

# Inspiring Women's Awareness About Their Essential Abilities

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**Abstract**—The aim of this study is to inspire women to have the confidence and independence to equally coexist with men. All over the world, there are stories of female suffering. This suffering is caused by verbal, physical, material, psychological, and sexual violence and discrimination. Some violence is culturally embedded, and local communities and theological teachings are resistant to change. Traditional, cultural, and theological adherence, in these instances, causes women to surrender to their fate. However, women possess great potential that is valuable and useful for human life. This paper explores methods of inspiring self-respect among women and developing their awareness of their extraordinary individual competencies. The research is based on a number of theories, including the labeling theory, dual systems theory, Weber's theory of power, and self-perception theory. Qualitative research methods were used to interpret relevant literature and create an analysis model. The results suggest that Indonesian women, in general, are resigned to violence for fear of social exclusion and fear of sin. The objective of the research is to inspire awareness of these issues among women through the development of positive self-perception. Women should realize that they are competent and have potential in order to not be resigned to discrimination and violence. Education in self-awareness can be used to empower women by constantly reinforcing the belief that they are competent and are worthy of living happy lives. The research concludes that comprehensive and continuous formal education, which teaches psychological strength and character building, is required to empower women to escape cycles of violence and discrimination.

**Keywords**—labeling, dual systems, cultural and theological adherence, self-perception

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian women share the experience of suffering with other women throughout the world. Much of this suffering is caused by violence and discrimination. Violence can take many forms, including verbal, physical, material, psychological, and sexual. Violence can sometimes be embedded in traditions, cultural values, and theological teachings. Resisting socially and culturally sanctioned violence is extremely difficult for its victims. Traditional, cultural, and theological adherence often makes women surrender to their fate. However, women possess great potential and are of value to society. This research employs several theories to explore these issues.

**Labeling Theory** refers to a label attached to an individual based on the misinterpretation that is regarded as "a truth." A person thus incorrectly labeled may lack the power to remove this incorrect label (Jones, 2009: 148). This theory is related to those in power and to the society that

perpetuates the incorrect labeling of individuals. According to **Weber's theory of power**, there are three types of power dynamic: *traditional*, which is a form of domination (obey me because it is in accordance with society); *charismatic* (obey me because I can transform your life); and *legal-rational* (obey me because I am legally your boss) (Jones, 2009: 116). In addition to the theory of power, the **Dual Systems Theory** argues that the dual hegemonic systems of capitalism and the patriarchy are instruments of oppression (Jones, 2009: 133). According to Hartmann, the patriarchy existed prior to the advent of capitalism. Mitchell (1940) suggests that oppression is based on female psychology processes, as developed by Sigmund Freud, whereby women enable their own domination by men and, thus, domination is a problem of female psychology rather than political policy (Jones, 2009: 135). Finally, the **Self-Concept Theory** relates to how an individual feels about him- or herself, with regard to "What" and "Who." Reflection on self is influenced by interactions with oneself and others, such as family and community. Research in the field of communication suggests gender-based differences in the concept of self. Women are more oriented to the assessment of self-image, and men to the assessment of social comparison. These differences are also dependent on the social and familial roles of women (Hubeis, 2010:69).

This research used a qualitative approach, to undertake a cultural study. Bibliographical research was conducted to analyze and interpret the different approaches to female self-awareness and empowerment. Descriptive and qualitative methods emphasize the meaning of the process rather than results. Data are analyzed and presented as descriptive phenomena, rather than numerical data, or coefficient so relationships between variables. In the case of this research, data were analyzed according to information contained within the data set. The analysis was performed using a variety of relevant theories, concepts, and definitions. Primary and secondary data sources included books, journals, papers, newspaper articles, and government publications. The data collection technique used was the close reading of documents and literature. These materials contributed to the formulation and refinement of the concept and the application of theory to data.

## II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Most Indonesian women are heavily influenced by the culture, customs, and religion they are continuously immersed in throughout their lives. These institutional influences can lead to a loss of confidence. This loss of confidence is usually, though not exclusively, experienced

by women who are more traditional, have lower levels of educational attainment, and have less intercommunication outside of their cultural, social, or religious group.

These conditions may be altered if changes are made to general attitudes toward women in Indonesia. This task requires careful and prolonged preparation, as it must start from the smallest social unit, the household. In their role as household managers and as educators of young children, mothers should be educated to change their mindset and attitude and of how to effect these changes. If mothers are aware of their abilities and can contribute to enhancing their abilities, they would be able to be successful and well prepared for further tasks.

#### A. Stigma Attached to Women

The stigma attached to women related to the theory of labeling. The cultural myths surrounding women affirm their position in society. Culture is at the heart of human development as it is the endogenous force that becomes the soul and spirit of a nation. Indonesia is a culturally diverse country, so the endogenous force is also varied. However, cultural imagery across the globe turns women into role models in their plurality (Hubeis, 2010:216). The *Consensus theory*, as it relates to myths about women, argues that cultural structure determines societal behavior. Therefore, both women and men are restricted by cultural rules. In some societies, there is a strong adherence to the central cultural values that regulate gendered human actions (Jones, 2009: 8-13).

Myths about women have long been created and disseminated in the form of fairy tales, perpetuated by cultural beliefs that justify supposed female personality traits. Tales such as *Cinderella*, *Rapunzel*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Jaka Tarub with Seven Women from Khayangan* among others, justify traits such as dependence, submission, dreaminess, forgiveness, and attractiveness. Women are seen, not as they are, but as others' perceptions of what women are. As a result, the relationship between men and women is as that between leader and follower, served and server. These perceptions carry public weight in, for example, Iran and China, and follow the philosophy of Mao Tse Tung (Hubeis, 2010:70). The majority of both urban and rural Indonesians continue to be influenced by views represented by this theory. Women feel weak, helpless, and dependent on men in many ways. Many myths describe the attitudes of dependent women as reflected in one Indonesian fairy tale.

