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## Women career advancement in public service: a study in Indonesia

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### Abstract

There are lots of facilities provided by the Indonesian public service to the Muslim women public servant to ease the effect of working on their families such as child care, job sharing, flexible hours, longer maternity leave and working from home. On top of that, policies available that support the women are treating them with the same trust and confidence, giving them the same assignment, paying them comparable salaries as men and not to relocate them for the sake of career advancement. It is found out that the factors that contribute to their career success were experience, education, seniority, interpersonal skills, ability in tackling superiors, commitment and dedication, support from superiors, colleagues and family and leadership styles. On the other hand, they believe that there are some factors that hinder them from career advancement which are preference for family, limited access to professional training, personality, lack of leadership charisma, lack of confidence, society expectation, gender bias, lack of qualification; power; prestigious developmental assignments and informal network, no mentoring system, low self esteem and not taken seriously. They believe that Muslim women are capable in leading organizations as physical inferiority compared to men is not a factor in their religion. In fact, they should be obeyed and respected as men as their religion does not prohibit them to be the leader of men in general. This is due to gender is not a factor but their capabilities are. Moreover, Indonesian Muslim women public servants are more concerned of their staff. However, family is more important than their career. Thus, these Indonesian public servants believe that Muslim women should assist their family financially if the husbands are unemployed or terminally ill. Majority agreed that they have good prospects for promotion in their departments. Hence, they would apply promotion in the next three to five years. In order to get the promotion, they are willing to devote their time to advance in their career such as to further studies, perform abilities, attend courses, develop network with management or change leadership style. Majority of them would also like to adjust their career aspiration if they are unsuccessful in their career advancement. However, only one of them would like to leave the organization.

*Keywords:* career advancement, women, public service, Muslim, Indonesia

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## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is located next to Malaysia and Singapore. Indonesia is the fourth largest population in the world. There are at least 200 ethnic groups with four considered to be the main ethnics which are Javanese (45%), Sudanese (14%), Madurese (7.5%) and Coastal Malays (7.5%). The Indonesian are majority Muslims (87%), Protestans (6%), Roman Catholics (3%), Hindus (2%) and Buddhist (1%). Agriculture is the main labor force in Indonesia (45%) and this follows by services (39%) and industry (16%). The official language is Indonesian, however; the most prevalent local language is Javanese (Levinson, 1998).

By the year of 2008, the Indonesian work force totaled up to 111.5 million whereby it had a lower female work force participation rate than its sister countries (45%). At that time, the unemployment rate of Indonesia was 8.4%, compared to 3.3% of Malaysia. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for women is higher (7.54%) than men (5.68%) showing that the labor force is still gender unequal (Asima, 1998).

The illiteracy rate among women (63%) is higher than men (29%) indicating gender inequity persists. At the higher education level (both state and private universities), girls constitute 47.6 percent of students. These statistics demonstrate that women and men are attaining relatively equal levels of education. Furthermore, this also points to a hopeful future in which the remaining gaps in the labour force and women's participation in public life can be reduced, as women gain equivalent qualifications to men (UNDP, 2010).

To add things worse, women basically receive lower wages than men for certain basic business and technical skills. The percentage of Indonesian women in management was 6.6% in 1985 which was the lowest in the ASEAN region. The number later increased to 17%. The data show that women managers are more likely to be in public than the private sector (Bennington & Habir, 2003).

However, women are still under-represented at senior official levels of government, with females constituting approximately only 9 percent of echelon 1 officials. Despite gaps in income between sexes in both the formal and informal sectors, an inadequate input and support for training and skills development, women contribute significantly to the growth of agricultural and rural-sector development (UNDP, 2009). Hence, this paper tries to investigate the notion of career advancement of Muslim women in Indonesian public service particularly the barriers and facilitators.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Career Advancement of Women in Indonesian Public Service

The Indonesian civil service tends to be a lifetime career, from graduation until retirement (at 56). Thus, civil servants rarely quit or get fired, and seldom move from one ministry to another. If an employee's performance is deemed satisfactory, their grade will advance once every four years. Rises in grade do not, however; guarantee promotions to better managerial positions.

