

Meritocracy and Gender Equity

(Opportunity for Women Civil Service to Occupy the High Leader Position in Local Bureaucracy in Indonesia)

Eunike Prapti Lestari Krissetyanti

PhD student of the Faculty of Administrative Science,
University of Indonesia
Depok, West Java, Indonesia
Eunike.krissetyanti@gmail.com

Eko Prasajo and Azhar Kasim

Professors of the Faculty of Administrative Science,
University of Indonesia
Depok, West Java, Indonesia

Abstract—Process of selection and promotion on civil service in Indonesia that based on merit system has not been able to drive more women civil service to get the high leader position yet. Statistically, the number of women civil service in Indonesia's bureaucracy workforce had increased for recent years, but few numbers of women civil services who have structural positions, especially in high leader position. The problem of women under-representation in high leadership positions is more noticeable on the regional government bureaucracy. Meanwhile, implementation of the merit system in civil service management persistently is pursued. One of them is the open selection method to high leadership positions that provides greater opportunities to women to reach high positions in bureaucracy. This paper focused on why the merit system that be used in career development and job promotion, cannot drive the increasing number of women civil service to held high leader position is.

This study was conducted using qualitative method. Interviews were conducted against women civil service who structural position in the provincial government of DIY and Bali. Interview also conducted toward key person related to civil service career development in National Civil Service Agency and Local Civil Service Agency of the Province of DIY and Bali. Secondary data was also collected to support the argument of this study.

Finding of this research show that when the merit system is applied in organizations with a masculine culture, gender inequity can be occurred. This is supported by the perception of women that occupy high leader position, which states that to achieve their current position, necessary struggle more than men peer. This shows that the merit system sometimes cannot be applied in conjunction with the policy of equity, including gender equity. While affirmative action towards gender still being debated.

Keywords—meritocracy, gender equity, women civil service

I. INTRODUCTION

Meritocracy is a social system of society in which "merit or talent and effort becomes the basis for sorting people into positions and distributing rewards" [15]; [18]. The work organization adopted merit to be the basis for assessing, rewarding and career development of its employees. Definition of merit is initially limited to intelligence and effort. In its current development, the broader merit definition includes abilities, training and experience. Meritocracy is regarded as the ideal principle of justice, because it ignores irrelevant non-merit inputs such as gender, ethnicity, race, and social class [19]; [18].

Merit as the basis for the workings of functions within the organization becomes fundamental. Increasing number of organizations that emphasize merit as a core value and establish merit system, in part to eliminate bias and increase the perception of fairness in workplace [10]. But according to Castilla and Benard [1] meritocratic values and practices, if not implemented carefully, may actually increase bias than decreasing it. More firmly, Young who popularized merit system was ultimately self-criticized the practices of merit system that its outcomes became a new way of maintaining the status quo of the group defining merit and eventually legitimize social inequality.

Along with the emergence of a notion of gender equality, the practice of merit system in organizations faced new challenges. The merit principles that exclude non-merit factors, including gender, have not been able to support gender equality in work organization. This can be seen from the lack of representation of women in high positions within the organization. Becomes a question of whether merit system contribute to the phenomenon of the lack of representation of women in high positions in the organization, given the organization based on merit system will certainly implement it in the career development process of its employees.

In Indonesia, since the implementation of Law no. 5 of 2014, clearly defined that the implementation of merit system in the management of civil state apparatus. This implementation of merit system is related to several processes in the management of state civil apparatus, namely recruitment, development (career) and job selection. Merit becomes the basis of civil service management related to recruitment, career development and payroll system. Related to gender, recruitment process of civil service has resulted inequality in terms of the numbers between men and women. The number of female civil servants in Indonesia has increased in recent years, ie 44 percent in 2007 to 48.89 percent in 2015. However, this equality is not followed in the career development process, especially career development in structural positions.

Women representation in structural position is only 29.76 percent. Women representation in upper position (high leadership position) is only 17.42 percent of all official of high leadership position. The largest percentage is official in low-level echelon, and the smallest percentage is official in the top level echelon. This phenomenon shows that there are still

obstacles for women civil service for a career in structural positions, especially for the upper level.

Due that 79.05 percent of civil services in Indonesia are the local or regional civil service, so that the problem of women under-representation in high leadership position is also more occurred in local government. Basically the problem of career development of civil service on structural positions in local government is the tight competition to occupy structural positions. This happens because the number of structural positions in the region is very limited (compared to the center government). Meanwhile, the number of civil service who meet the requirements to occupy structural positions is much more. This causes the issue of gender equality in structural positions at the local government to be insensitive. This causes the issue of gender equality in structural positions at the local government to be insensitive. It became evident that the representation of women in high-level structural positions (high leadership position) is relatively small. This phenomenon occurs in all provinces in Indonesia, including the province of DIY and Bali.

Women representation in all level of structural positions in the provincial government of DIY is about 38.5 percent. The highest percentage is the lower level structural position of the supervisor or echelon IV. The percentage of representation in high leadership positions is only about 24.3 percent. This point is quite high compared to some other provinces such as Bali province which only has percentage of women representation in high leader position about 10.64 percent.