*Jaka Tarub* tells the story of seven beautiful angels from *Khayangan* (heaven) who had come down to earth and were bathing in a lake. A man named Jaka Tarub spied on the angels as they bathed. Then Jaka Tarub hid one of the angels 'dresses. When the angels finished bathing, the six others flew back to *Khayangan*, but the angel who had lost her dress was in tears. Jaka Tarub came to her and helped her find other clothes to wear. Afterward, he asked the angel to marry him. The angel had no choice but to marry Jaka Tarub out of gratitude for helping her in her time of need. For many years, they lived a happy life until, one day, the angel found her original clothes. She put on her dress and immediately returned to *Khayangan*. The moral of the story is that women are *helpless* and *powerless*, and must make their husbands happy, even when circumstances force them into that situation.

The traditional viewpoint of women differs from the modern viewpoint. From the traditional perspective, when a girl is considered an adult, she cannot leave the house alone, and higher education is deemed unnecessary as soon she will be married to a man chosen by her parents. A young woman must accept her parents' choice, even if she does not love the man. To prepare for marriage, a girl must learn how to manage a household and to take care of her husband and children. A traditional wife cannot go against the wishes of her husband and must defer to her husband and her parents.

Such conditions are detrimental and cause suffering among women. Communities with such traditional attitudes toward women create their own gender labels, and the label is considered the only right way to be and to act (Bluestone, 1987). The *Labeling theory* suggests that a label attached to somebody through misinterpretation, yet regarded as "truth," creates a mistaken perception of the individual wearing the label who is powerless to change the label (Jones, 2009: 148). Power rests with those members of society who define the labels.

*The Myth of Adam's Rib.* Umar (2012) described The Myth of Adam's Rib. Women are often stigmatized because of the creation story of Eve (a woman) created from the rib of Adam (a man). In Middle Eastern mythology, the left hand symbolizes subordination and has negative connotations. This is reflected when we are eating, drinking, and holding the Qur'an we should use our right hand. Toilets must be entered with the left foot, and houses of worship with the right foot. The lowermost ribs are suggestive of women's subordination to men. These cultural-religious practices express the *theory of structural conflict* where societal inequalities exist for men and women, rich and poor, and old and young. In such a society, conflicts of interest dominate (Jones, 2009: 15).

The myth of Adam's rib is prevalent across the Semitic language family, among speakers of Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Syriac, Qibti, as well as most European languages. The word God takes the male personal pronouns (He/Huwa), thus, is this gendering God as male? When greeting others, either male or female, the male term is used because woman was created from the rib of man.

This is evident in common greetings "*Assalamu alaikum*" (Safety to you men) does not require the addition of "*Wa'alaikunna al-salam*" (and the safety of you girls), because the rules of Arabic states: When men and women are together, it is kind enough to mention a woman's husband only (*Al-Tadzkir wa al-ta'nis idza ijtim'a gulibah al-tadzkir*). Even in a large room full of girls, it is not necessary to say: "*Assalamu' alaikunna*" which means, "safety for you, girls." When women leave the house, a male relative must always accompany them. Men do not have to adhere to the same restrictions.

The myth of Adam's rib has a socio-psychological influence on society. Women are perceived to be subordinate to men. The myth precipitates in the sub-conscious of most women who learn from an early age that, theologically, women are not the equals of men. Men were created first, so women will always be the second sex. As a result, women usually hold marginalized positions in their families and communities.

*Myths of Complementary Men.* Umar (2012) has also discussed the Myths of Complementary Men. One such myth

is that the woman was created to complement male desire. When God created a man and that man might not enjoy the fruits of heaven, no one understands this. Then, God named him Adam, a lonely creature in heaven. The Book of Genesis 2:18–19 explains that it is not good for a man to live alone and, therefore, God created a companion, Eve. She was created to be Adam's companion. In Hebrew language the word "Woman" means *haishah* or "servant". So, the creation of Eve was believed as a helper or *ezer* of Adam."

Theological assumptions such as these present women not only as the help meets of men but also as their inferiors. Judith R. Baskin, in Prospective Historical Jewish Woman (2010), illustrates that in the Jewish Midrash, women are created substantially different from men. Man was created with intellect (*hokmah*) and woman with instinct (*Binah*). Men, from this perspective, are naturally more rational, and women more emotional due to the different origins and motivations of their creation. Such perceptions of women, derived from religious teachings and public opinion, have continued to the present day. Some modern views continue to see women as appendages of men. Gender inequality is considered reasonable and related to freedom and the product of capitalism. Capitalism, which is dependent on inequality and regards it as justice, rationalizes the unequal treatment of men and women. Inequality begins at school where classrooms are divided according to smart and weak students, which reflects the division of society between rich and poor. The weak and poor have failed (Jones, 2009: 90).

A careful reading of the Bible reinforces the religious and cultural bases for inequality. The Book of Genesis, for example, consists of 50 chapters and 1532 articles, many of which clearly express the position of women. Women are weak, while men are strong; women are objects, while men are subjects. The narration of women in the scriptures should be understood as hermeneutics; the spirit of humanity and justice can be revealed by reading the text. While scripture acknowledges and commends women, it is also less favorable toward women, especially when read in the context of modern society.

This is fundamental issue as it is written in core text followed by religious adherents. Some myths continue to go uncritiqued, as they are perceived to be religious doctrines. Theological doctrines such as these are among the toughest obstacles that feminists have to overcome. Due to women's ongoing household duties and obligations, men are increasingly likely to place greater importance on the role of women in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Without the support of men, the ability of women to realize alternative roles remains limited. The duty to attend to important tasks such as child-rearing and educating does not mean they are forbidden to adopt other interests. This is all related to an understanding of gender within the context of the community where women should be regarded and treated equally, as creatures of God.

Islam is pioneering in its decent and respectable attitudes toward women, and as equal to men in the position of honorable human (An-Nahl '97 and Al-Anbiya '94) quoted by Umar (2012). Women, therefore, are responsible for their gendered tasks for which they will receive a commensurate reward. According to Islam, women must accomplish three tasks: 1) woman was created as *sakanah*, or one who gives happiness and peace (Ar-Rum 21); 2) a woman's role is to be a source of love and compassion (Ar-Rum 21); 3) a woman

is the queen of her household and the educator of its descendants (An-Nahl 72).

