
GENDER INEQUALITY IN WOMEN LEADERSHIP OF PUBLIC SECTOR INSTITUTIONS IN PAPUA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The gender inequality still exists in the workplace, where women face barriers to improving a higher career path. One of the barriers comes from the institutional environment in the form of gender gap, which make it increasingly difficult for women to reach leadership position. Gender stereotypes halt women's career advancement, resulting in a glass ceiling phenomena. This study examines the effect of gender inequalities on career satisfaction towards Papuan women leadership during their employment among public institutions. Descriptive qualitative approach was used; the participants selected were female leaders in public institution including education, government, health, and libraries sector. Pattern across the study showed that women remain underrepresented in upper-level management position because they feel unfairly treated by the institution. Barriers generally outweigh opportunities for career advancement; these including glass ceiling phenomena in the workplace by asserting that men make better leaders. Consequently, more women are rising into leadership roles at all levels, including functional public service positions. Given these results, leaders need to build high quality relationship with employer and employee to prevent a glass ceiling in the workplace, resulting in promoting gender equity more broadly within the public whom they serve

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality draws attention when men (or women) benefit from a disproportionately greater share of opportunities and increased violence due to their gender. Yet, gender inequality persists in all spheres of society's social and economic life, especially in developing nations. Even in those countries that have been at the forefront of modern equality policy, women and girls continue to experience underrepresented in leadership positions across various industries and sectors (Eagly & Carli, 2007). There has been progress in policy making to support gender equality in recent years, for instance the United Nations declared the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the International community has been moving toward sustainable development. In particular, SDG 5 "ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment" that is more advanced. To achieve this goal, women and female participation in leadership has continued to gain traction in the 21st century, as set out in the public institution employment.

Public institution reflect more in advancing and improving service quality satisfaction with the development of public services by community needs and carrying out administrative activities correctly. Apart from that, in improving the quality of public services within the institution, it is deemed necessary to influence its members behave with each other, the setting of relationship between superior and subordinates, the atmosphere surrounding to fulfil the capacity of human resources (HR) in services. Bearing in mind that HR as a service apparatus has a strategic role as a driver of bureaucratic reform. In this case, what needs to be understood is the important role of leadership quality.

Employee's leadership in building institution by men and women has its own strength and weaknesses, so to be an ideal leader has no gender boundaries. Yet, (Mashele & Alagided, 2022) stated that men are superior to women and that women are supposed to assist the men and not be at the forefront. Even the Papuan traditional culture has always believed in male superiority, with women being relegated to the kitchen and child-rearing duties.

Significant progress has been realised in various institution and different sectors, including the political landscape, as the number of women in leadership positions is increasing. Further, as (Fitriani et al., 2022) highlighted that the participation of Papuan women in politics is very small to date, even after given a government's policy of quota 30% towards the position of women in the DPR RI. However, the participation in the Provincial DPRD only touched 7.8%. This shows that the world is improving in terms of their perception of women, considering in some cultures in Papua, women were not and are still not allowed to attend school. Despite this benefit, women in leadership roles often face unique challenges, such as gender inequality and stereotype threat, which can impact their confidence and career advancement. Research by (Wekke & Ibrahim, 2019) indicates that Papuan women who have managed to occupy top leadership are reportedly encountering balancing challenges, being disrespected and undermines, as well as being sexually harassed among others. These challenges have resulted in some women failing to reach their potential, while others end up preferring lower-level positions that have less attention and responsibilities.

In order to address these identified gaps and to support participation of women in leadership, this study aims to explore the impacting factors of how gender inequality occurred in the workplace that female leaders face in their career advancement in employment institution, and to analyse the causes of gender-related barriers that Papuan women experience in the workplace.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilizes a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the research aim (Ayton, 2023; Furidha, 2023). Qualitative Description developed by (Sandelowski, 2000) and it focuses as a methodological approach that provided comprehensive summary of phenomena or experiences or events about what is experiences by research subjects. The data needed in the study are primary data and secondary data. In this study the author collected data by interviewing the object under study. In analysing research data, it refers to several stages consisting of; data reduction, data display, at the final stage is drawing conclusions or verification, conclusion drawing/verification.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Understanding the Gender Inequality in the workplace

Initially, the environment of institution is often based on traditional gender roles, limiting leadership approach to one gender. Indeed, in many public institutions, the term "gender" and its implications appears to have become a political movement to make women and men in the understanding of social behaviour. Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment in which men usually have much power and being dominated compared to women in many different forms depending on the economic structure and social organization within society. The implications can be observed in outcomes like health, education and economic, personal autonomy and political participation. Consequently, women are more likely experienced gender issues at every level in institution, from being accepted to entry-level positions to senior managerial to leaving an institution (Jayachandran, 2015).

Women are still struggling to maintain their position in the career advancement within public institutions, as they may cast the role of men that traditionally uphold the responsibility into the perceived 'masculine' world of managerialism and leadership. Most striking of all when analysing pay data between men and women, who often valued based on their capacities and other opportunities. A number of studies have explained the phenomenon of the income gender inequality. (Ulfa et al., 2020) describes that women received lower income than men in all provinces, and as many as 16 provinces have inequality above the average income gap of Indonesia. Meanwhile, Papua Province has the highest income inequality in terms of average values from 2010 to 2018. Differences in pay between men and women capture differences along many possible dimensions, including worker education, experience, and participation. There is a tendency for conditions to be more favourable for men in employment sector that impacting women's ability to access various opportunities that can increase equitable economic development.

