

Kartini and Transformational Leadership: An Overview of Women's Representation in Indonesia

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Abstract

Kartini is an icon of the women's rights movement in Indonesia, advocating for women's emancipation despite patriarchal constraints. This study explores the values of Kartini's advocacy and legacy through the lens of transformational leadership theory. It further provides an overview of the representation of women in Indonesia in leadership positions in politics, education, and business. This study employed a qualitative approach, and the data was collected using a literature study. This study argues that Kartini's ideas regarding gender equality and her efforts to achieve them, which have served as a source of inspiration for Indonesians throughout generations, align with the values of transformational leadership. In relation to the current representation of women, the study finds that, despite the increase of women in leadership positions in politics, translating representation into policy outcomes favouring women remains challenging. In education, women dominate the teaching workforce. However, their ascent to leadership roles, especially in higher education, remains limited. Similarly, in business, although women are increasingly represented in senior management, gender diversity at the highest levels is a challenge.

Keywords

Kartini, Transformational Leadership, Women's Representation, Gender Equality, Education

1. Introduction

Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country, with a razor-thin divide between male and female populations. However, this does not ensure that men and women have equal opportunities because women's representation in lead-

ership and decision-making in many sectors lags behind men's (Ruhaini & Edwards, 2010). The struggle for gender equality has been going on for more than a hundred years, dating back to the Dutch colonisation of Indonesia. In *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*, Susan Blackburn (2004) argues that European education, however, had a significant influence on the country's feminist movement. One explanation for this is that, in the late 19th century, the progressives started to doubt the endless exploitation of the colony and urged the Dutch colonial government to make an effort to improve and promote the welfare of the Indonesian people. This call for change originated, in part, from the publication of correspondences between Raden Adjeng (R.A.) Kartini and her circle, a few Dutch women and men who could be referred to as the supporters of "colonial reform" (Coté, 2014: p. 178). In these letters, she expressed her vision for the development of her society with both sincerity and misery. In response to the insistence, the *Ethische Politiek*, known as the Ethical Policy, was carried out, signifying an unprecedented commitment of the Dutch colonial government to the progress of Indonesia as opposed to perceiving the colony merely as possessions (Gouda, 1995; Blackburn, 2004). Therefore, the Ethical Policy validated the assertion that the Netherlands owed the colony an ethical responsibility. Moreover, it was a milestone in the recognition of the needs of the native Indonesians, specifically in terms of education for women.

Within the Indonesian context, the debate about gender equality is becoming more intense in April when people commemorate the birth of Kartini. It is called *Hari Kartini* or Kartini Day. Among the numerous figures who advocated for women's emancipation in the country's history, she is almost certainly the figure whose movements and writings have been studied worldwide (Taylor, 1976; Blackburn, 2004; Connell, 2010; Bijl & Chin, 2020; Robinson, 2020). These studies provide fascinating insights into Kartini and the interconnected topics that are fundamental to her feminist discourse and aspirations. Despite this multiplicity, there is a lack of study concerning her leadership legacy, specifically when examined from the lens of transformational leadership theory.

The main objectives of this study are to examine the extent to which Kartini's leadership embodies transformational values and to provide an overview of women's representation in three areas, namely in politics, education, and business, over the past two decades. This study employs a literature review as a method to address specific research gaps from the previous research findings and other relevant resources. It is a multifaceted procedure that involves summarising, analysing, evaluating, and synthesising a range of published and unpublished documents from diverse sources on a particular subject (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010, as cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012: p. 2). The overall structure of this study is organised in the following way. After this introduction, the section presents relevant theories about transformational leadership. Background information on Kartini and her work on women's emancipation prior to Indonesia's independence is presented in the next section. The narrative of Kartini and

her leadership is critical to write because the debate regarding women and leadership cannot be divorced from the breakthroughs she made during her lifetime. The fourth section elaborates on the representation of women in leadership roles in three different areas, namely politics, education, and business. The final section serves as a conclusion.

