feel uncomfortable and inferior (Cuddy et al., 2015; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011).

Literature on gender differences in leadership effectiveness is yet to be conclusive (Evans, 2014; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014; Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Further, men's and women's successful and effective leaderships are often judged by predominant stereotyping of masculine traits and men being a dominant public group. Cultural and social context of leadership continues to apply different rules, expectations, attributes to men and women (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014).

Participants' explanation of a good and effective woman's leaders which include women's leadership styles, attitudes and altruism, according (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000; Evans, 2014; Goleman, 1995) has been more relevant to current and global organisational requirements. Those women's attributes can be transformational than ever in the past than power and control. Evans and others also confirm that current international environment seeks for transformational leaders which characterized by supportive and empathetic leaderships styles, to a large extent favour to female attributes (Evans, 2014; Goleman, 1995; Latu et al., 2013)

Conclusion

Women's representation in top management leadership in developed countries have been very prominent in the past 30 years. Yet, the progress of women's leadership in the Asia Pacific region has been stall (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2010). In Asia, many reported that many women opted out of their professions when transitioning from middle to senior management. This phenomenon is often referred as the 'leaking pipeline' phenomenon. For example in Japan, the drop of women from middle to senior management levels was as high as 70.24%, China (52.88%), Hong Kong (48.83%) and China (45.90%) (Tuminez, 2012).

Many agrees that ever existing social, cultural, political barriers, stigma, prejudices will continue to put barriers for women climbing top positions (Evans, 2014; Parawansa, 2002, 2005; Setiawati, 2010; Tuminez, 2012). The progress of women's empowerment in some regions, like the Asian Pacific, has been painstakingly slow; yet (Evans, 2014) was optimistic, that the direction and expectation of global communities are changing and women are poised to play a much greater role in the future[5].

The progress of women's leaderships largely depends on regional practices in women's empowerment and efforts to reduce structural barriers to women's leadership in top positions. Targeted systematic support is needed to help women to persevere in the public domain without giving up their roles as mothers and caregivers. This may to include policies on maternity and paternity leaves, better access to childcare and elder care, and more gender-equal retirement and pension schemes (Tuminez, 2012). A serious reforms towards a more participatory and flexible bureaucracy which is highly focused on distinctive gender policies, is needed. Gender-sensitive policies need to address gender differences in leadership styles, values, norms and approach to social welfare issues and provide guidelines for the development of gender responsive capacity building programs for women's leadership across different sectors.

Women's interest in leaderships in politics, economic, health or education need to be addressed in both regional and community levels. Public and private institutions need to be more flexible and informal, and proactively removing barriers for women's leaderships. (Andajani-Sutjahjo et al., 2015). Strong domination of male bureaucrats in the public domain, could only lead to further stigmatization against a woman's leader. Therefore men should be the partners for women's leaderships and struggle, not their competitors. For example, discussions on the roles of women and women's *kodrat* which has been disadvantaging to women's participation in public spacecould potentially be a starting point of some collective reflection. In this study, all of the participants agree for the need to look into the context of collective leadership, which encourage partnerships, distribution of shared power (Parawansa, 2002), and collective efforts in strengthening women's voice, confidence, agency, as well as proactively creating opportunities and support for women into high leadership positions.

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(Endnotes)

1   This recent study included 1761 male and female students from 7 universities in Jakarta and 5 universities in Makasar. It examined the perceptions of young educated men and women toward gender roles in marriage (Utomo, 2015).

2   The term *blusukan* [Javanese: going down to observe and listen to the grassroots communities] was often used, as it echoes the recent exemplar of President Jokowi in his campaign.

3   Indonesia experienced a dark history of discrimination against women during the New Order government (1965-1998). In order to maintain national 'stability' the roles of women were control within its domestic arena and it was stipulated under the *Repelita* (the five-yearly development plan) (Suryakusuma, 1996). The roles of an *ibu* [mother] was primarily to the serve her husband, children and then the nation. A mother's commitment was determined by her duties to her family. It set the application of the double-standard measure on how men and women were being valued in public domain.

4   Indonesia experienced a dark history of discrimination against women during the New Order government (1965-1998). In order to maintain national 'stability' the roles of women were control within its domestic arena and it was stipulated under the *Repelita* (the five-yearly development plan) (Suryakusuma, 1996). The roles of an *ibu* [mother] was primarily to the serve her husband, children and then the nation. A mother's commitment was determined by her duties to her family. It set the application of the double-standard measure on how men and women were being valued in public domain.

5   This refers to the concept of glass staircase, reuniting different concepts of glass cliff, glass ceiling developed by previous researchers. The concept of glass staircase refers to the recognition and observed evidence that cultural and social obstacles to women's leadership do exist and women's empowerment in leadership can be painstakingly slow, yet changing in current international worlds poised women to play a far greater role in not so distance future (Evans, 2014)