Indonesian government rankings are complicated, being a mix of "Golongan" (entry levels based on education) and echelon (structural positions, the top three of which are managerial). There are four golongan in ascending order, I-IV, and five echelons in descending order, V-I whereby I being the highest one. One should be in golongan III or IV to have a chance of entering structural level of five echelons (Wright & Tellie, 1993).

Of the 3.9 million civil servants, 38% are women compared with 62% men (Anonymous). Most women in the civil service (around 1.9 million) are employed as teachers and nurses. From 1974 to 1984, the number of women participated in public service increases from 18 % to nearly 30 %. Later, it increased to 37.4% but only 5.5% are in positions of authority. Then, it increased to 7% and 11 % in 1984. On the other hand, only 3.7% hold the senior positions in the state enterprises including state banks (Bennington & Habir, 2003).

In 1974, most women were employed in the lowest of the four broad official classifications (Golongan I), in which only proof of elementary-school graduation is required. By 1984, the majority were found in Golongan II, which requires a college degree or equivalent. Women at Golongan III (postgraduate degree) had more than tripled from the 1974 level. This indicates progress has been made, although we cannot tell from Golongan figures if the progress is into managerial ranks (Wright & Tellie, 1993).

Indonesian women also make up less than 1% of officials with decision-making authority in local government offices. However, in 2005, for the first time, a woman was appointed as Indonesia’s Minister of Finance. This is in contrast to the principal of Islam as Islam should not be a barrier to women’s advancement in Indonesia and Muslim women could pursue an academic or professional career after marriage. Thus, women are not restricted to private life but instead should have more access to power.

Promotions in local government are determined by all civil servants to undergo a standard performance assessment which is known as DP3 every year. This procedure was created during the Suharto regime and emphasizes, among other things, loyalty to Pancasila (the official ideology of the state) and the Constitution.

The MOF allows women to seek re-assignment to accompany their husbands when they are assigned to another city. While this suggests flexibility towards women’s careers, the ‘beneficiaries’ must accept demotion to a sub-managerial level in their new posting. This flexibility is not offered to men, which means that it is invariably the women who are required to accept demotion in order to accompany their husbands.

Indonesian women tend to turn down promotions which are attached to remote postings, preferring to stay in Jakarta, or at least Java. Since they cannot be promoted without serving in remote areas, their grade advances while their position remains low. The result is that the Jakarta office is filled with women in advanced grades but low positions. It is assumed that they are not a family’s main breadwinner and therefore, less in need of unofficial payments. Being denied these opportunities can then restrict their future careers. Majority of women who are promoted are widowed or divorced as they can be relocated throughout Indonesia. This shows that it remains difficult for women with families to advance. On the other hand, women seek to be reassigned to accompany their husbands when they are assigned to another city.

In five ministries i.e. Communication and Information, Transportation, Public Works, Marine and Fisheries, and Religious Affairs, there are no women working in the first echelon (Paramita, 2007). At the second echelon of these ministries, the percentage of women holding the posts ranges from 5.9 percent and 27 percent, and in the third echelon, the percentage ranges from 14.3 percent to 21.2 percent. There are no women working in the first echelon in the state ministries and ministry-level agencies in Indonesia. The percentage of women working in the second echelon ranges from 4.2 to 23.3 percent. (UNDP, 2010).

In overall, there is only 9 percent women are working at the top echelons of civil service, which forms 0.5 percent of the total female force. The women civil servants differ from the male colleagues in several aspects: they are younger, more likely to be single, and are more highly educated. Please refer to table 1 for further details.