2. Transformational Leadership

In *An Integrative Definition of Leadership*, [Winston and Patterson \(2006\)](#) present an integrative definition of leadership that takes into account a variety of dimensions, for example, encouragement, feedback, and trust, that may assist scholars in better comprehending the breadth and extent of leadership. Nevertheless, they emphasise that as scholars acquire a deeper understanding of the concept, the definition of leadership will continue to evolve. [Bell \(1997, as cited in Winston & Patterson, 2006: p. 15\)](#) argues that by defining a preferred future, a leader can propose the desired goal in opposition to the current situation, enabling the leader to instil a sense of dissatisfaction with the present. This portion of the leaders' role is referred to as seeing new possibilities and communicating those possibilities to their followers ([Kanter, 1996; Kotter, 1990; as cited in Winston & Patterson, 2006: p. 16](#)). To further clarify, [Bradshaw \(1998, as cited in Winston & Patterson, 2006: p. 15\)](#) adds that leaders could facilitate continuous "change and movement" toward the desired outcome. In the midst of the multi-interpretable definition of leadership, [King \(2017\)](#) emphasises that "leadership has nothing to do with administrative paperwork and procedures" (p. 5). This statement is vital in addressing the misperception that leadership is synonymous with administrative duties.

Transformational leadership is one of the leadership styles that was first described by [James Burns in 1978](#) and further expanded by [Bernard Bass in 1985 \(Lai, 2011\)](#). It is demonstrated by the presence of charisma and shared vision that exists between leaders and their followers ([Burns, 2010, as cited in Lai, 2011: p. 2](#)). The power of transformational leaders lies in their capacity to encourage and motivate others to generate outstanding performance ([Lai, 2011](#)). In addition to this, [Antonakis and Day \(2018\)](#) argue that a critical feature of transformational leadership is the leader's behaviour that motivates followers to transcend their interests in pursuit of the greater good. [Northouse \(2007, as cited in Madimbo, 2016: p. 13\)](#) highlights that transformational leadership is when a person engages with others and establishes a connection; thus, the degree of motivation and morale in both the leader and the follower is raised. Later, [Madimbo \(2016\)](#) interprets this definition more concisely: transformational leadership is "a process that changes people" (p. 13). Consistent with these viewpoints, [King \(2017\)](#) further asserts that transformational leaders not only motivate people to follow but also motivate them to develop and become leaders in their own right. Therefore, it can be inferred that transformational leadership is distinct from transactional leadership, in which a relationship between the leader and follower

is built by a system of exchange and contract.

In relation to the ethical components, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) mention that transformational leadership provides “a more reasonable and realistic concept of self—a self that is connected to friends, family, and community whose welfare may be more important to oneself than one’s own” (p. 186). They identify four elements that exist in transformational leadership, namely idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The description of each element is as follows.

Idealised influence defines the degree to which leaders exhibit strong moral and ethical principles and serve as role models for their followers (King, 2017).

Inspirational motivation of leaders encourages followers with spirit to actively participate in collective goals. In addition to this, Kanungo and Mendonca (1996, pp. 61ff, as cited in Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999: p. 188) associate this with an empowerment process.

Intellectual stimulation is associated with leaders who support open innovation, encouraging followers to challenge assumptions and generate creative solutions to issues.

Individualised consideration of leaders involves recognising each follower as an individual and prioritising their growth as leaders.

3. Kartini: Power of Women and the Empowerment

3.1. Life and Legacy

Born into a noble Javanese family on April 21, 1879, Kartini dedicated her life to the struggle against gender discrimination and the advancement of native Indonesians. As an aristocrat, Kartini and her eleven siblings deserved the chance to study in Western education. She went to Europe's Lagere School and learned Dutch. Once, she wrote, “Alas! We girls are not allowed by our law to learn languages; it was a great innovation for us to learn Dutch” (Kartini, 1920: p. 9). Kartini also learned traditional crafts and the Quran at home, which served as a parallel for the conflict throughout her life (Schultz, 2017). Once Kartini and her sisters were twelve years old, her father forbade them from continuing education. According to the norm at the time, a 12-year-old girl was expected to remain at home and wait in seclusion (Taylor, 1976). However, they maintained acquiring knowledge independently and developing their views on the social processes that influenced their daily lives. Moreover, they opened a small school for girls at their home.

After a few years, Kartini and her sisters were finally allowed to break the seclusion tradition and occasionally made public appearances. Kartini was able, but limited, to socialise with the wives of the Dutch administrators, many of whom were liberal in their political views. One of them was Mrs. Abendanon, the wife of J.H. Abendanon, the Director of Education, Religion, and Industry for the Netherlands East Indies. Kartini also discovered a way to reach her

pen-pal Stella Zeehandelaar, who was six years her senior, Jewish, single, and engaged as a Socialist assisting the Dutch in humanitarian work. They mainly discussed social issues such as polygamy, husband-wife relationships, women's rights, education, colonialism, and Kartini's intentions to study abroad (Taylor, 1976). In his study, Schultz (2017) highlights that this friendship was a stark contrast compared to her repressive, hierarchical, and restricted life.

