

DYNAMICS AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN LEADERS: GENDER EQUALITY AGENDA VS GENDER TRADITIONAL ROLES IN SOCIETY

Serlyeti Pulu, Nur Iman Subono, Shelly Adelina

*Gender Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies (SKSG), Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Indonesia,
Jakarta, Indonesia*

*Gender Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies (SKSG), Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
lily.pulu@gmail.com; boni.subono@gmail.com; shelly.adelina@gmail.com;*

Abstracts

This article examines some of the previous research on the background and social context of shaping women leaders in socio-political movements and women's movements, the action agendas they formulated, and how they manage the challenges faced in carrying out their missions. The phenomenon of the emergence of women leaders in various social organizations and women's organizations at the local level and the national level of the contemporary period and the period of the independence movement is the context of the study in this paper. The empowerment framework from Joana Rowlands guides the analysis. Key findings from previous studies have shown that women leaders develop strengths from within themselves, strengthen them by building relationships with others, and further develop collective action. These strengths, interacting with social issues, and generating collective action, are processes of empowerment that allow women to drive greater change.

Keywords: *women leaders, empowerment, power.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji beberapa penelitian terdahulu tentang latarbelakang dan konteks social membentuk perempuan pemimpin dalam gerakan sosial-politik dan gerakan perempuan, agenda-agenda aksi yang dirumuskannya, serta bagaimana mereka mengelola tantangan yang dihadapi dalam menjalankan misinya. Fenomena munculnya perempuan pemimpin di berbagai organisasi sosial dan organisasi perempuan di tingkat lokal dan di tingkat nasional periode kontemporer dan periode pergerakan kemerdekaan menjadi konteks kajian dalam penulisan ini. Kerangka pemberdayaan dari Joana Rowlands memandu analisis tulisan ini. Temuan penting kajian atas riset-riset terdahulu menunjukkan bahwa perempuan pemimpin mengembangkan kekuatan dari dalam diri sendiri, memperkuatnya dengan membangun hubungan dengan pihak lain, dan selanjutnya mengembangkan aksi bersama. Kekuatan yang sudah dimiliki tersebut, berinteraksi dengan persoalan sosial, menghasilkan aksi kolektif, merupakan proses hasil pemberdayaan yang menjadikan para perempuan dapat mendorong perubahan yang lebih besar.

Kata kunci: *perempuan pemimpin, pemberdayaan, kekuasaan.*

A. Introduction

The increase in the number of women leaders recently in both governmental and non-governmental organizations shows a shift in society's perspective, which previously still strongly believed that only men are capable of being leaders. This view is generally associated with the main characteristics of leaders including having power and occupying a special position, which are identical to the characteristics of men.¹ The results of the legislative election in 2019 in Indonesia led to around 20 percent of women occupying positions as members of the House of Representatives, the Republic of Indonesia.² Even though it was still less than 30 percent of meeting the quota for women's representation according to the Election Law, this achievement is still noted as progress for women in taking on public leadership roles that until now have mostly been dominated by men. It is similar to the situation among civil society organizations (CSOs) at the national level, especially NGOs - Non-Governmental Organizations, in which a decade after reform has also become an arena and space for the emergence of many women leaders in several national organizations that are generally dominated by men.³

Among the society still prioritizing male leadership that tends to be masculine, being a woman leader is always a difficult situation. Hoyt and Simon calls it a double bind, in which on the one hand women leaders are always required to remain

women with all the gender characteristics idealized by the society, such as being obedient, gentle, etc. However, when a woman shows a feminine side in carrying out her leadership, for example being more participative, she will be judged as a woman who is not worthy and deserves to lead. Moreover, when she shows her masculine side, such as being firm in making decisions, she will also be criticized for taking actions not according to her "nature".⁴ This condition makes the women leaders always be faced with a dilemma, because how their subordinates and co-workers accept them is also determined by how they think and take action, and the process of gendering their position indirectly takes place.

Conceptually, women's leadership can be categorized into 3 (three) groups as follows: 1) women leaders who refer to their gender, generally known as the concept of *female leadership*,⁵ 2) women leaders who refer to their character, known as *feminine leadership*,^{6,7} and 3) women leaders who refer to ideas and changes to struggle for the interests of women's groups, known as the concept of *feminist transformative leadership*.⁸

The concept of *female leadership* emphasizes marking the characters of women's leadership because of their female gender. Therefore, in some literature, this category is frequently equated with *feminine leadership* because the assumption used is that feminine attributes are always inherent in the

¹ Amanda Sinclair, "A Feminist Case for Leadership," dalam *Diversity in Leadership: Australian Women, Past and Present*, oleh Mary Tomsic, ed. oleh Joy Damousi dan Kim Rubenstein (ANU Press, 2014).

² Tim Redaksi, "Menteri Bintang Optimis Keterwakilan Perempuan di Legislatif Capai 30 Persen pada Pemilu 2024," kemenppa.go.id, 27 Februari 2021, <https://www.kemenpppa.go.id/index.php/page/read/29/3076/menteri-bintang-optimis-keterwakilan-perempuan-di-legislatif-capai-30-persen-pada-pemilu-2024>.

