

INDONESIA'S PROGRESS FOR WOMEN IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP*

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Abstract

Nowadays, gender equality has become a major discussion all over the world. Feminism fights for women's rights, such as equal treatment to men as well as in leadership roles. Women in leadership is still a sensitive issue in most Muslim majority countries. Some people tend to use 'religious reason' to block women in leadership roles and maintaining the status quo (Rohman, 2013). In Indonesia, there are some cultural and structural barriers faced by women in leadership roles. As we know that most of Indonesian are Muslim and most of them still believe that women should not be leaders (Rohman, 2013). Different perspectives in interpreting the holy verses sometimes lead to atrocious problems, mostly for women, hence women seem to be discredited and did not get the same privileges as men (Anggahegari and Lantu, 2014). Furthermore, the stereotypes about women's abilities tend to limit them in getting leadership roles in society, and stereotypes about how women should behave inhibit them from getting advanced careers in the workplace by discouraging assertive and ambitious behaviour (Rudman and Glick, 2001). However, a study that has been conducted by Anggahegari Prameshwara and Donald C. Lantu (2014) found that Indonesia, as a Muslim majority country, showed positive progress in enhancing women's role in leadership compared to their Middle Eastern counterparts. Therefore, this paper will analyse the Indonesian approaches in providing space for women's role in leadership particularly in the era of Jokowi's presidency. this essay will analyse the Jokowi's gender inclusivity policy towards his ministerial cabinet and its impact for the changes of social views in women and leadership. that aim is to share knowledge about Indonesia's progress in giving space for women in political leadership.

Keywords: Women, Politics, Leadership, Gender, Indonesia, Muslim Country

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, gender equality has become a major discussion all over the world. Feminism fights for women's rights, such as equal treatment to men as well as in leadership roles. Women in leadership is still a sensitive issue in most Muslim majority countries. Some people tend to use 'religious reason' to block women in leadership roles and maintaining the status quo (Rohman, 2013). However, a study that has been conducted by Anggahegari Prameshwara and Donald C. Lantu (2014) found that Indonesia, as a Muslim majority

country, showed positive progress in enhancing women's role in leadership compared to their Middle Eastern counterparts. Therefore, this paper will analyse the Indonesian approaches in providing space for women's role in leadership.

2. GENDER BIAS AND CATCH-22 FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The concept of men as the worker and women as the housewife were vested for hundreds of years. It was not common for women to work outside their houses to pursue a higher career. A long time ago, the men were perceived as the person whose duties were to provide all of family's expenses, while the women were perceived as the person whose duties were to serve their husbands, kitchen works and bed affairs (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milke, 2007). According to Ely, Robin, & Rhode (2010), "Women have long suffered from a double standard and double bind in the exercise of authority. They are thought too aggressive or not aggressive enough, and what appears assertive in a man appears abrasive in a woman." Social circumstances seem to construct the ideas that the men are superior to women in many aspects of life.

In Indonesia, there are some cultural and structural barriers faced by women in leadership roles. As we know that most of Indonesians are Muslim and most of them still believe that women should not be leaders (Rohman, 2013). Different perspectives in interpreting the holy verses sometimes lead to atrocious problems, mostly for women, hence women seem to be discredited and did not get the same privileges as men (Anggahegari and Lantu, 2014). Furthermore, the stereotypes about women's abilities tend to limit them in getting leadership roles in society, and stereotypes about how women should behave inhibit them from getting advanced careers in the workplace by discouraging assertive and ambitious behaviour (Rudman and Glick, 2001).

A research that has been conducted by Babbit Laura et all (2013) revealed that most of Indonesian people still tolerate gender inequality. They believe that women are weak and delicate, so that they must be protected by men. Furthermore, the beliefs of women are limited in their ability to undertake certain tasks, lead to the underrepresentation of women in many aspects of higher positions in leadership. It makes women not empowered as they could be. For some cases, families with weak economies are more likely to send their sons to school rather than their daughters. They believe that a son could change their economic situation in the future (Babbit Laura et all, 2013). Indeed, this situation is worsening while the women tend to be a passive, unfriendly and lack of ambition in claiming their rights in leadership roles (Giscombe and Mattis in Anggahegari and Lantu, 2014).

3. INDONESIAN POSITIVE PROGRESS FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Indonesian government realises that the women's role in higher leadership authorities is important for the development of the country. Today, there are numbers of women that are appointed to several prestigious positions in companies or even as governmental officials. CGIO research (2010) revealed that almost 12% of commissioner and director positions in Indonesian Stock Exchange belong to women. This number is considered as the highest in Asia, compared to the other Asia's best economic countries. According to Indonesia Statistic Department census in 2009, female literacy rate in Indonesia is quite high and their educational background is rising quite significantly (BPS Statistic in Anggahegari and Lantu, 2014). Furthermore, McKinsey (2013) study revealed a surprising fact that women who have a position on the director board of a company tend to get high return of equity, margins, share price and better average growth compared to the companies that have no women on their director boards. This shows that women matter in future development.

Indonesian Government has been conducting gender inclusivity policies. These policies were enacted as an effort to give various opportunities for women to improve themselves. According to UNFPA Indonesia Monograph Series (2015), the Government of Indonesia has implemented efficient and effective policies to enhance access among women and girls to their basic needs such as education, health, employment and social insurance.

Indonesia pays serious attention to women empowerment by having created the Ministry of Woman Empowerment and Child Protection. Surbakti and Devasahayam (2015) said that "The Presidential Instruction No.9/2000 on gender mainstreaming was drawn up to mandate that the entire cabinet ministries, the head of the other governmental agencies, and the chiefs of military services at the central and regional levels had to integrate the interests, needs, concerns and characteristic of men and women in every stage of the nation's development activities (UNFPA Report, 2015)". There is a regulation stated that the legislative body membership should consist of 30% minimum of women in order to convey women's ideas upon the parliament.

The Ministries Cabinet of Jokowi's presidency consists of nine charismatic women. It claims the biggest number of women compared to others democratic country in Asia (Liputan6 News, 2016). These ministers have been appointed in some strategic position such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finance, Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Minister of Health Affairs and so on. When Russian President Vladimir Putin asked about the reason behind numbers of women's ministries in Indonesia, President Jokowi said that "women figures have their own ability and toughness. They are regarded as a test-proof person and never complain" (Liputan6 News, 2016). It shows that Indonesia under the Jokowi's presidency has respected women's roles in their own style of leadership.

A survey that has been conducted by Indo Barometer Research Centre (2017) related to the performances of the ministries cabinet of Jokowi's presidency shows that the highest rank goes to Susi Pudjiastuti as the Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries. Minister Susi is considered to have good performance, courage, and a firm attitude among the other ministers in the cabinet. Susi's good performance is characterized by the eradication of fish thieves, the control of foreign ships, and the well-care of Indonesian seafood (Kumparan News, 2017). Under the leadership of Minister Susi, Indonesia succeeded in becoming number one in the eradication of Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in the world (Kumparan News, 2017). Susi has proved that women can achieve best performance in leadership roles and authority. It proves that the Jokowi's policy of incorporating women in his presidential cabinet has been successful in eliminating gender inequality in Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, gender bias still becomes an obstacle for women to become a leader. However, Indonesia under the presidency of Jokowi taught us that gender bias could be eliminated by giving the opportunity to women in leadership roles and change society's perception about women in leadership. Jokowi's gender inclusivity policies proved that there is no difference between men and women in leadership because everyone has an opportunity to become a leader. Finally, an expression says that "behind a great man there is a great woman" it means that men are not superior to women, but they cooperate and needed each other.

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