Islamic concepts related to these three tasks clearly require Muslim women to be educated in order to deal with life problems. These rights and obligations of women are feminist, according to the concepts of the unity of God. Nevertheless, it can be expressed with confidence that, in Indonesia, most Muslim women are perceived to be good Muslim housewives if they take care of the home, their husband, and their children (Hubeis, 2010:220). The doctrine of male-female equality in the Qur'an is clear. Women engaged in household task Sar glorified in the hadith of the Prophet, which reads: "Paradise under the mother's feet..." However, the decision-making role of women in the family is ignored. Women may have to or choose to work for a living. However, according to Islamic jurisprudence, the perception and interpretation of the status and role of women and the allocation of household responsibilities remain controversial (Hubeis, 2010:221).

### B. Patriarchal Society

The patriarchal society is related to the dual systems theory. In patriarchal societies such as Indonesia, the patriarchy controls decision-making at all levels of government and power. Belief in male dominance and gender discrimination legitimize the patriarchy (Hubeis, 2010:4). According to Millett, patriarchal societies are created by men based on male-centered cultures. These societies emphasize the importance of the biological mother and the family structure based on heterosexual marriage. According to Bouchier (in Jones, 2009: 131) marriage is "the institutional source of real exploitation."

Because sexual relationships between men and women should occur within matrimonial boundaries, in Indonesia, marriage is the acceptable form of relationship between men and women. Based on religious and social beliefs, marriage increases a woman's respectability. Patriarchal culture has existed since ancient times, yet still applies today. Some research has shown that patriarchal culture is responsible for inequality and leads to domestic violence (Nelson, 1997). Patriarchal culture places men as leaders with higher status than women. One outcome is that sons revalued higher than daughters within the family.

Violence perpetrated by husbands against their wives can be influenced by a patriarchal ideology that is embedded since childhood and continues to be the societal norm (Buzawa and Carl, 1990). This ideology perpetuates norms and stereotypes that result in imbalanced relationships between husbands and wives. These conditions can lead to the diminution of one partner's role in the family and can affect the development of the family. While families are not the only institutions to foster collective resistance to defeating patriarchy, the hierarchy of husband, wife, and children is analogous to a military leader and his troops. This condition results in a loss of unity, harmony, equality, and justice.

Frolin's graduate anthropology research from the University of Medan has found that intimacy and marital harmony can be disrupted due to economic problems caused by husbands not meeting household needs, failure to produce children, the poor habits of other family members, third party interference by in-laws, intervention by family members in

household affairs, and disagreements between husbands and wives (Simanjuntak, 2013: 101-102).

A husband, as sole bread winner, sometimes feels powerful because all other family members depend on him. The feeling of superiority engendered by this dependence means that the husband's needs and desires within the household could not be denied. The wife cannot make decisions as she wishes, as the husband decides everything (Davis, 1994). Conditions such as these often lead to domestic violence when a wife is no longer willing to accept such treatment. A wife is often blamed when a family does not have children. She is considered barren and incapable of producing the next generation of the family. This condition causes polygamy on the part of the husband (Matsui, 2001). If a wife does not want her husband to get married again and a husband does not want to divorce his wife, or if a wife is not willing to divorce because she is opposed to polygamy, domestic violence may ensue.

Most households in Indonesia consist of multi-generational extended families that include mothers- and fathers-in-law, sisters- and brothers-in-law, aunts, and uncles. This is a traditional house hold in some Indonesian communities. With so many family members living under one roof, conflict can often arise when the functions and roles of the husband or wife retaken over by other family members. This can cause marital friction where intervention by third parties already exists in the home. When a wife is unable to adapt to a third party, domestic violence against the wife often occurs. A marriage is a blend of two people from different backgrounds. These differences may include culture, religion, tradition, values, education, and insight. Unifying these differences is not easy. If these differences are not reduced by means of mutual tolerance, trust, and respect, conflict can develop in the household, and the woman is often the victim (Husain, 2012).

Indonesians are known for being polite and courteous and for not causing offense (Ari Ujianto, 2010). Indonesian etiquette aims to make others feel good. Indonesian people respect elders, and Indonesian women are accustomed to respecting their husbands because of tradition and religion, especially Islam. In addition to respect for elders and husbands, Indonesian women respect others based on status and social hierarchy.

Ways of talking and dressing are also circumscribed by society. Women are advised to speak softly but clearly with a subdued tone. Women who speak loudly are considered rude. Women who talk too much ruse irreverent language are frowned upon, as are women who like to argue. Thus, women are required to perform calmness, gentility, and courteousness. Because of these traditions, it is difficult for most Indonesian women to stand up for their principles in all manner of contexts. As a result, women live passive and resigned lives, lacking the courage to change the conditions of their lives.

The task of a wife and a mother is to take care of the household, her husband, and children, and to properly educate children to ensure they play a future ole that is beneficial to the community, contributing to the development and progress of the nation. This is one of the strengths of a mother. Indonesian women have to reflect on who they are, what they have done in their lives, and what they should do next. As "homemakers" they carry out many heavy duties,

which do not need to be enumerated here. Mothers must continue to provide for their households even when they lack the resources to do so. Domestic activity never ends, as mothers provide everything required for a smooth-running home. In addition, mothers are responsible for the education of their children. A child's success is attributed to both parents, but a child's failure is attributed to the mother alone. This assumption exists in many societies, including Indonesia.

In order to properly educate children, parents must set good examples when speaking, acting, behaving morally, through showing emotions, and intellectual learning. In addition to the home, children also learn these life skills in schools and in daily life. Children also require attention, supervision, and affection. In Indonesia, moral teaching is guided by religious dogma, especially when the children are young. If mother could gain confidence through introspection which would assist them in understanding and appreciating power dynamics within the family. One aspect of the power imbalance that must not be overlooked is that women are physically weaker than men, according to some viewpoints. But this is not always the case with mental and spiritual strength. Mothers are sometimes rendered too emotional. Mothers should consider this criticism, in order to better control their emotions.