³ YLBHI succeeded in choosing Asfinawati as the director for the period of 2017-2021 (www.ylbhi.or.id), and KontraS chose Fatia Maulidiyanti as the director for the period of 2020-2023 (www.kontras.org), National Indigenous Peoples Alliance (AMAN) chose Ruka Sombolinggi as the General Secretary from 2017 to 2022 (www.aman.or.id), the National Executive of WALHI chose Nur Hidayati as the leader of National Executive from 2016 to 2020 (www.walhi.or.id)

⁴ Crystal L. Hoyt dan Stefanie Simon, "Social Psychological Approaches to Women and Leadership Theory," dalam *Handbook of Research on Gender and Leadership*, ed. oleh Susan R. Madsen (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785363863.00013>.

⁵ Maria Medina-Vicent, "Women's Leadership: an Essentialist Concept," *Journal of Feminist, Gender and Women Studies*, no. 2 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.15366/jfgws2015.2.008>.

⁶ Sally A. Carless, "Gender Differences in Transformational Leadership: An Examination of Superior, Leader, and Subordinate Perspectives," *Sex Roles* 39, no. 11/12 (1998): 887-902, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018880706172>.

⁷ Triparna Vasavada, "A Cultural Feminist Perspective on Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations: A Case of Women Leaders in India," *Public Administration Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2012).

⁸ Violet Eudine Barribeau, "Constructing A Conceptual Framework for Developing Women's Transformational Leadership In The Caribbean," *Social and Economic Studies* 52, no. 4 (2003).

female gender. However, in reality, many female leaders included in the *female leadership* category also apply mainstream leadership characteristics with masculine character.⁹ Meanwhile, *feminine leadership* emphasizes more on feminine characteristics that are generally attributed to the female gender with main characteristics such as being participative, caring about the needs of staff, being more willing to listen, being open to feedback, and so on. This category is the opposite of the masculine style of leadership that has become the mainstream model.¹⁰ *Feminine leadership* frequently also contains the main elements of transformative leadership, so not infrequently, this type of leadership is associated with cultural feminism's way of thinking, which tries to fight the perspective that devalues feminine characters by giving positive assessments to women's feminine characters equivalent with masculine characters considered superior by the society.¹¹ Furthermore, the third category, *feminist transformative leadership*, is a leadership characteristic based on a belief that there are unequal power relations in society, and also in organizations, so that women lead with awareness for change in the organizations and society in a more equal and just direction.¹² Barriteau has developed a concept of transformative leadership, which focuses on how women leaders use power, for what purposes, and who benefits from it. This transformative leadership concept is generally reflective and carries out self-criticism by referring to the principles and values of democracy and justice. *Transformative feminist leadership* is not only limited to the leader's ability in management

and other technical aspects, but rather the ability to connect personal and domestic affairs to political affairs, the ability to identify sources of power, and also the ability to change values and principles at the level of ideas into real actions, developing approaches into decisions, and also negotiating diversity that shows interdependence and the need for sustainability.¹³

This article uses Jo Rowlands' empowerment theory to analyze the experiences and dynamics of women leaders from many literature and research related to women in socio-political movements and women's movements. According to Rowlands, the concept of empowerment is rooted in the concept of power. There are 4 (four) types of power according to Rowlands as follows: *power over* (controlling other people), *power to* (changing external conditions), *power with* (shared power), and *power from within* (power from self-awareness).¹⁴ These four concepts of power will be used to analyze how women leaders from the grassroots level organizations to the national level organizations experience transformation starting from themselves, which then encourages them to make efforts to influence others, then develop actions together, and finally influence to encourage greater change.

According to Liz Kelly (1992) in Rowlands, *power* is a concept referred to by the concept of empowerment. According to Rappaport (1984) quoted from Zimmerman, empowerment may occur at the individual, organizational, and community levels.¹⁵ A person is said to be empowered if he/she can maximize the opportunities available to him/her without obstacles,¹⁶ including opportunities to respond to his/her problems, his/her organization, and the environment. Thus, this article does not only analyzes how individual women leaders

⁹ Rocio Garcia-Retamero dan Esther López-Zafra, "Prejudice Against Women in Male-Congential Environments: Perceptions of Gender Role Congruity in Leadership," *Sex Roles* 55, no. 1-2 (6 Desember 2006): 51-61, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9068-1>.

¹⁰ Robert C. Jones dan Liam Swiss, "Gendered Leadership: The Effects of Female Development Agency Leaders on Foreign Aid Spending," *Sociological Forum* 29, no. 3 (September 2014): 571-86, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sof.12104>.

¹¹ Triparna Vasavada, "A Cultural Feminist Perspective," 476.

¹² Muchtar Yanti, ed., *Kepemimpinan dan Partisipasi Perempuan dalam Membangun Kebijakan Publik di Komunitas: Studi kasus di Jeneponto (Sulawesi Selatan) dan Lombok Tengah (Nusa Tenggara Barat)* (Jakarta: KAPAL Perempuan, 2010).

¹³ Violet Eudine Barriteau, "Constructing A Conceptual Framework," 16.

¹⁴ Joanna Rowlands, *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras* (Oxford: Oxfam ; Humanities Press International, 1997).

¹⁵ Marc A. Zimmerman, "Empowerment Theory," dalam *Handbook of Community Psychology*, ed. oleh Julian Rappaport dan Edward Seidman (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2000), 43-63.

¹⁶ Joanna Rowlands, *Questioning empowerment*, 13.

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transform, but also includes their responses to social situations as the context where they are located that allows their leadership to grow and develop, either in the organization or in greater society, and to have interactions and negotiations with culture and traditions in this empowerment effort.