Table 1. Women in the Civil Service by Echelon (2009)

| <b>Institution/Rank</b> | <b>Women (%)</b> | <b>Men (%)</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| First Echelons          | 8.72             | 91.28          |
| Second Echelons         | 44.98            | 55.02          |
| Third Echelons          | 46.78            | 53.22          |
| Fourth Echelons         | 48.07            | 51.93          |

Source: UNDP, 2010

*2.2 Career Advancement of Muslim Women*

Allah regards men and women as equal. The Qur'an, Al-Hujuraat 49:13 is often quoted to support this view that humankind derives from an equal pairing of men and women. "Allah favors not man, or woman, but whoever is most pious". Thus, there is no discrimination among men and women in terms of career advancement especially in the public service. However, Muslim women could not be the head of a country as this position can only be upheld by men (Sharifah Hayaati & Ilhaamie, 2009).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Goal

In this survey, we aim to examine the barriers and facilitators of Indonesian Muslim women public servants. Based on the literature review, a questionnaire was developed and later was tested on five women public managers (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The final instrument contains 10 sections in 16 pages.

#### 3.2 Sample and Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed to three ministries in Jakarta, West Java and three ministries in Aceh, Sumatera by using convenience sampling technique. This technique was used as we just would like to find the descriptive statistics of the data. Moreover, it is very hard to collect data considering that we are foreigners. This matter was observed while we were conducting the pre-test. These three ministries were chosen by based on the assumption that career advancement was harder for Muslim women due to the ministries' masculine characteristics (eg. Ministry of International Trade). Meanwhile, Java and Sumatera specifically Jakarta and Aceh were chosen due to the fact that they are the main two places which contain high population of Muslim in Indonesia.

#### 3.1. Analysis and Results

About 147 completed questionnaire were collected, however; unfortunately only 33 were useable. This amounted to 22.45% rate of response.

Majority of the respondents are Acehnese (63.6%) aging from 46 to 58 years old (36.4%), married (72.7%) for 16 to 20 years (36.4%) with one to five children (63.6%). Their priority is their family (51.5%) and therefore, they are the primary provider of their family (69.7%). These Muslim women possess bachelor degree (53.8%) and thus, they hold professional and managerial post (84.8%) for one to five years (69.7%) and earn from 3,100,000 to 4 million rupiah (33.3%) with salary grade of IV/b (15.5%). Their parents possess tertiary education (54.5% & 42.4% respectively), however; their mothers are not working (72.7%). On the other hand, their fathers work in the private sector (18.2%). Please refer to table 2 for further details.

Table 2. Respondents' Profile

| Factors            | Majority                   | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Ethnic             | Aceh                       | 63.6           |
| Age                | 46-58 years old            | 36.4           |
| Marital Status     | Married                    | 72.7           |
| Length of Marriage | 16-20 years                | 36.4           |
| Qualification      | Bachelor Degree            | 53.8           |
| Basic Salary       | 3,100,000-4,000,000 Rupiah | 33.3           |
| Salary Grade       | IV/b                       | 15.5           |
| Position           | Professional & Managerial  | 84.8           |
| Tenure             | 1-5 years                  | 69.7           |
| No. of Children    | 1-5                        | 63.6           |

|                                 |             |      |
|---------------------------------|-------------|------|
| Total Hours of Household Duties | 6-10 hours  | 39.4 |
| First Priority                  | Family      | 51.5 |
| Primary Provider                | Yes         | 69.7 |
| Fathers' Highest Education      | Tertiary    | 54.5 |
| Mothers' Highest Education      | Tertiary    | 42.4 |
| Fathers' Occupation             | Private     | 18.2 |
| Mothers' Occupation             | Not Working | 72.7 |

These women spent eight hours (51.5%) at work and they sometimes bring work back home (57.6%). Majority of them prefer to work with anybody be it women or men as their boss (63.6%). Thus, they are satisfied with their position (60.6%), salary (51.5%) and power (72.7%). Please refer to table 3 for further details.

Table 3. Attitudes Toward Work

| Items                 | Majority  | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Hours Spent at Work   | 8 Hours   | 51.5           |
| Bring Work Back Home  | Sometimes | 57.6           |
| Position Satisfaction | Yes       | 60.6           |
| Salary Satisfaction   | Yes       | 51.5           |
| Power Satisfaction    | Yes       | 72.7           |

These women believed that some facilities are provided by their employer to ease the conflict of working with their families. Some of the facilities are child care (60.6%), job sharing (54.5%), flexible hours (45.5%), longer maternity leave (36.4%) and working from home (27.3%). Please refer to table 4 for further details.