### C. Self-Perception of Women

Most women in Indonesia are heavily influenced by traditional teachings, cultural values, and customs, which influence their self-perceptions. Self-perception, in turn, affects behavior. If women do not behave in accordance with local practices, they will experience trouble as individuals, family members, and members of society.

The theory of self-concept refers to how a person thinks about him- or herself with regard to the questions "What" and "Who." Reflection is influenced by interactions with oneself and others. Research in the field of communication indicates differences between male and female self-concept. Women are more oriented toward the assessment of self-image, while men toward the assessment of social comparison. This is also dependent on the roles played by women (Hubeis, 2010:69). *Self* is the completeness of psychological self-reflection that affects experiences of consciousness, which underlie perceptions, beliefs, and feelings about one self and allows one to regulate one's behavior (page 46). *Perception* is the meaning of stimuli. As a process, perception always requires an object. The objects of perception are diverse, one of which is the *self*. As the object of perception, the *self* is not a single object, but a complex of objects. There are four aspects to the *self*: physical, psychological, socio-cultural, and spiritual (Rahman, 2013: 48).

**Understanding oneself** is important for controlling our daily lives. It is important to be aware of one's strengths and weaknesses so that one accurately determines beneficial attitudes and behaviors. At first glance, it seems easy to understand oneself, but it is not. Sources of understanding include introspection, self-observation of behavior, evaluation of others, social comparison, reflection on the reactions of others, and socialization (Rahman, 2013: 51-54). Rahman argues that **introspection** involves looking into oneself, into one's thoughts, or feelings. It involves the exploration of memory. Introspection allows for private reflection without being noticed by others. One can acquire

an understanding of oneself as the result of **socialization**, but if the social environment is traditional, nothing will change.

**Observing ourselves** is actually the same as observing others, but we often do not realize the need to observe ourselves. Assessment results can be used to correct the mindset, attitude, and behavior. Self-observation is similar to introspection. The latter is a form of contemplative self-observation, while the former is an observation of oneself from the outside, so as to understand how one is viewed by others (Resmiswal, 2013). When that view is negative, self-correction can take place. The weakness for women is their inability to control their emotions. **Social comparison** occurs when one is unable to judge oneself, and thus needs others to do it in order to obtain accurate self-perception. There are three motives for social comparison: improving the accuracy of self-evaluation and self-enhancement, or achieving a more positive evaluation and self-improvement, or increasing self-efficacy and success (Rahman, 2013: 54). Evaluation from others is necessary, as one is unable to evaluate oneself. Using social comparison, an accurate self-perception can be acquired, for example, when one begins to change negative self-perception into positive self-perception. With attitude change comes a more positive evaluation and the ability to increase efficacy and success. Success cannot be achieved when one is in a depressed, fettered, and frightened frame of mind. **Reflection on the reactions of others.** Sometimes, one cannot understand exactly who one is. Therefore, the views of others are necessary to learn about oneself. Thus, an offense should not be taken when someone close describes how one really is because once that view is known, it can be used to fix attitudes and behaviors that will allow for more successful social relationships tall levels. According to Rahman (2013), the reactions of others function as a mirror through which to see oneself. According to Cooley (Cantor and Bernay, 1992), the *self*-thrives when in contact with others in the same community. The *self* cannot be separated from social influence and is formed by the view of others.

The question, then, is how to stimulate **self-confidence and awareness** in Indonesian women in order to develop their confidence in their abilities. Traditional mothers are often afraid to make changes. Attempts must be made to instill confidence in these women. Such attempts require in-depth planning and organization. This cannot be achieved in an instant or in an unplanned way. Due to changing mindsets, comprehensive and sustainable methods that consider those life conditions and experiences that instill beliefs in a life guided by fate or destiny, which does not need to be changed, are necessary.

According to Hubeis, **self-concept** relates to how a person feels about her- or himself with regard to "What am I" and "Who" am I. "This reflection is influenced by interactions between oneself and others. Research in this field of communication indicates gendered differences in the concept of self. Women are more oriented to the assessment of self-image, and men to social comparison. This also depends on the role played by women in society (Hubeis, 2010: 69). Tradition landless educated women do not think about or evaluate themselves. They tread the path of life as it is and go with the flow. Therefore, the fate of such women never changes. How can such women be made aware of this so they can receive guidance? As self-concept depends on women, for whatever reason, women must rise up to get to know who they really are. To this end, it is society's

responsibility to convince women of what they need to do to gain awareness of their multiple assets, which include the concept of self, such as the mind, confidence, impressions, limitations, capabilities, and liabilities. In other words, self-esteem. One's efforts to understand oneself may generate concepts about one self. This concept is a collection of beliefs about the self and personal attributes. The concept of self is the mind, confidence, and impressions of one's nature and characteristics, including one's limitations, capabilities, liabilities, and assets (Rahman, 2013: 62).

According to Branden (1981), the need **for self-esteem** is related to natural characteristics. Nevertheless, it is characteristic that must be developed. Self-esteem is influential in process thinking, emotions, desires, values, and goals. Branden argues that self-esteem is an important key to getting to know an individual's behavior. There are many aspects of self-esteem. First, it is a gesture, such as pointing at a particular object, which is an action involving cognitive, emotional, and positive and negative behaviors. Second, it is a comparison between the idealized self and the real self. One will have high self-esteem if one approaches the real self from the ideal self, and vice versa. Third, it is regarded as an individual's psychological response to oneself. Finally, self-esteem is understood as a component of one's personality or self-system (Rahman, 2013: 64).

According to Wells et al. (2006), self-esteem is made up of three parts: competence, which is associated with success and capabilities; sense of worth; and feelings of competence. (Rahman, 2013: 64).

According to Branden (1992), self-esteem is one's tendency to feel capable of coping with problems and feeling valuable. Integration of self-esteem leads to self-confidence and **self-respect**. Thus, self-esteem refers to a sense of personal efficacy and a sense of personal worth. To acquire self-esteem, women must be intellectually, emotionally, morally, and spiritually qualified. Thus, strong guidance and direction must be provided to girls and women so that they can feel valuable in the eyes of their families, communities, and country. Since this activity is a change in mental attitude and mindset, mothers must provide early education for their daughters. The mothers should previously have received regular and continuous education through an organization called Empowerment of Family Welfare (EFW).