This article is a study of the background that shapes the characters of women's leadership, organizations and their influence on the formation of women leaders, the agendas these women leaders have struggled with, and also the challenges they face and their flexibility in facing these challenges. This study uses a literature search method that specifically discusses the experiences of women leaders in socio-political movements and women's movements in Indonesia. Data collection has been carried out by reviewing a number of literature related to the topics of women leaders, transformative leadership, and women's leadership in socio-political movements and women's movements. Searching dozens of previous research results has found five research results reviewing several topics relevant to the scope of this literature study. A more in-depth search of the five research results has revealed several topics described in the following topics : (1) Social issues and gender issues as drivers for the emergence of women leaders, (2) Organizations as a tool of struggle, (3) Agenda-actions promoted: rooted in community problems, and (4) Challenges faced in the arena of struggle.

B. Social Issues and Gender Issues as Drivers for the Emergence of Women Leaders

The emergence of women leaders in the public sphere is generally a response to the social issues occurring in their environment, which requires alternative perspectives, approaches, and handling strategies, by using gender analysis. This is because the leaders, who are generally men, more frequently use a gender-neutral approach in solving the problems or responding to the community needs, which often does not solve the problems, but instead adds new problems because the solutions offered are only enjoyed by some community members and harm others. In this situation, it requires an

approach that is more responsive to gender and inclusive.

As seen in Rowlands' description of *power from within*, women's self-awareness will lead to respect and acceptance of others in equality. This awareness encourages reactions to injustice or oppression that occurs to people around them. Such energy has encouraged some female Seruni activists: Narsidah, Lili Purwani, and Sri Setiawati, to establish a women's migrant worker association in Banyumas, Central Java to build *power* to respond to the problems of migrant workers in their area.¹⁷

The high number of female migrant workers with cases has encouraged these three women to take action because they were also migrant workers in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. They also directly faced the problems of female migrant workers from preparation for departure until returning to Indonesia. Problems of migrant workers commonly occurring in the pre-departure period include uncertainty of departure, psychological and physical violence at shelter locations like unworthy housing and food, and inhumane treatment by Indonesian Migrant Worker (TKI) delivery service officers. including violence committed among the prospective migrant workers as a result of the pressure they experience from TKI delivery service providers. Furthermore, during work placements, some problems frequently faced include salaries that are not paid according to the agreement, documents that are withheld by the employer, no free rest time according to the agreement, unilateral termination of the employment relationship, and so on. New problems arise when they return to Indonesia, such as what job they should take to have an income so that they do not need to return to be high-risk foreign workers.¹⁸

In this case, the problem of migrant workers in Banyumas is like a circle that never breaks, even though many parties including the Regional

¹⁷ Elisabeth Dewi dan Sylvia Yazid, "Protecting Indonesia's Women Migrant Workers from The Grassroots: A Story of Paguyuban Seruni," *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 13, no. 1 (2 Januari 2017): 76-91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2016.1272812>.

¹⁸ Elisabeth Dewi dan Sylvia Yazid, 79-84.

Government have made efforts to overcome the problem of migrant workers, especially women. Therefore, the founders of Paguyuban Seruni are trying to make an alternative breakthrough on the issue of female migrant workers, especially in their area, by using a more in-depth approach to the factors making female migrant workers and the arising problematic, since pre-departure, during their time of work placements abroad, and when they return to their homeland. Analyzing problems with a perspective in favor of women as victims is an alternative way for Seruni to formulate their actions and advocacy agenda to overcome the problems of female migrant workers in Banyumas.

In a different context, interfaith women in Ambon mobilized after the outbreak of bloody conflict between Islamic and Christian groups in 1999-2004. Having resulted in tens of thousands of deaths, injuries, and refugees, this conflict has triggered the emergence of women's movement from the inter-faith groups who have been united in making efforts to reduce the direct and further impacts of this violent conflict. In the conflict lasting for almost 5 (five) years, women are not only victims, but some of them are also directly involved in the battlefield of the two warring groups. Baihajar Tualeka, one of the women leaders who was directly involved in the armed conflict at the beginning of the conflict who later became the peacemaker, experienced this violent conflict directly. Through an organization called LAPPAN, she held activities for trauma healing by providing counseling services for refugees in refugee barracks.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the Catholic, Christian, and Muslim inter-faith women not involved in the violent conflict at all were also united to carry out joint actions within the Concerned Women's Movement (GPP) to reach all groups at the basic level. The role of inter-faith women in GPP in responding to the impact of conflict has made a big contribution to the efforts to build peace in Maluku. In the end, their approach was highly appreciated by President Gusdur because it had broken through

boundaries that were difficult for many parties to penetrate to build peace. The approach they chose in responding to problems in the conflict areas is to work more at the grassroots level by carrying out various methods of promoting peace and anti-violence starting from peace rallies, public education of anti-violence movements, trainings, and action meetings among the conflicting religions/groups. They also provide counseling services and other psychological support for women and young victims of conflict. Their approaches, which target directly the perpetrators and victims, are different from the Baku Bae Maluku movement that carries out reconciliation actions at the national level and outside Ambon as the location of the conflict itself.²⁰

It is similar to the 6 (six) local women leaders in North Sulawesi who were researched by Missiyah. They took several actions in response to women's problems in their respective work areas. Before they intervened in their respective work areas, the problems of poor women in Manado City and in the rural areas of Minahasa and North Minahasa, which are the work areas of the six women, were always solved by a mainstream approach, in which there was no village or organizational response on women's issues according to their needs.