Table 4. Current Facilities For Career Women

| Recommendations        | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Child Care             | 20        | 60.6           |
| Job Sharing            | 18        | 54.5           |
| Flexible Hours         | 15        | 45.5           |
| Longer Maternity Leave | 12        | 36.4           |
| Work from home         | 9         | 27.3           |

Regarding the policies on career advancement, these women believe that women are treated with the same trust and confidence (51.2%), given the same assignments as men (48.5%), the rules treat them equally as men (45.5%), they are paid comparable salaries (36.4%) and are not asked to relocate geographically (30.3%). Please refer to table 5 for further details.

Table 5. Policies on Career Advancement

| Attitudes  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| Women are treated with the same trust & confidence | 17        | 51.2           |
| Women are given the same assignments as men        | 16        | 48.5           |
| The rules treat men & women                        | 15        | 45.5           |

|  |    |      |
|--|----|------|
| equally  |    |      |
| Women are paid comparable salaries             | 12 | 36.4 |
| Women are not asked to relocate geographically | 10 | 30.3 |

These women agreed that the factors that contribute to their career success were experience (39.4%), gender (36.4%), education (33.3%), seniority (30.3%), interpersonal skills and ability in tackling boss (27.3%), commitment and dedication (24.2%), support from boss, colleagues and family (24.2 %) and leadership styles (21.2%). Please refer to table 6 for further details.

Table 6. Critical Success Factors

| <b>Factors</b>                 | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Experience                     | 13               | 39.4                  |
| Gender                         | 12               | 36.4                  |
| Education                      | 11               | 33.3                  |
| Seniority                      | 10               | 30.3                  |
| Interpersonal Skills           | 9                | 27.3                  |
| Ability in Tackling Boss       | 9                | 27.3                  |
| Commitment & Dedication        | 8                | 24.2                  |
| Support from Boss & Colleagues | 8                | 24.2                  |
| Support from Family            | 8                | 24.2                  |
| Leadership Style               | 7                | 21.2                  |

On the other hand, they believe that there are some factors that hinder them from career advancement which are preference for family (57.6%), limited access to professional training and personality (51.5%), lack of leadership charisma (48.5%), lack of confidence (45.5%), society expectation and gender bias (42.4%), lack of qualification, power, experience and mentoring system (39.4%), low self esteem (36.4%), lack of informal network and not being taken seriously (30.3%) and lack of prestigious developmental assignments (27.3%). Please refer to table 7 for further details.

Table 7. Barriers of Career Advancement

| <b>Items</b>                            | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|
| Preference For Family                   | 19               | 57.6                  |
| Limited Access to Professional Training | 17               | 51.5                  |
| Personality                             | 17               | 51.5                  |
| Lack of Leadership Charisma             | 16               | 48.5                  |
| Lack of Confidence                      | 15               | 45.5                  |
| Society Expectation                     | 14               | 42.4                  |
| Gender Bias                             | 14               | 42.4                  |
| Lack of Qualification                   | 13               | 39.4                  |
| Insufficient Experience                 | 13               | 39.4                  |
| Lack of Power                           | 13               | 39.4                  |
| No Mentoring System                     | 13               | 39.4                  |
| Low Self Esteem                         | 12               | 36.4                  |
| Lack of Informal Network                | 10               | 30.3                  |
| Not Being Taken Seriously               | 10               | 30.3                  |

|   |   |      |
|---|---|------|
| Lack of Prestigious Developmental Assignments | 9 | 27.3 |
|---|---|------|

Regarding to their attitude on career advancement, they believe that Muslim women are capable in leading organizations (60.6%) as physical inferiority compared to men is not a factor in their religion (54.5%). They should be obeyed and respected as men (51.5%) as their religion does not prohibit them to be the leader of the men (42.4%). This is due to gender is not a factor (33.3%) to be the leader but their capabilities are. Moreover, Muslim Indonesian female civil servants are more concerned of their staff (45.5%).