Women, especially those who are traditional and less well-educated, are often usually categorized as being unable to control their emotions or to have difficulty with **self-control and self-regulation**, and their behavior is often judged to be irrational and absurd (Hubeis, 2010). On the one hand, women must appear confident and independent, but on the other hand, they should be able to control their emotions and regulate their behavior, in order to not appear arrogant and unsettling to those around them. In this case, the guidance and direction given to these women should be well prepared, so the expected results can be obtained. **Self-regulation** is similar to self-control. Self-control refers to a conscious impulse control, while self-regulation is the effortful control of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in order to achieve a goal. In the context of goal achievement, the ability of self-regulation is vital. An inability to self-regulate has a very broad impact. Personal and social problems can arise due to an inability to self-regulate. For example, criminality and infidelity stem from the inability to self-regulate.

*Confidence* refers to internal growth and the control of attitudes and actions. One can control one's life by imagining it, and it is easy to control one's mind and direct one's thoughts to the achievement of a particular purpose. Thoughts are tremendously powerful; the power of the mind often goes beyond the physical limitations of the human body. It is an invisible source that exudes dynamic energy and affects every aspect of one's life. So, much so that, many of the activities related to the reform of mental attitudes and mindset can be done. Although thoughts cannot bring about comprehensive change, it can lead to results in line with expectations.

*Women's capabilities* are related to the possession of certain mindsets and attitudes. The characteristics of positive thinkers include perceiving a problem as a challenge, enjoying life, being ready to accept suggestions, discarding negative thoughts, feeling gratitude, not participating in gossip, using positive language, not procrastinating, cultivating and developing a positive mind, using positive body language, having personal confidence, smiling to enhance positive thinking, avoiding feelings of fear which kills happiness, accepting shortcomings, seeking success without greed, and using hopes and dreams as motivation.

### *1. Inspiring Women to be Aware of their Essential Abilities*

Inspiring women to be aware of their essential abilities. In *Women power: the secrets of leadership*, Schultz (1991) argues that the abilities of a female leader are having a competent self, such as using creative aggression and expressing a woman's power.

Women will never aspire to be powerful if a macho ideal of power is perpetuated. But redefining power as something that seeks to ensure the greater good removes the conflict with feminine nurturing and caring traits. Although power and nurturance are viewed as contradictory, the mother is an extremely powerful figure in the household, and raising children is a powerful occupation. A mother's power has both obvious and hidden dimensions. A mother wields *obvious* power in her role as family director, as she shops, plans meals and vacations, directs bedtimes and homework times, and so on. The hidden dimensions of a mother's power enable her to foster her children's growth, which she does through her role as caretaker. In this role, she empowers others and vicariously measures her own success in relation to their success. Although women are aware of the influence they have on their children's lives, they do not often define that influence as "power" (53-54). Related to this concept, the challenge is to find a way to inspire women to realize the tremendous power they hold within the household to determine the future of the nation. They have the power to manage the household, serve all members of the family, and educate the children to become adults who contribute to society. Women are generally unaware of this power and continue to live in darkness. Therefore, women must be constantly encouraged to see themselves as very powerful figures and to see the remarkable successes they can achieve.

**Power and the ability to lead.** The acquisition of power, whether by men or women, does not guarantee the automatic emergence of leadership or the ability to influence others. Power alone is not enough. A successful leader must strongly believe in his or her ideas and want to put to others, and those others must perceive this person as a figure of authority. US Congress woman Barbara Boxer said:

If you want to be a leader, it doesn't mean that you have to have an opinion on everything. But if you do have an opinion and it is clear, and you feel strongly about it, then you say it (Cantor and Bernay, 1992:59).

In reference to this statement, confidence greatly affects one's ability to make decisions. Doubt, on the other hand, leads to confusion and indecision. In order to have confidence, one must believe in one's ability, and this ability can only be achieved when one is willing to learn, listen, accept input from others, and be determined.

**Becoming a leader in a male environment** poses a dilemma for women. When a man leads other men, they relate to each other as equals. However, when a woman leads men, she does so from a position of having been taught since childhood to not be assertive around men. Many men experience difficulties relating to a female supervisor. This explains why a female manager, even if she has confidence in her ideas, may have greater difficulty getting and keeping the attention of the men under her supervision (61).

However, a housewife is already a leader in a male environment, although the attitudes of the men in her household are often degrading to her position. Men and boys forget that the abilities of the women who take care of the household, educate, and raise children. For house wives who work outside the home, the workload is more than doubled. Women have to demonstrate to men that they are capable of and responsible for multiple tasks every day. Demonstrating these abilities is not to show pride, but to seek appreciation from those who benefit from this work. **The importance of internal applause** is a belief that one's competence originates in early childhood. Children's earliest memories are of being loved and of being special. For young girls, this feeling is a form of constant approval from those around her. She believes that everyone thinks that what she does is wonderful. She believes the empowering message "I am lovable. People love me, even when I make mistakes." The young girl hears this message over and over until it becomes a part of her inner voice. It functions as a continuous round of internal applause, which eventually replaces her need for external applause in the form of constant positive feedback. Internal applause comes with a sense of security that gives the young girl the inner strength to take risks and try new things (Cantor and Bernay, 1992:97). Many of the women interviewed for the researches being conducted by some gender researchers reported that they felt loved and special before that question was asked as part of the interview process. The women reported feeling loved by parents, grandparents, and other relatives.

As noted in the previous section, children should be educated from an early age to relate to changes in mental attitude and ways of thinking. Therefore, to change the attitudes of a generation, mothers should first be educated. However, psychological education is considered less important in school. Contemporary for maleducation takes a cognitive approach, whereas, from the approach of moral education, the mindset is the foundation of attitudes and behaviors and character development. Mothers should learn the importance of giving praise to their children when those children are successful in various fields. Such praise instills pride and encourages children to perform better. Praise from parents can make children eager to live their lives with confidence.