One of the women leaders in the coastal area in North Minahasa expressed the women's problems very clearly such as the difficulty in having access to reproductive health services at community health centers, providing clean water at home, getting social security, access to secondary to high education, and the issue of women's autonomy, especially choosing a partner of life or deciding not to get married. So far, this issue has never been included in the Village Government's analysis which is then programmed and budgeted in village funds. Viewing this situation, the women initiated several activities using alternative approaches that prioritize feminist analysis in looking at women's problems, so that they can formulate concrete actions by the problems and their causes.²¹

¹⁹ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "Religious Women for Peace and Reconciliation in Contemporary Indonesia," *International Journal on World Peace* 31, no. 1 (2014).

²⁰ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, 37.

²¹ Missiyah, "Tinjauan Feminisme Poskolonial tentang Kesadaran Kritis dan Otonomi Perempuan Indonesia :

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Ona, one of the local women leaders from the Bajo tribe living in Bajo Village, P. Nain in North Minahasa, then began to organize women in her village combined with a critical awareness process about gender issues and their rights as citizens. At the same time, she also began to advocate for access to basic services for women in her village so that their basic needs could be fulfilled, especially reproductive health services and education for their children. Apart from that, as an effort to strengthen the struggle for women's agenda in village development, she ran for office and was finally elected as a member of the Village Representative Body (BPD) in her village as the only woman.²² The approach to solving village women's problems offered by Ona as one of the local women leaders in Manado uses a different strategy because it is based on the perspective that women have different gender needs from that of men in the village, so the village development must also be arranged based on the needs of all village residents including women.

In the context of Indonesian history during the independence era, a study of the autobiographies of two female freedom fighters shows how they responded to situations that were appropriate to the context at that time. Suyatin Kartowiyono and Rasuna Said are examples of two women known in the national movement before and after the Indonesian independence. Suyatin Kartowiyono is a Javanese woman from a noble family who has the privilege of enjoying an education like her male siblings. The progress of her parent's way of thinking, in this case, her father, had encouraged Suyatin to become an autonomous woman who chose her way, including building important involvement in the Indonesian independence movement through various national movement organizations and the women's movement at that time.

The basic reason for Suyatin Kartowiyono's involvement in the independence movement according to her biography as quoted from Blackburn (2013) is that colonialism had a very

bad impact on the Indonesian people at that time, besides her protest against the implementation of Javanese culture that was very detrimental to women. Suyatin was lucky to have progressive parents who allowed her to receive a modern education, which at that time was a very rare opportunity for women.²³

With the same background of the problem, which is colonialism by Dutch colonialists in West Sumatra, Rasuna Said, who is currently one of the few women who have received the title of National Hero, joined in opposing colonialism. She is a Minangkabau woman who joined the ranks of the Indonesian independence struggle after seeing various problems that arose as a result of colonialism by the Dutch at that time. Coming from a middle-class family, Rasuna Said had the privilege of receiving an education from his hometown Maninjau to another city in Padang Panjang to attend the Diniyah School. The opportunity to receive an education opened up her opportunities to know the movement organizations, which in the end led her to be directly involved in several national movement organizations.²⁴

Still referring to White's research, her concern for social problems such as illiteracy became the basis for Rasuna Said's early actions in her hometown of Maninjau and Padang city when she migrated to develop her political career after leaving Diniyah School in 1931. Later, her involvement in several organizations such as Syarikat of People that had an affiliation with the communist party, and in the end becoming the central figure in the Permi organization (Indonesian Muslim Association) led her to see broader social and political issues. The lawsuit against Dutch colonial rule was the strongest reason for Rasuna Said's involvement in the independence movement. She was one of the women leaders in the Permi organization (which later became a political party in 1932).²⁵

Studi Kasus Pendidikan Feminis KAPAL Perempuan untuk Pemimpin Lokal di Manado, Sulawesi Utara" (Jakarta, Indonesia, Universitas Indonesia, 2005).

²² Missiyah, 151–54.

²³ Susan Blackburn, ed., *Suyatin Kartowiyono: A Nationalist Leader of the Indonesian Women's Movement* (NUS Press Pte Ltd, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1qv1g3>.

²⁴ Sally White, *Rasuna Said: Lioness of the Indonesian Independence Movement* (NUS Press Pte Ltd, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1qv1g3>.

²⁵ Sally White, 104–7.

From the description of the forms of women's responses in various contexts, as presented in several studies above the writer finds that the interaction between the individuals' awareness of themselves and others in equality with the problems around them has become a motivation for the emergence of efforts to mobilize collective strength to seek the greater change. Starting from the female migrant worker activists in Banyumas, the inter-faith women in Ambon, the local women leaders in Manado, and female fighters before the independence, all have the same pattern in terms of motivation for the emergence of their leadership qualities. All are related to their response to the social and political problems in their region. It is then responded by the relevant struggles in the context based on a belief that an approach that favors the victims and marginalized groups, which are generally women, is a strategic solution to reduce the social problems. In stages, the application of the concept of *power from within* becomes *power* and then transforms into *power to* explain how women leaders develop their self-capacity and then carry out empowerment in the organization and the greater environment.