Family is more important than their career (60.6%), thus; these Indonesian Muslim civil servants believe that Muslim women should assist their family if the husbands are unemployed or terminally ill (42.4%). Please refer to table 8 for further details.

Table 8. Career Advancement of Muslim Women

| Items  | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Muslim women are capable in leading organizations    | 20        | 60.6       |
| Physical inferiority compared to men is not a factor | 18        | 54.5       |
| Muslim women leaders should be obeyed as men         | 17        | 51.5       |
| Muslim women leaders should be respected as men      | 17        | 51.5       |
| Muslim women can be leaders to men                   | 14        | 42.4       |
| Gender is not a factor                               | 11        | 33.3       |

Majority agreed that they have good prospects for promotion in their departments (63.6%). Thus, they would apply promotion in the next three to five years in their department (69.7% & 21.2% respectively). In order to get the promotion, they are willing to devote their time to advance in their career (45.5%) such as to further studies and perform abilities (30.3%), attend courses (27.3%), develop network with management (24.2%) or change leadership style (18.2%). Majority of them also would like to adjust their career aspiration if they are unsuccessful in their career advancement (48.5%). However, only one of them would like to leave the organization (3.8%). Please refer to table 9 for further details.

Table 9. Future Plans

| Items   | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Apply promotion in next 3-5 years                 | 23        | 69.7       |
| Adjust career aspiration                          | 16        | 48.5       |
| Devote time to advance career                     | 15        | 45.5       |
| Further Studies                                   | 10        | 30.3       |
| Perform Abilities                                 | 10        | 30.3       |
| Attend Courses                                    | 9         | 27.3       |
| Develop Network with Management                   | 8         | 24.2       |
| Seek Position At A Higher Level in the Department | 7         | 21.2       |
| Change Leadership Style                           | 6         | 18.2       |
| Leave the organization                            | 1         | 3.8        |

#### 4. Conclusion And Recommendations

The Indonesian Public Service provides some facilities to Muslim women to ease the conflict of working towards their families such as child care, job sharing, flexible hours, longer maternity leave and they could work from home. On the other hand, policies available are treating women with the same trust and confidence, giving them the same assignments; the rules treat them equally; paying them comparable salaries as men and are not asked to relocate geographically for the sake of career advancement. The factors that contribute to their career success were experience, education, seniority, interpersonal skills, ability in tackling boss, commitment and dedication, support from boss, colleagues and family and leadership styles.

On the other hand, they believe that there are some factors that hinder them from career advancement which are preference for family, limited access to professional training, personality, lack of leadership charisma, lack of confidence, society expectation, gender bias, lack of qualification, power, prestigious developmental assignments and informal network, no mentoring system, low self esteem and not being taken seriously.

They believe that Muslim women are capable in leading organizations as physical inferiority compared to men is not a factor in their religion. In fact, they should be obeyed and respected as men as their religion does not prohibit them to be the leader of the men. This is due to gender is not a factor to be the leader but their capabilities are. Moreover, Muslim Indonesian female civil servants are more concerned of their staff. However, family is more important than their career, thus; these Indonesian Muslim civil servants believe that Muslim women should assist their family if the husbands are unemployed or terminally ill.

Majority agreed that they have good prospects for promotion in their departments. Thus, they would apply promotion in the next three to five years in their department. In order to get the promotion, they are willing to devote their time to advance in their career such as to further studies and perform abilities, attend courses, develop network with management or change leadership style. Majority of them also would like to adjust their career aspiration if they are unsuccessful in their career advancement. However, only one of them would like to leave the organization. Hence, there is only a small number of them that would leave their organizations if they are unsuccessful in their career advancement. This definitely supports their satisfaction of their position, grade and salary.

Indeed, the Indonesian public service has taken all measures to ensure that Muslim women are equally represented in decision making levels. At the higher education level (both state and private universities), girls constitute 47.6 percent of students. These statistics demonstrate that women and men are attaining relatively equal levels of education, and this points to a hopeful future in which the remaining gaps in the labour force and women's participation in public life can be decreased, as women gain equivalent qualifications to men.

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