Just as mothers praise their children when they excel, mothers themselves must be convinced of their excellence in running the household and raising children in different and, sometimes, difficult conditions. Raising the self-awareness of mothers that they are great people who should have self-esteem and dignity as women and, therefore, deserve respect and gender equality.

**Mature personality** is a personality not hampered by child hood trauma or conflict. Healthy people are guided and directed by their current intentions and anticipations of the future. They look outward toward the future (19). Allport quoted by Schultz (1991) states that a healthy personality is based on the principle of mastery and competence (25). Proprium (self) is one's unique physical self, identity, self-esteem, self-extension, self-profile, rational self, appropriate striving, and selfhood. People with a mature personality think rationally and logically, and do not behave childishly. They are not overly emotional in the face of difficulties, and they seek the best solutions to the problems they face in life. They are positive and optimistic throughout their lives and look forward to the future, rather than oriented to negativity and the past.

**A competent self** enables a woman to see possibilities instead of obstacles. Even when a possibility does not materialize into fact, but rather, turns into an obstacle, a qualified woman can draw on her competent self for the strength to weather the bad times and continue to pursue her vision of the future (26). Her competent self protects her from feeling threatened when she takes risks. Household problems are never-ending, making all family members feel uncomfortable and unhappy. When this happens, the mother not expected to make the condition worse but employs her patience and calm to solve problems and create better conditions. A mother carries a heavy load. On the one hand, she is expected to make a cozy home atmosphere, and on the other, she often experiences difficulties in caring for the household.

Mothers must always be reassured that they are strong, competent, and the mainstay for all family members, who create a harmonious and happy family life. Mothers must know that they are great people who develop the personality of their children to become productive members of the next generation. In this knowledge, it is expected that mothers will feel more confident and become more resilient in the face of difficulty. **Creative aggression** includes actions such as taking the initiative, leading others, and speaking out which are all considered positive attributes. Female aggression is redefined as being in the service of life and growth and not of rather than destruction. Horney (Cantor and Bernay, 1992) describes "adequate aggression" as follows

Capacities for work taking initiative; making efforts; carrying through to completion; attaining success; insisting upon one's rights; defending oneself when attacked; forming and expressing autonomous views; recognizing one's goals and being able to plan one's life according to them (27).

**Creative aggression** can enhance personal growth if used creatively and wisely. Woman Power is the power used to make the world a better place (28). Power is the ability to do or act. It is the ability to mobilize financial and human resources to influence results. It is the capacity to change that part of the world in which we live (36). These qualities

associated with power are strength, force, and authority. The emphasis here is on strength, authority, decisiveness, getting things done, and running other people's lives.

Women in Indonesia, and especially, housewives, already act in accordance with these concepts, but many women are unaware of their power and do not participate fully because of the obstacles they face. Traditional and less educated housewives generally do not dare to express their feelings, thoughts, or ideas. According to traditional and cultural values, such attitudes are impolite.

Women do not dare to argue or speak out to defend what they think is right, as such attitudes are not considered normal for Indonesian women. Women are able to manage their households, raise their children, and resolve the problems that occur in the household. Therefore, women need to awaken the courage to attain that which they are entitled. Mothers should be given guidance on how to pass this knowledge on to their daughters.

**Family values.** Research conducted by Horney with women who excel both in the family and in society has found that these are have levels of educational attainment, which helps them to appear more confident and to achieve self-actualization. Horney has found that, in addition to a warm, nurturing family life, these women come from families that place a high premium on education, community service and participation in politics.

As conveyed earlier, in order for Indonesian women to play a role in developing a sustainable future, their awareness of their capacities must be aroused. Education is the key to this. For women who have not gained a formal education, guidance and direction from women's organizations are important. Liberal feminism: gender prejudice is a matter of ignorance, and it can be overcome by the implementation of anti-discrimination regulations. Feminism can achieve its goals through re-education (Jones, 2009: 126). In the case of the family, traditional family values that have stagnated women must be broken. There are many government and stakeholder rules and regulations; however, advancing the position of women has still not been realized.

**The mother's role.** Mothers can be role models for their daughters as, often, mothers are closer to their children than fathers. If a mother does not demonstrate any competence, then her role is not much more than that of a housekeeper. The self-awareness of mothers must be raised so they can become role models for their daughters. As Schultz has noted, popular thinking would have us believe that strong political women are the way they are because they identify more closely with their fathers. However, if a mother is a strong and competent individual, then her daughter can identify with her and develop her own competent self. However, if the mother is perceived as weak and ineffective, some daughters will turn to their fathers and turn their backs on maternal values (104).

As this concept makes clear, if women want to play a role in development, they must quickly and immediately change their mindset and detrimental attitudes. They should no longer be passive, weak, and dependent on others, and they should no longer accept everything with resignation. It is the duty of women to help their fellow women, to guide and direct them to become as competent as the woman who is helping them. External government regulation and support

are merely complementary; women must be the initiators of change.

**Risk-taking and courage: The confidence factor in leadership.** The question remains of whether women dare to make these changes. To effect change for the sake of progress, women must dare to change traditional cultural values that curb freedom and impede progress. This is dependent on women, they should not merely complain while blaming those around them. Schultz writes, “what a paradox for the woman leader. Using your creative aggression and woman power to be an effective leader means you must deviate from the passivity associated with traditional conceptions of femininity. It means that you run the risk of being seen as unfeminine, undesirable, and unlovable. Women leaders in all arenas struggle with this difficult dilemma” (167).

Once women start to act to over haul the conditions of discrimination, they must have the courage to carry the risks involved. They certainly should not be too hasty or haphazard in taking action. They should be thoughtful and considerate and know that change cannot take effect in a short time. Changing the mental attitude and mind set requires thorough preparation, with regard to how and when to implement those changes. Changes toward improvement and progress should not destroy the existing order; rather, those changes should fix and improve those elements that hinder progress. Therefore, in the previous section, it was repeatedly stated that changing ideals takes a long time in order to achieve lasting and satisfactory results.