In addition to communicating with her circle of reformers, Kartini also took pleasure in Dutch books and magazines, including subversive publications from socialists, feminists, and liberals, who posed a significant challenge to her suffocating social surroundings. In one of her letters, Kartini expressed her admiration for the Indian social reformer Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, "I trembled with excitement: so, it is not only a white woman who is able to gain for herself an independent existence!—the brown Indian woman can also make herself free, independent" (Coté, 2021: p. 411). Additionally, she respected Dutch feminist Cecile de Jong van Beek en Donk, whose novel advocated that education and labour force employment were crucial for societal advancement—rather than coercing women into marriage for survival (Schultz, 2017). Kartini was also aware of other writers who expressed criticism towards Dutch policy, such as Edward Douwes Dekker, P.V. Veth, and Louis Marie Ann Couperus (Kartini, 1964; Van de Velde, 2006, as cited in Schultz, 2017: p. 37).

At the age of sixteen, Kartini, along with her sisters Rukmini and Kardinah, presented several artworks at a women's national exhibition in Den Haag called *Nationale Tentoonstelling voor Vrownarbeid*. Their artworks, including landscape paintings encased in carved wooden frames, carved bamboo pieces, and a set of *batik* equipment, received special attention from Queen Wilhelmina. The Dutch newspaper *De Rotterdamse Courant* published an article on this occurrence on August 30, 1898 (Priyanto, 2014, as cited in Wirianingsih, 2016). Kartini realised that while the wood carvings were of exceptional quality, the price was unreasonably low, and the craftsmen continued to live in poverty. The exhibition's success motivated her to empower craftsmen by advocating for them, marketing their work, and writing about the beauty of Jepara's wood carvings (Iswahyudi, 2021; Yuliati et al., 2019). Kartini's effort was rewarded; she eventually worked collaboratively with *Oost en West*, a newly established Dutch trading company, to develop and market the wood carvings of her people (Yuliati et al., 2019).

Kartini's exposure and her writings drew unwanted attention, increasing her father's pressure on her to get married. In 1902, Kartini was married to Rembang Regent Raden Adipati Djojo Adiningrat, who had previously been married to three women and had six children. Kartini died just a few days after giving birth to her only child, a son, at the age of 25. Before she died, she ran another school for girls in Rembang. Kartini's testament, expressed through her correspondence over a century ago, serves as a lasting reminder of her ongoing legacy that inspired the later generations of Indonesian feminists, which will be elaborated on in the next section.

3.2. The Agent of Change

Kartini's short life was not in vain; her death prompted the publication of her private correspondence. The Abendanons decided to publish a selection of her letters, which appeared for the first time in 1911. Nevertheless, the character of this volume and future translations should preoccupy us more than a narrative of Kartini's existence because Abendanons' selections and editing had shaped her image (Taylor, 1976). The letters were then documented and titled *Door Duisternis tot Licht*, translated as *From Darkness to Light*. The Abendanons added a copy of Kartini's 1903 memoir on the urge for colonial policy reform. It was vital not only because it was the first time an Indonesian woman addressed such a memoir to the Dutch but also at a time when few Indonesians had ever been able to express their thoughts. *Educate the Javanese!* talks about social problems and advocates for the role women may play in overcoming them. The introduction to the memoir states:

"Kartini was a product of this historical change. She was one of the first Indonesian girls ever to enter a primary school for Europeans (ca. 1885-91), and her European friends were trekkers, not members of the old Indies' Dutch community. By the early 1900's she had become known to a small circle of liberal Dutchmen and Javanese aristocrats through her articles in Dutch-language journals and through her open confrontation with Javanese tradition" (Kartini & Taylor, 1974: p. 83).