Education is the main capital for human to prosper, regardless of socio-economic background, gender and race. (Todaro & Smith, 2011) argued that young women are less educated when compared to men in almost all developing countries. According to the data from (BPS Statistics Indonesia, 2024), the population aged 10 years and over who are illiterate is 2.32% form men and 4.92 % for women. So it can be concluded that the gender gap in education between women and men in Indonesia in 2020 is 2.6 years. In Papua, education level is very poor, especially regarding improvement of human resources and economic growth development. Education has always been a central issue, even though the implementation of the Special Autonomy Law in West Papua formed in 2001, yet these provinces remain poor to support the education level. So, when Papuan women joined public services, they struggle to



make significant progress toward equality with men at all levels of education (Mollet, 2007). The low level of education of women causes women's human capital to be low, as it artificially reduces the pool of talent from which employers can draw, thereby reducing the average ability of the workforce. Such distortion affects women to be promoted in certain level of institutional employment. The gap between a structural shift from the germination of different gender ideas and practices around men and women has narrowed to the point of vanishing. Thus, indigenous women in Papua are feeling discriminated other than men in workplace.

Gender differences in leadership perspective

While women make up nearly half the workforce globally, they play a critical role in advancing international agenda for gender equality. They can construct, inspire, and enable institutions to take action in all aspects of sustainable development. For instance the (Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development, 2022) stated there would be positive results of women's contribution towards workplace (e.g. wise decision-making, financial, organizational culture, and relational reasons, among others), (Madsen, 2015) highlights that by recruiting more women into high-level managerial position in the workplace in universities higher hierarchies can be supporting them to remain long term. This view is prevalent as in recent findings (Offermann & Foley, 2020) where it was found that women in leadership positions in many industries performed as well as their male counterparts. In public institutions of society of West Papua (Wekke & Ibrahim, 2019) explored women entering the professional setting across politic and education. The situation in Merauke, South Papua navigate a leadership study of women in education, directed at addressing gender inequalities often resulted in a disconnect between institutional values and policies (Fitriani & Tjilen, 2019).

Despite the expansion demand for gender diversity's in careers advancement, gender inequality towards women leadership remains persistent. As a result, women remain in a minority and their representation in institution seem to be decreasing, the number of women still struggle to rise to leadership position. This existence phenomena called the glass ceiling, which is a metaphor considered by women as substandard as men and to describe their obstacles in receiving equal opportunities, education, or prospects along their career paths. There are various causes of glass ceiling including societal prejudice, bias, discrimination, and lack of mentoring and networking (Chrisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Hendrarti et al., 2024). While the presence of women in the public institutional is growing, there does not appear to be escalates in leadership position.

Leadership in the public sphere is primarily associated with the gender stereotyping and gender role perceptions that continue to halt women seeking senior management level. (Evans & Maley, 2020) conducted research on senior executives and stated a number of challenges; both genders are implemented to their roles; however women's skill and experiences were not evaluated properly in the same way as men. In many communities in Papua, there is a common belief that women should be at home and they do not need to have jobs and develop their careers. If females do not adhere to such beliefs, they will always feel that starting up a family causes glass ceiling. This belief can hinder women to enter workplace across different industries. Moreover, the unconscious bias against women and the belief that women must deal with family issues may also have an impact on a women's overall performance and institutional success. A survey conducted by (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2023) indicates 47,61% of Papuan women participation in the workforce, which is lower than male participation in workforce at 63,97%. These results suggest that gender plays role in reaching leadership potential in work environments. Male-dominated culture mainly perceives women's priority as family and child. Thus, understanding major effect of gender disparity on leadership presumed to be significant throughout their career path, as the process for women to take part in working life, and both historically and economically, entering into management position in terms of leadership characteristics has been even more difficult.

Women Leadership

The obvious changes that characterised women leadership within top management are strongly oriented by economic and social dynamics. Examining the coherence between effective leadership and the career success of women leaders in public institutional providing sense of characteristics in pursuing overall performance. The persistence of gender-specific-leadership roles is a process in the choices leaders make to explore as a common good or in the public sphere. (Aikman et al., 2011) who recently provided the differences in leadership style between men and women, thus this framework can contribute significantly to ensure fairness and justice for all genders. Generally women are underrepresented globally in leadership position especially in the higher public institutions such as higher education, political, hospitals, libraries, or other corporates ones. However, in research conducted by (Ginting et al., 2022) examined indigenous Papuan women's participation to have more control in government policy than men. With that designation it can be concluded that, women who are appointed to the top management are outnumbered by then men in leadership. Similarly, in other sector, for instance women participation in political sector encourage them to undertake leader duties that affecting other women's rights to education, employment, decision making, and independent thought (Fitriani, 2022).

Yet, to address gender inequality in women leadership to be a sustain process, evaluation may need to be implemented. As there as a dearth of leadership development frameworks specifically for women (Shava & Chasokela, 2020) and management journal rarely publish leadership studies of indigenous Papuan women with women-only participants. Our knowledge about the impact of women's leadership program is limited and fragmented, as is our current understanding. Promoting gender equality in leadership roles is recommended because it typically focusing on subjective cultural, religious, and traditional criteria faced by women.

4. CONCLUSION

Understanding institutional systems is critical for the advancement of research on leadership in varying context. If academics, policy makers, and practitioners do not adequately understands which societal-level forces impede or facilitate gender inequality in women's leadership, we cannot craft programs and policies to address these issues. Therefore, researchers studying gender inequality in women leadership have recommended conducting more studies to explore barriers in regard different tribes across Papua. In this respect, exploring personal or individual, institutional, economy and social barriers faced by women leaders in public sectors, as it would give us more updated information regarding these challenges.

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