**Building a competent self: feeling loved and special.** How does feeling loved and special help build a competent self? When children learn to get their mother’s attention by crying, sucking, smiling and, later, talking, they are learning how to control their environment and their lives. They see how their actions are rewarded with attention and love. They feel seen and heard, attended to, loved, and cared for. As they continue to grow, they learn that similar actions in the world outside of the family can lead to similar results. The sense of competency begins in infancy. One’s earliest experiences of the competent self occur when one realizes that one can have an effect on others. As one grows older, one simply casts a wider net to include more others on whom to exert influence(139-140).

As this suggests, it is a natural human characteristic to desire attention and praise. Women, as mothers or daughters, seek praise by showing their achievements and good qualities to their families and the wider society. Proper attention and praise encourage people to perform better. Praise also increases self-confidence and self-competence. When women already have this attitude, it is possible to continue to improve and share this ability with the family, community, and the country. Therefore, women must be reminded and reassured that the people around them need them. From this experience, a transformation in confidence can be expected among children, and especially daughters. This is one method to stimulate the awareness of women and their confidence in their capabilities.

**Risk-taking starts early.** Humans must learn to take risks from an early age. As humans, we often seek safety and security, as we do not dare to take risks. This attitude is harmful, as a struggle is necessary to effect change and bring about. A mother’s ability to take risks and be courageous

influences a baby’s sense of trust in its mother. A mother’s capacity to take risks and to enjoy the feeling of being courageous influences an infant’s ability to trust, take risks, and to happily venture into the wider world. At the same time, as the infant is learning to trust its mother and to take risks, it learns to be wary of others.

**Self-trust, courage and smart risk.** Mary Landrieu, a treasurer from Louisiana, wrote:

I have a good bit of courage, but I think that comes from having a good self-image and self-confidence, which I thank my parents for. I learned that I can trust myself, that gives me the courage to do things I’ve never done before. If I did *this* and did it pretty well, I just assume that I can do *this* also. It’s just a matter of taking one step at a time. Of course, you get shaky when you fail or when you’ve made a wrong decision because it diminishes your self-confidence. But most of the time I feel courageous and pretty strong (176).

**Mistakes and setbacks: learning experience.** Education and learning experiences are important in the fight to change the fate of women. Therefore, women should not be afraid to make mistakes in the search for experience. Fear is ignorance that can prevent us from making progress. A mother does not need to be deterred by the fear of changing her fate, and family support is the most important thing she needs. Schultz argues that without the freedom to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes, one cannot creatively savor life’s possibilities and move forward. Women interviewed by Schultz consistently reported that the ability to trust in themselves grew out of early family support, which gave them the self-confidence to cope with mistakes and setbacks in adult life (181).

**Functional personality** is the ability to rely on one’s own experience about life based on one’s own reality. Self-actualization is healthy self-motivation and positive regard. Functional personality is composed of openness to experience, existential life, self-trust, sense of freedom, and creativity (50-54). With regard to these concepts, in order for Indonesian women to play a role in developing a sustainable future, they must be open to experience, take an existential approach to life, trust in themselves, and have a sense of freedom and creativity. How can each of these be realized? The answer lies in the reform of thinking which can only be obtained through planned activities. These activities should be taken seriously and receive support from relevant parties, including government bodies.

**Productive personality.** According to Fromm, it is the role of men to understand and change human personalities, as have happened to cultures throughout history. Whether a personality is healthy or unhealthy depends on whether a culture supports or hampers the development of positive human beings (62). Fromm argues that one’s personality is a product of culture. Unhealthy cultures create hostility, prejudice, and a lack of faith, all of which may hamper the development of each individual. Meanwhile, a productive personality results from the implementation and realization of human potential (71). Some traditional Indonesian cultures inhibit the development of positive human beings. As explained earlier, the influence of culture, customs, and misinterpreted religion often disables the position of women. Unhealthy cultures never place women at par with men and can even create hostility, prejudice, and lack of faith among the members of that culture, thus hampering the development

of each individual. If women want to achieve success in all areas of life, then the effort must come from women themselves. No one can help women except women themselves. Women should immediately recognize this and quickly rise to become beneficial to themselves and to society.

**Self-actualization**, according to Maslow, is when a man has already achieved his need for physiology, self-security, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Self-actualization is the development of a human being's potential, capacity, and competence in order to achieve self-actualization. The purpose is to enrich one's quality of life (93). Some indications of self-actualization are the ability to efficiently observe reality; a general acceptance of one's own and others' power of nature; spontaneity, simplicity, and naturalness; focusing on problems outside the self; the need for privacy and independence; the ability to function independently; an appreciation for spiritual experience; social interest; democratic personality; the ability to distinguish between good and bad; careful sense of humor; and resistant to toxic culture. Some of these indicators of self-actualization are associated with the mindset, mental attitude, and behavior that requires education and reform. In connection with this, women, especially housewives, must be given a well-planned education that explains in detail the meaning of these elements of self-actualization through examples of daily tasks undertaken by women and housewives. Such teaching and understanding will not be easy to implement, as many Indonesian women lack education and continue to think traditionally.

**Self-meaning**, according to Frankl, a healthy personality consists of the freedom to act; responsibility for one's actions; independence; acquiring a suitable meaning of life; self-control; the revelation of creative values, values of experience, and way of life values; and the ability to overcome personal problems (159). Similarly, more work is required in order to raise the self-meaning of women. The condition of many Indonesian women is underdeveloped and distressed, causing them to lack the courage to change. Mentors and teachers are required who have mastery in this field and can assist in the mental education of Indonesian women.

**Education as a necessity of life and education as a social function:** the need to develop, purify, and idealize existing social customs, creates a wider and better-balanced environment that influences young people (Dewey, 1966: 22). Therefore, in order to successfully raise the next generation, women must first be trained to transfer education to their children. Education refers to both the formal education received at school and the informal education acquired at home and in society. Education is a means to bring about reform, to create a more ideal society, and to lead to a bright future for young people.