C. Organization as A Tool of Struggle

Awareness of unequal power relations, whether due to gender, social class, ethnicity, religion, or political views, encourages women leaders to choose the most effective strategies and formulate their struggle agendas as a response to socio-political and gender issues that arise in society. Organization is the most effective vehicle used by these women leaders to realize their struggle agendas. By organizing, people with the same problems, needs, interests, and purposes work together to achieve their goals. All women leaders are not only the informal ones because of their capacity and capability, but they build and lead the organizations as a means of struggle. This topic arose in all the articles the writer has researched.

According to Rowlands, in the operational process of empowerment, 3 (three) aspects are interrelated with each other those are personal, connectedness, and collective. Personal build

self-awareness, confidence, and self-capacity, and eliminate the effects of the oppression they experience. Connectedness builds the ability to negotiate and influence the form of relationships and decisions within them. While collective is when individuals work together to achieve a greater impact than each individual can do alone.²⁶ In the writer's opinion, this framework explains well the processes that occur among the women leaders in all issues discussed in this literature review. Women's awareness, confidence, and self-capacity emerge in all contexts, either during the reform period or the struggle for independence, and also in all issues (migrant workers, conflict, poor rural women, illiteracy, and traditional constraints), and interact with aspects of connectedness and collective action they advocate and seek various changes that have a greater impact, such as in Rowlands empowerment model.

The establishment of Paguyuban Seruni is based on the problems of female migrant workers in Banyumas and the surrounding areas. Narsidah and her fellow founders of this organization realized that it is important for an organization to fight for female migrant workers to exist at the local level, even though their capacity to manage this organization was doubted by the local Manpower Office. However, with support from many parties, finally, the three women initiators of Seruni succeeded in declaring the founding of the Seruni community in 2008.²⁷

The same strategy was also conducted by the women in Ambon when they worked to respond to the consequences of the conflict occurring there. Several organizations were established by the women leaders as their vehicles to work more effectively in reaching women and children who are the victims of conflict. Baihajar Tualeka established an organization called LAPPAN as a space for her and her friends to carry out a joint action in the form of providing counseling for women and children from Muslim groups in the refugee camps and later established Genuine Ambassadors for Peace

²⁶ Joanna Rowlands, *Questioning empowerment*, 15.

²⁷ Elisabeth Dewi dan Sylvia Yazid, "Protecting Indonesia's Women Migrant," 82.

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(GAP) to promote peace.²⁸ Meanwhile, the inter-faith women gathering together to initiate cross-group peace efforts built an organization called the Concerned Women's Movement (GPP), which was at the beginning initiated by a Catholic Sister named Sr. Fransesco Moens, PBHK with her colleague Sr. Getruda Yamlean. These two women started the idea of bringing together influential women from warring groups, generally the middle and educated class. These two Catholic women started their efforts by contacting the Deputy Governor of Maluku, Paula Renyaan, to ask for support for their idea. With the support of the Deputy Governor, they could hold an initial meeting of the initiators consisting of 10 Christian women. Furthermore, with the agreement of the initiators, they involved the Muslim women's groups in their movement. After going through a series of meetings that were not easy because of the very high conflict tensions, the Concerned Women's Movement was finally formed with leaders representing various religious groups: Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic.²⁹

For women leaders in North Sulawesi, the organization is also quite effective answer in winning the arena of struggle for women because their power is consolidated and more effective by organizing. PILAR Perempuan is a women's organization that was recently established jointly by women leaders in North Sulawesi who were the subject of Missiyah's research.³⁰

From Missiyah's findings, at the beginning, each of them was involved in various organizations, either community organizations at the village level, local NGOs, or international NGOs operating there. However, they were aware of several challenges in the struggle for their agenda through these organizations, because the organization's vision and goals cannot fully accommodate their vision. Finally, after a long process, in 2002, they established a women's organization in Manado called PILAR Perempuan to become a vehicle for them to jointly fight for the rights of women

and children in the North Sulawesi region. The establishment of this organization was greatly influenced by the experience of the female founders grappling with themselves after attending the critical education stages of KAPAL Perempuan that opened their awareness of the oppression of women in various aspects of life. This reflective action process has encouraged them to come together to build an organization with the main vision of women having autonomy over themselves as an effort to support the emergence of women leaders to create a more pluralistic society.³¹

The same strategy was implemented by women leaders in the early era before Indonesia's independence day. In the 1920s-1950s, Suyatin Kartowiyono was active in establishing and getting involved in national movement organizations. In 1922, at the age of 19, Suyatin together with her friends established an organization called Putri Indonesia, the women's wing of the young Indonesian intellectual organization, Pemuda Indonesia. Previously, she had joined the Jong Java women's wing organization. Indonesian youth later became part of the declarations of the 1928 Youth Oath. She also became the initiator of the first women's congress in Yogyakarta in 1928, and after the independence, she established a women's organization called Perwari (Indonesian Women's Association). In its struggle, the organization is a very effective vehicle to struggle for big agendas for the advancement of women in particular and the Indonesian nation in general. As part of the nationalist movement, Suyatin was very aware that by being part of the organization, she could realize its mission.³²

Similar to the strategy of her colleague Suyatin Kartowiyono in Java, in almost the same period in West Sumatra Rasuna Said was also actively involved in the national movement organizations in her region. Starting from her involvement in Sarikat Rakyat, an organization affiliated with the communist party at that time, then Sarikat Islam Party (later PSII), and Permi, Rasuna Said

²⁸ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "Religious Women for Peace," 35.