Transformational leadership is a concept that cannot be divorced from Kartini's efforts to ensure that women can play their roles, even in the middle of patriarchal Javanese society. Change and movement can be the most essential and relevant factors to characterise her feminism. She was challenging the engrained stereotyping of women. It is evident in her advocacy against the status quo throughout her life and in the way she challenged the order of Javanese cultural norms, which she believed disadvantaged the position of women, particularly in education. She insisted that women should be educated regardless of their function, whether as mothers or beyond. Kartini envisioned women in professions and as educated mothers capable of training children who would be aware of their own community's needs. Early in 1903, she did not envision women combining occupations with the roles of wife and mother, but we know from her letters that she did so soon before she died (Kartini & Taylor, 1974).

For women to aspire to positions of influence, they must first demonstrate their ability to be moral leaders who effect concrete change in their communities. According to Schultz (2017), with her efforts, Kartini demonstrates that she is an agent who epitomises the visionary, a woman who attempted to reform the mindsets of their societies. A young woman's comments indicate that she is independent of changes in thinking, learning, and behaviour. She envisioned herself as someone she wanted to be but could not become because of her dedication to her family and early death, among other factors. However, her call to action was heeded by others, and she continues to inspire modern Indonesian

feminists. In line with his notion, [Chin \(2020\)](#) writes:

“Without doubt, Kartini—the symbol of both nationalism and women’s liberation—is pivotal to this active phase of women’s development in Indonesian society and politics. Her ideas about woman’s position and rights in education, marriage, family, and society were not only taken up by women’s organisations and movements but had also provided them with an agenda and checklist for women’s progress” (p. 85).

During her lifetime, Kartini established two schools for girls, initiated the growth of Jepara woodcarving, and contributed to periodicals of the day on issues ranging from shifting customs among Java’s patriarchal tradition to women’s liberation ([Taylor, 1976](#)). Finally, Kartini’s mind expanded beyond that of her society, where men dominated. She continued to inspire the next generation: the modern Indonesian women emerging in the 1910s.

In the 1910s, during the Indonesian colonial from Kartini onwards, a number of educated women participated in some modern organisations, encompassing both religious and non-religious affiliations ([Blackburn, 2004](#)). Some of them were Jarisah, Dewi Sartika, and Siti Sundari; Kartini’s legacy serves as a source of inspiration for them. Representing women, they presented submissions at a public forum known as the Commission Inquiring into Declining Welfare in Java and Madura ([Blackburn, 2004](#)). Jarisah’s arguments, drawn from her personal experience as a midwife, emphasised the need for women to gain critical knowledge for their future lives, including sex education, hygiene, and child-rearing. Dewi Sartika, a Sundanese noblewoman and principal of a girls’ school in Bandung, not only expanded upon the principles established by Kartini but also further developed them by proposing the integration of vocational skills into girls’ education. Similar to the other two speakers, Siti Sundari, an editor for a Javanese women’s magazine, emphasised the value of educating girls. In addition, she contended that the influence of Western education should not undermine sentiments of nationality. She concluded her submission by stating that Kartini’s spirit is watching over their endeavour, “It illuminates us” (*Eerste Koloniaal Onderwijscongres 1916*, as cited in [Blackburn, 2004: p. 46](#)).

The struggles that were endured by the previously mentioned influential figures serve as evidence that Kartini’s manifesto has echoed through the ages. Kartini exemplifies a transformational leader as she consistently inspires women’s movements throughout the 20th century and continues to the present day. [Taylor \(1976\)](#) argues that Kartini was the first woman whose voice was heard in a language understandable to Indonesia’s educated society as well as a European audience. She was one of Indonesia’s earliest modern thinkers.

4. Women Representation in Leadership Positions

The previous section presents how Kartini is a pivotal figure in Indonesian history: an observer of colonial society during a period of rapid demographic and social change, a reformer, and an early representative of the first generations of

Indonesians educated in the European system. The following section examines the representation of women in leadership roles in three sectors more than ten decades after the Kartini era to see the extent to which women's leadership slowly transforms.

4.1. Politics

Asian women are increasingly climbing the ladder in all sectors, from politics to business, breaking through the glass ceiling and effectively navigating the leadership labyrinth; the path has been challenging yet remarkable (Chaudhuri et al., 2018). In Indonesia, women's representation in leadership has emerged gradually a few years following the fall of the New Order (1966-1988) era, more than fifty years after its independence. According to Bessell (2004), two significant reasons become barriers for women in politics during the era. First is the New Order ideology; the domesticated woman was central to the family because it was the smallest element of the state. Secondly, on the religious grounds of Islam, the position of women as leaders was constantly debated. In line with this notion, the 1974 marriage law reinforced patriarchal ideas toward men's family leadership; the government highlighted men's social and political roles while downplaying women's roles in the public sphere (Brenner, 2004).