**Education.** The value of a good education cannot be overemphasized, as it can lead to a competent self and creative aggression (Dewey, 1966: 62). Related to the problem of women with education and self-competence, education for women and girls must be pursued in such a way as to reveal their competence. A related problem is learning to not respond emotionally to attacks, as emotional responses by women are often ridiculed or used examples of women's inability to handle pressure. When an issue is emotional, emotions must be restrained. In order for women

to achieve self-competence and creative aggression, they must be educated. Education can be obtained formally, through the education system, and informally, through guidance and counseling. For housewives, education can be implemented through local organizations, such as the EFW. In settings such as this, counselors can provide continuous guidance and counseling to help women realize their self-competence and creative aggression. A mother can pass on the knowledge gained through this education to her daughters. It is important to emphasize that women must show self-competence and creative aggression in accordance with their status as housewives, caregivers, and educators.

**Education as direction** assumes direction, control, and guidance. Education as growth: habits as expressions of growth, the educational bearings of the conception of development and education as training of faculties (Dewey, 1966: 60-68). The most important factor for stimulating confidence and awareness among women is their capacity for education. Mothers must provide equal education opportunities for boys and girls. Girls must be allowed to attend high education in order to live independently in the future and have the ability to participate in the development of the nation. Education is not merely the absorption of theories but must also be balanced with concrete exercises. It is not only intellectual, but it must also provide mental and emotional education.

**Education as conservative and progressive.** Education as conservative and progressive tools can not be separated from culture. According to democratic conception education as national and as social process to strengthen the culture. Dewey wants to say that the aims of education should be together with the education of culture (Dewey, 1966: 99). Referring to the above concept, as conservative education, education-oriented attitude to life that is included in the culture. In other words, everyone is well-educated in accordance with their own national identity and culture, which supports the advancement of society and the nation of Indonesia. Education meets Indonesia's national and social objectives in accordance with the ideology of *Pancasila* and the Constitution of 1945. *Pancasila*, official philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state, consists of two Old Javanese words (originally from Sanskrit), "pañca" meaning five, and "sila" meaning principles. These five principles are held to be inseparable and interrelated: 1) Belief in the divinity of God (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*), 2) Just and civilized humanity (*Kemanusiaan Yang Adil dan Beradab*), 3) The unity of Indonesia (*Persatuan Indonesia*), 4) Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives (*Kerakyatan Yang Dipimpin oleh Hikmat Kebijaksanaan, Dalam Permusyawaratan dan Perwakilan*), and 5) Social justice for all of the people of Indonesia (*Keadilan Sosial bagi seluruh Rakyat Indonesia*).

If this concept is related to the condition of women in Indonesia, through national education, and as a social and cultural aim, then the education of women in Indonesia cannot be separated from national ideology and the education of the Indonesian personality. In connection with this goal, the re-education for women, and especially housewives, must be addressed by the EFW in the form of comprehensive and sustainable activities.

**Experience and thinking**—in determining the place of thinking in experience, it must first be noted that experience

involves a connection with doing or trying with which is undergone in consequence (Dewey, 1966: 151). With regard to this concept, experiences and thoughts are related to the actions and exercises. Therefore, the first task must be the reformation of mindset and subsequent outcome must be implemented in the form of a variety of activities that can ensure well-being for women and put women on a par with men. Activities related to this have already been undertaken by the women who have participated in EFW programs in various women's organizations in Indonesia.

**Educational values and moral theories.** These are internal and external; they are the opposition of duty and interest, intelligence and character, and the social and the moral (Dewey, 1966: 346-360).

This concept is very important to this subject as it involves the issue of values, morals, moods, and behavior. In the opinion of this author, and probably the opinion of many people, moral and character education is the foundation of all education and the foundation of human life. Education for women should emphasize on the role of values, morals, moods, and behavior, in order to stimulate self-confidence and awareness of women's capabilities. Education for women should refer to the capacity building of women; that is, how women can build a sustainable future. In this case, women must be qualified in accordance with their respective fields. With regard to moral problems, moods, and behaviors, women should appear respectable and dignified to be role models for younger generations.

**Unspoken parental messages.** Today's mothers must develop unambiguous messages for their daughters early on, to encourage their daughters to become who they want to be. These empowering messages must include ideas; that girls are entitled to dream of greatness, that nurturance and aggression are both legitimate parts of being feminine, and to foster a cohesive competent self (229). In accordance with this, mothers should be able to educate their daughters consistently and firmly. Mothers should encourage their daughters to be themselves, which means that they must be independent and confident. Girls must have high ideals, meaning they must be educated in order to be successful and beneficial to society. Girls should be educated and nurtured so that they are competent. To attain a competent self, girls should be given as much education as possible, so that they become knowledgeable and successful.

**Experiment.** Dewey wrote: "Choose a dream of your own to put into action. Look over the list of dreams you've created for yourself. Ask yourself which feels most achievable and satisfying. Start with a small dream. Set out a plan to achieve it, following the step-by-step pattern. When you've achieved a small dream, you will know that it is alright to dream of greater things. Your dream will motivate and energize you. "It is hoped that with growing activism for gender equality and with more female leaders, change will happen. It is also hoped that women in power will teach others the secret of leadership, including the importance of taking a leap of faith and looking for possibilities rather than obstacles. It is hoped these women serve as role models of leadership in all areas of life. To achieve this goal, implementation through women's organizations and non-governmental organizations will lead to the empowerment of women.

### III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In order to stimulate women's self-confidence and awareness of their capacities, a platform called EFW was created by the government. It carries out various activities to promote women's participation in society. However, none of these activities assist women in reforming their mental attitude and mindset. All activities thus far focus on material and physical education, such as clothing, food, and the household. Activities must be developed into modules that are easy for all women and girls, who need to acquire this knowledge, to understand. These activities should be carried out regularly, constantly, and thoroughly because education and the reform of the mental attitude and mindset are processes that require a great deal of time. Mental change and character building can change the dignity of women, communities, and the nation to become modern and progressive. Therefore, if the results of this study can be implemented, it is worthwhile to contribute it to the EFW through the Ministry of Women's Role.

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