²⁹ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, 37-38.

³⁰ Missiyah, "Tinjauan Feminisme Poskolonial," 157.

³¹ Missiyah, 157.

³² Susan Blackburn, *Suyatin Kartowiyono*, 78.

developed her political career and effectively used these movement organizations as vehicles to achieve her goals, fighting for the Dutch colonial rule at that time. As a result of her resistance through these movement organizations, her organization was prohibited from operating and she was even sent to the colonial prison. She established schools in Padang and Medan as a means to achieve the goals of her struggle. In the period of Japanese colonialism, Rasuna Said was also involved in several organizations to support the struggle for Indonesian independence. After the independence day, Rasuna Said also joined an organization founded by Bung Hatta, the National Defense Front (FPN), and Perwari in 1954, an organization previously founded by Suyatin Kartowiyono.³³

From the description of research related to how women use organizations as a tool of struggle, the writer understands that their collective actions are institutionalized in organizations as their vehicles to achieve their goals. Paguyuban Seruni, GPP and BPD, and PILAR Perempuan are quite effective vehicles in advocating for the birth of regional policies (Perda) in Banyumas, policies at the village level in the form of Village Regulations (Perdes) on Nain Island, and efforts to reconcile conflicts and build peace in Maluku. Even for the female freedom fighters, the PERWARI, PERMI, and other organizations were very effective in supporting them in fighting for the ideals of Indonesian independence and the aim of fighting for the dignity of women to be equal to men in marriage as an agenda that united many women's organizations in the early days of Indonesian independence.

D. Agenda Rooted in Community Issues

The third topic of this study is the struggle agendas brought by the women leaders in civil society organizations through the organizations they established or joined. The previous research shows that their action agenda is a response to social problems that exist in the community they

are located. Various approaches are used to bring these agendas into public issues so that they find greater attention from stakeholders, especially the Government, to respond to important issues in their region. Policy advocacy, community organizing, critical awareness, and skills training are strategies found in almost all contexts.

The Paguyuban Seruni organization in Banyumas has been specifically established to respond to the problem of migrant workers that frequently occurs in Central Java, especially in Banyumas and its surroundings. They started by mapping and analyzing the stakeholders related to the issue of female migrant workers. The results of this actor analysis guided the Seruni activists to start formulating an action agenda as follows: conducting case advocacy, conducting policy studies, political actions (conducting political contracts with candidates for office), and conducting policy advocacy starting from participating in discussions on policy drafts to the policy approval.³⁴ Thus, it can be seen that their important advocacy agenda is encouraging budget allocations for handling migrant workers and regional regulations related to them. One of the results of their advocacy is the budget allocation for migrant workers (2001) that previously did not exist in the Banyumas Regional Government budget. Likewise, they also succeeded in encouraging the Regional Regulation on the Protection of Migrant Workers in 2015 and a cross-sector program related to migrant workers at the Community Empowerment Agency (BPM).

Besides conducting advocacy and policy studies, Seruni is also developing vocational programs that aim at improving skills and developing alternative sources of income for the former female migrant workers after returning to Indonesia, such as making crafts and culinary training, and also increasing other knowledge. They also facilitate alternative education for children whose parents are migrant workers, for husbands whose wives work as migrant workers on how to raise children, and also provide internet in the migrant workers' homes. All of these programs are carried out with

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³⁴ Elisabeth Dewi dan Sylvia Yazid, "Protecting Indonesia's Women Migrant," 82.

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the support of various parties, including the local government.³⁵ These agendas emerged from the results of Seruni activists' analysis of real problems in the field, specifically using a gender lens so that they could see that there were gender issues in the migrant workers and the handling in Banyumas.

It is similar to the women leaders in Ambon who carried out the peace-building action agenda in the Ambon conflict area during the 1999-2004 period. Through GPP, these interfaith women leaders initiated efforts to build peace at the grassroots level with educational activities and the promotion of anti-violence, and also the peace dialogues. The "Stop Violence" campaign and the "Voice of Women" cultural action carried out by the GPP demanded the Government to carry out reconciliation and build peace and finally find the result, the Malino Peace Declaration.³⁶

As the writer explained in the previous section, the action agenda initiated by the inter-faith women in Ambon is an action agenda based on the real needs of the community in conflict situations by trying to prevent the parties potentially involved in the conflict situation as the actors, also doing the recovery efforts for those who have become the victims, especially women, and children. Therefore, besides carrying out extensive Stop Violence campaigns and non-violence movements and advocating for their family members not to get involved in the conflict, GPP also carries out various interventions to encourage the dialogue for peace and reconciliation with the Government and the parties in power, and also providing support counseling and assistance in healing from trauma for the victims including children who were active participants in the conflict. Storytelling, music activities, and creating art are effective ways to encourage children to get free from the groups involved in the conflict to build a reconciliation among them. For underprivileged children, GPP seeks financial support to buy school supplies.³⁷

With the enthusiasm to respond to the real needs of society, especially poor women groups as targets for organizational assistance, the women leaders who joined PILAR Perempuan developed an action agenda. Quoted from Missiyah, several activities carried out include a program of providing information and public education via Pro 2 FM radio related to several important issues in Minahasa and its surroundings at that time, such as the high number of people living with HIV/AIDS, violence against women, the issue of racism, human trafficking, and migrant worker issues.