Later, following the collapse of Soeharto's New Order, women's representation in the nation's parliament and possibilities for women to participate in formal decision-making processes remained limited. However, in the subsequent leadership, the new President, Abdurrahman Wahid, appointed two women, Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Erna Witoelar, to lead two ministries in his cabinet, namely Minister for the Role of Women and Minister for Housing and Regional Development, respectively. Megawati Soekarnoputri, the daughter of Indonesia's first president, became the country's first female president two years later. However, the election of a woman president in 2001 did not result in breakthroughs for women (Ruhaini & Edwards, 2010). The feminist considers "President Megawati insensitive to gender issues and unable to see how often privilege is conferred based on family connections, social class, gender, and membership of the dominant cultural and social groups" (Ruhaini & Edwards, 2010: p. 203). The situation is consistent with the findings of scholars who researched women's leadership in India. Female politicians from privileged groups have little influence on women's rights and show little interest in social issues, while female leaders from underprivileged groups, on the other hand, do the reverse (Kodila-Tedika & Asongu, 2017).

The representation of women in the cabinet climbed statistically in the subsequent period. This progress is demonstrated by some female ministers who hold crucial positions typically dominated by men (Sari, 2020). For example, under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Mari Elka Pangestu served as Minister of Trade and Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy; Sri Mulyani, who was awarded the World Best Minister of Finance, served in two cabinets consecu-

tively. Furthermore, the election of Retno Marsudi also marked the breaking of the glass ceiling in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by becoming the first female foreign minister in Indonesia. Susi Pudjiastuti was appointed Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in President Joko Widodo's first term, leading a ministry deemed masculine.

From one election to the next, the number of women elected to Indonesia's parliament has also climbed. In the 2019 parliament election at the national level, 118 of 575 elected members were women, representing 20.5% of the total. This number is the most significant achievement Indonesia has ever made regarding women's representation in political leadership (Dewi, 2020). In a similar vein, data from *Statistics Indonesia (2020)* reveals that the rate of women elected to provincial parliament elections has risen significantly from 25.76% in 2014 to 30.88% in 2019.

4.2. Education

There is limited research on women in educational leadership in Indonesia. Due to this limitation, a few of the findings focus on women's leadership in higher education but lack the details at the primary and secondary levels. However, women's representation in education leadership has moved at a slower pace but in a favourable direction, similar to how women's representation in politics has changed.

The general school system is under the Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology (MoECRT) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). The MoECRT is responsible for supervising the conduct of education in public and private schools, while the MoRA is in charge of Islamic religious schools (*madrasah*). According to the *World Bank's (2020)* report on the Indonesian teaching force in 2006, despite the fact that women constitute the majority of teachers in Indonesia (54%), only slightly more than half (41%) reach the post of principal. Gender disparity in MoECRT's public and private schools is most visible at the junior secondary level. The percentage of male and female teachers is equal, 50%; unfortunately, the proportion of female teachers who become principals is less than half, 21%. In schools under the jurisdiction of the MoRA, a more noticeable gender disparity exists at almost all levels except kindergarten: while 40% of women occupy teaching positions, only 15% of them are in charge of leading and supervising. Apart from insufficient data, female teachers' careers in administrator roles are challenging to map since principals continue performing duties and responsibilities as teachers. Thus, most government officials' statistics do not provide rigid distinctions between the number of teachers who have been promoted to principals and the current number of principals.

Cecilia Titiek Murniati (2012) studied the career advancement of senior women academic administrators in Indonesia as part of her dissertation. Regarding women's leadership in higher education, she discovers that women

make up 33% of faculty members at public institutions and 39% in private institutions (Murniati, 2012). However, women have held just a few senior leadership positions in higher education. There are no female presidents, and the majority of those in positions below the presidency, such as associate president, dean, and associate dean, are likewise male-dominated. The same issue is revealed by Muluk (2013), which is linked to women's leadership in Indonesian Islamic higher education. Although the number of female lecturers increased slightly between 2006 and 2011, the positions of president, vice president, and dean were never held by women. The highest structural positions held by female academics were the post of deputy dean, accounting for 3 (15%) out of 20 positions, and the head of the department was somewhat higher, accounting for 7 (35%) out of 20 positions (Muluk, 2013). This glance portrayal indicates the degree of male domination in the makeup of academic leadership roles in religious-based higher education.