Still from Missiyah's research, it was stated that at the basic level, the women leaders who joined PILAR Perempuan provided critical and literacy education for poor women in the coastal villages of North Minahasa in Nain Island. This critical and literacy education also contains the promotion of pluralism issue in its approach as a response to the separation of society on the island based on very strict religion, ethnicity, and culture. With a popular critical education approach, in which women from different ethnic groups are united in learning forums where previously they rarely sat in one forum, this education is also a space for interaction among groups and for establishing more open solidarity and acceptance among groups.

The research above also explains that critical education for women is focused on building awareness of their situation as women and how culture and religion have strongly influenced the power relations that exist in the society they live in every day. They were invited to look at women's everyday problems such as the difficulty of accessing health services, the difficulty of obtaining clean water, the difficulty of finding access to further education for children, including starting to criticize the myths they believe very strongly such as *Jamali* (abstinence) for men to take water in the *Jere* well (the old well in Nain village is the only source of clean water) because it will cause disaster. The results of this critical education were visible almost a year after it was started, with the appearance of men who were the husbands of the critical education participants taking water from the *Jere* well, also the establishment of intensive

³⁵ Elisabeth Dewi dan Sylvia Yazid, 83–86.

³⁶ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "Religious Women for Peace," 40.

³⁷ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, 38–41.

and open interactions among women with different ethnicities and religions, and the beginning of opening up women discuss problems in the household as a common issue.

In the early era of independence, taking suit against the strong patriarchal culture in marriage law drafts was the agenda of the two women leaders discussed in this study. Growing up with a strong critical attitude, Suyatin Kartowiyono, who started to criticize palace feudalism when she was a child by refusing to give respect to the King according to tradition, as an adult, criticized President Sukarno for practicing polygamy. She left an important position in President Sukarno's government in protest against polygamy. This critical attitude is also reflected in the efforts to encourage action agenda in the organization she led, Perwari, by developing various programs to improve the status of women, such as building schools and providing literacy education for women, building maternal and child health clinics, and providing legal aid for women. Suyatin was also involved since the beginning in proposing the Marriage Law Draft and oversaw it until it was successfully enacted in 1974.³⁸

Like her colleague Suyatin Kartowiyono, Rasuna Said, in her involvement in various movement organizations, also struggled for several agendas in response to social problems and women's issues occurring around her. The difference is, besides using the organizational vehicles in which she was involved and became the leader, she developed her schools to fight illiteracy and provide political education for women. This happened when she was in Padang City and saw the problem of the low status of women's literacy and political involvement due to restrictions of customs, and also when she moved to Medan after being released from prison. With Permi's support, in Padang City, she developed a wing organization for women and girls and built elementary schools throughout West Sumatra.³⁹ In Permi, Rasuna Said is a well-known propagandist and is one of three women who are leaders in this organization. Being freed from

prison by the Colonial Government, Rasuna Said continued her struggle agenda through different means by becoming a teacher at the school she established and becoming the editor of the Raya Journal (in Padang) then after moving to Medan she became the editor of the Menara Putri Journal in Medan. During that period, one of her public appearances was when she opposed the draft of the Marriage Law issued by the Colonial Government, which prohibited polygamy. Her argument is based on Islamic law, which is considered to more defend women by making the divorce process easier, compared to following legal regulations that burden women and men who are going to divorce by providing evidence and bringing their cases in court, which is considered to cause great embarrassment, so that there will be a lot of women with the status of being abandoned by their husbands without having an "official" divorce and having difficulty in remarrying or living in poverty. In most of her struggles, according to the historical records, movement organizations were mostly used to fight for the agenda of Indonesia's struggle for independence from Dutch colonial rule. This was further proven by the Indonesian Government by awarding her the title of National Hero in 1974 for her contribution to the national struggle.⁴⁰

By using Rowlands' empowerment framework, this section further emphasizes that by building organized collective power (*power with*) in organizations, women leaders can realize their dreams to encourage improvement efforts that have a greater impact. The strength and reach of the organization exceeding the capacity of individuals is a power that the women leaders use then they work together to build the power to produce greater change.

E. Challenges of Women Leaders in the Arena of Struggle

Findings from the previous research show that there has been significant progress in the number and transformational role of women in leadership, but the challenges due to gender roles

³⁸ Susan Blackburn, *Suyatin Kartowiyono*, 89.

³⁹ Sally White, *Rasuna Said*, 107.

⁴⁰ Sally White, 111–18.

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experienced by women in leadership positions in social movements and women's movements have not decreased significantly. Not infrequently, female leaders make more sacrifices to continue playing multiple roles, so that they can have the opportunity to work in the public sphere. The negotiation process, both with oneself, with family, organizations, and society becomes a special field of struggle for women leaders.

The activists of Paguyuban Seruni and other women who are migrant worker activists in Banyumas and Ambon are concrete examples of the struggle of women leaders in negotiating to face challenges. In an organizational context, limited resources, both human and financial, are a big challenge in responding to the problems. This limitation results in the limited reach of services both in carrying out advocacy and educating the public.⁴¹ In the interfaith women's groups in Ambon, the challenges come more from the negotiation process of building mutual trust among the target groups, as is common in the conflict areas.⁴²

However, behind the organizational issues above, there are dynamics of individual negotiations among the leaders within their families. In the case of migrant workers in Banyumas, according to Dewi and Yazid's research, many former female migrant workers wanted to become Seruni staff but found it difficult to realize their ideals because they "had to" prioritize their families, or return to work as migrant workers. In a patriarchal society, women are encouraged to prioritize the interests of their families, which means sacrificing their ideals and aspirations, so that they can be the ideal women. However, they are always in a double bind because, on the one hand, they have to be the ideal women, on the other hand, they have to respond to the economic needs so they can support their husbands in financing their family's needs.

A similar pattern was found among the women local leaders in North Sulawesi as researched by Missiyah (2005). The biggest challenges arise

from their family, especially regarding the issue of their bodily autonomy. The general standards and requirements for women to be considered normal in society include getting married and having children. So adult women who are not married or choose not to get married and/or do not have children will receive a bad stigma. Those who have no children are pressured by their families to have children immediately. Those who are not married yet are helped to look for a mate or are encouraged to get married immediately.⁴³ These pressures seem to question women's autonomy and how society accepts them. Facing this great challenge, these women are strengthened by their support group of friends. This process is in line with how empowerment works. When women begin to build their awareness and capacity, they will build relationships with other parties, and then take collective action. These three components continue to influence each other in the experience of women leaders managing challenges. The ability to carry out collective action outside will re-influence to increase women's self-awareness and capacity, and so on. Hence, the action-reflection is a process that is integrated into the empowerment process.

Meanwhile, the external challenges faced generally come from parties who feel disadvantaged by the activities of the organization they lead. For example, in the case of migrant workers, they will usually face the Indonesian Employment Service Providers (PJTKI).⁴⁴ In the context of women leaders working in conflict areas, the challenges they face are from the militant groups in conflict. In Maluku, when GPP activists held several meetings involving women and children from across groups, they would face the militias from each of the warring groups, who disliked the reconciliation efforts and tried to mess up the base-level reconciliation activities.⁴⁵ Challenges like this also occurred during the war for independence. When the women leaders voiced their aspirations, they were considered to be opposing the authority,

⁴¹ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "Religious Women for Peace," 44.

⁴² Elisabeth Dewi dan Sylvia Yazid, "Protecting Indonesia's Women Migrant," 83.

⁴³ Missiyah, "Tinjauan Feminisme Poskolonial," 134–37.

⁴⁴ Elisabeth Dewi dan Sylvia Yazid, "Protecting Indonesia's Women Migrant," 83–84.

⁴⁵ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "Religious Women for Peace," 42.

so their activities were banned/stopped and even led to imprisonment.⁴⁶

In the writer's opinion, by using Rowlands' empowerment framework, the challenges faced by the leaders from outside parties can be categorized as a form of negative power practices that are controlling and subduing (*power over*). PJTKI with its power over the migrant workers, the conflict provocateurs from warring groups, and the colonial authorities deliberately used their power to suppress the women leaders in carrying out their struggle. This is the reason why feminists oppose the power practices that subdue one person under another. As an effort to fight this negative power practice, collective action based on the spirit of making greater changes is one of the alternative strategies that women generally choose in this study.

F. Conclusion

From the study in many literature about several women leaders explored it can be concluded that all of these studies confirm as follows: (1) environmental background, especially family, community, and organization, contribute significantly to shaping the self-capacity of women leaders. Progressive parents, communities as support groups, and organizations that provide space for women leaders to actualize themselves have proven to be strong pillars and foundations for the formation of their leadership character, (2) Based on the foundation of self-capacity that has been formed, the women leaders take action as a response to the situations they experience and the problems that occur around them. At the same time, they continue to strengthen their capacity to build connections with other parties that have the same goals, so that their efforts can have a great impact. Personal experience, which for feminists is a source of knowledge, interacts with the experiences of other women in a patriarchal cultural context, making women leaders' resistance efforts not just a struggle for themselves, but to support the creation of justice and gender equality in society as a shared ideal. (3) The collective struggle of women leaders becomes

more impactful because they organize themselves into formal organizations, not just a group of people who move momentarily and incidentally. Formal organizations are quite effective vehicles/ means to achieve the struggle. Women leaders generally build their organizations, because the existing formal organizations are not open enough to accommodate their ideals of struggle that are less in line with the goals of mainstream organizations. (4) In developing their struggle agenda, the women leaders prioritize a comprehensive approach that responds to the root of the problem of women's oppression. This approach requires that as leaders they use their power to carry out transformation and empowerment, involvement/participation to build collective power (*power with*) to change for the better conditions. (5) In all periods and contexts, women leaders experience the same problem, the demand for double bind as a real form of the patriarchal concept that is most clearly applied to them. On the one hand, they are expected to continue to appear as the ideal women with all the attributes of the female gender, while on the other hand, they are required to appear firm as leaders, which in the end is still considered wrong because it goes against their nature as women who should be feminine.

Although the findings from the literature reviewed above have discussed the social, political, and cultural factors that are the background to the formation of the capacity of women leaders, this literature has not discussed yet how the individual struggles of these women leaders develop their capacity and family influence more sharply in the formation of their leadership. Likewise, the struggle between patterns of power relations and gender relations within the organizations and how they negotiate these situations has not been discussed yet in depth. For this reason, it requires further research on women leaders to find out more deeply about how their awareness and capacity are formed, how they manage power relations within the organization that at a certain level is a challenge for them, and how they manage these challenges with the power they have.

⁴⁶ Sally White, *Rasuna Said*, 107–11.

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