4.3. Business

According to Statistics Indonesia (2010, as cited in Jamil & Novel, 2017: p. 143), the unemployment rate of women in Indonesia is higher than that of men, at about 3.6% compared to 2.0%. As a result, many governments' entrepreneurial programs, such as loans for business expansion and business training skills, are geared toward women. Further, Jamil and Novel (2017), in their study to examine the leadership styles of businesswomen in the sector of culinary and fashion of Indonesia Women's Business Association, show that women operate 60% of micro, small, and medium enterprises in this country.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (2019), in its research entitled Board Gender Diversity in ASEAN, also published a report on the optimism surrounding women's leadership in top management in business. The research is a comprehensive analysis of more than 1000 companies in six ASEAN countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, including one regional non-ASEAN member, China, to provide a point of comparison, exploring the impact on business performance when women have a place at the boardroom table. The report emphasizes that "Women's economic participation in the region has increased, evidenced by the fact that more and more women are graduating from university and entering the workforce. However, leadership at the apex of companies still lacks gender diversity" (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019: p. 14). They discovered significant differences in board gender diversity among the countries; Thailand has the highest gender diversity, with women holding 20.4% of board seats in publicly traded businesses, followed by Vietnam (15.4%) and Indonesia (14.9%).

In addition, recently, a report entitled Women in Business 2020: Putting the Blueprint into Action (2020), published by Grant Thornton International, an employee professional services network of independent accounting and consulting member firms that operate on a global scale, demonstrates the same

trend regarding the increasing representation of women in leadership positions in the business. Positively, the report indicates that the global share of mid-market companies with at least one woman in senior management significantly climbed to 87% in 2020, up nearly 20% from 68% in 2015 (Thornton International Ltd, 2020). The same source also indicates that the proportion of women and men in senior management globally in 2020 is 29% and 71%. Even though the figure is still much below men's, the rising number of women leaders demonstrates that businesses are starting to adopt appropriate gender initiatives. According to Sari (2020), what is notable about the report is that Indonesia and Mexico are tied for fourth place with the most significant number of women in senior management roles at 37%, while the Philippines is first with 43%, followed by South Africa (40%), and Poland (38%). She adds that women's top three senior management roles in Indonesia are chief finance officer, human resources director, and chief information officer, with rates of 48%, 26%, and 25%, respectively.

5. Conclusion

Kartini's enduring legacy serves as a source of inspiration for Indonesian women's movements throughout the 20th century and beyond. Therefore, Kartini fits the profile of a transformational leader; she possessed the capability to bring about change and gave priority to the welfare of her people over her interests. Her effort was of such extraordinary strength that it was able to bring to European attention the social injustices Indonesian people faced and the gender inequality the girls burdened, influencing the reform of Dutch colonial policy.

Although the movement to promote gender equality and women's emancipation in Indonesia is expanding, this development does not merely ease the burden on women who want to play an active role in the public sphere. In terms of politics, for example, an increase in the number of women in the cabinet does not necessarily guarantee a process of making policies that favour women. The rise in leadership may also be seen in education, particularly in higher education; however, the growth is not statistically peaking. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that, despite female students dominating higher education, their representation in leadership positions in the workplace after graduation is not proportional to their male counterparts. Finally, according to data from some international organisations, the representation of Indonesian women in business is also expanding considerably. Despite the fact that several studies have shown that women's leadership improves the performance of business organisations, the general public continues to hold the notion that women are less competent than males when it comes to leading.

In light of the aforementioned positive changes, Indonesians should not become complacent, as there is still more work to be done in order to achieve gender equality, as Kartini envisioned more than a century ago. Women's progression in leadership positions is often hindered by the lack of organised and systematic support systems in society. Making the general public aware of the sig-

nificance of an equal distribution of family and public responsibilities is essential in motivating women to occupy influential leadership positions and fight for their rights. This study has potential limitations. In comparison to the diversity of the population of Indonesia, the overview of the gradual development of women in leadership positions in this study cannot be considered representative of all categories of women, such as women with disabilities or women from religious minorities. Therefore, future studies could further examine these gaps.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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