Women under representation show that there is glass ceiling phenomenon in career development in government. Some studies have concluded that the glass ceiling still exists, and the impact is felt by women in their career development [2]; [3]; [12]; and [17]. The sources of the glass ceiling come from personal, interpersonal, organizational, and societal factors. These factors can be mutually blessed or influential. This study focuses on organizational factors that challenge women in the development and advancement of their careers. These organizational factors in particular are related to policies in the promotion and development of careers of civil service.

Related to gender equality in career development, meritocracy in public organizational practices became one of the government's efforts to increase the chance of women to be able to occupy structural positions at all levels. Merit system becomes the basic for employee selection process to occupy structural positions. Especially in selection for high leader position (high level job structural), using open system. According to Law No. 5 of 2014 (section 108, 109 and 110), the filling for high leader positions in central and regional government office be open and competitive among the civil service by taking into account the requirements of competency, qualifications, rank, education and training, track records office, and integrity as well as the requirements of other positions in accordance with the provisions of the legislation.

Implementation of merit system indicates that there is an effort to gain the equality in the selection of structural

positions, including gender equality. This is in accordance with the Law no. 5 of 2014, section 72 that state "promotion of civil service is conducted by comparing the objective of competence, qualifications and requirements needed by the office, the assessment of job performance, leadership, teamwork, creativity, and consideration of the assessment team performance of civil servants in Government Agencies, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, race and class". Meritocracy can ensure gender equality, but by applying the same standards, for example in the process of job selection, does gender equity ensure? This question is supported by data that although women and men civil service have the same capabilities and competencies, more men are occupying structural positions, especially upper levels.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using qualitative method. This method is used due the researcher's needs to get deep information about meritocracy and gender equity in bureaucracy, with empirical studies on the career development of female civil servants in structural positions. Data collection based on in-deep-interview, using face-to-face or telephone interview. All the interviews were conducted individually, so as enable the participants can share their experiences, argument or perception as open as possible. Interviews were conducted against women civil service who held structural position in the provincial government of DIY and Bali. In-deep-interview also conducted toward key person of Local Civil Service Agency and National Civil Service Agency, related to their role in policy making for civil service. This study also based on literature study. Some finding of previous research is used to support the analysis

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Women Representation in Structural Position

The number of civil services of the province of DIY in 2016 is about 6,707 people, that consisting 3,898 men civil service and 2,809 women civil service. The number of civil services of the province of Yogyakarta as a whole has declined in recent years. However, if seen from the number of women civil service has increased from 48 percent in 2015 to 49 percent in 2016. This amount is almost the same as men civil service. Meanwhile the percentage of women civil service in structural positions in province of DIY is still small compared to civil service. Women representation in structural positions in the provincial government of DIY is about 38.5 percent. The highest percentage is the lower level structural position of the supervisor or echelon IV. The percentage of representation in high leadership positions is only about 24.3 percent.

In the province of Bali, the number of civil service in 2016 is 6,207, consisting of 2,545 (41 percent) of women civil service and 3,662 (59 percent) of men civil service. The total number of civil service increased compared to the previous year. The percentage of women civil service in 2016 is about 40.6 percent. This number is slightly increased compared to

the previous year. Structural or echelon officials in the Provincial Government of Bali are still dominated by men civil service, especially in high-level positions. Of the 942 structural officials, 38.75 percent are women, and the highest percentage was echelon IV officials. Women representation in high leadership positions about 10.64 percent.

These secondary data show that women representation in high leader positions in these two provincial governments, are still low. These facts also show that there are barriers that women civil service must faced to advance their career in structural position. Selection and promotion system that based on merit system has not been able to encourage more women to occupy structural positions, especially at the top level.

Referring to aspects of capability as measured by formal education, there is no wide gap between men and women civil service in these two locus of study. In the provincial government of DIY as same as the provincial government of Bali, the number of men and women civil service that have high education level (diploma until doctoral level), are relatively equal. The fact means that individual capability is not barriers for women civil service to get structural position. This finding show support the finding of previous research that barriers on women civil service in their development career is subtle and not visible [3]; [4]; [13]; [16]; and [17].

B. Can meritocracy ensure the gender equity?

Meritocracy that requires merit to be the foundation of the human resource management is considered an effective way to reduce women's barriers to occupying structural positions. The merit principles are considered to guarantee justice or equity by providing equal opportunities between men and women in career [8]. The principle merit system prioritizes is talent and performance, regardless of non merit factors, including gender.

Empirically the traditional working pattern still 'coloring' the pattern of career development in the bureaucracy, as well as the policies of civil service that gender-neutral. According to [14], traditional working pattern, such career pattern and full-timer career is based on typical working lives of men. To be able to occupy structural positions, especially upper level, women must have some characteristics and personality of men.

Some participants of this study who have held the structural position of echelon II (high leadership position) suggested that in order to occupy their current positions, they should perform the male characteristics such as prioritizing rationality, tough, firm, engage in informal networks, high spirit of competition, etc. It is an inequity (injustice) to 'force' women to follow the masculine career path. This is in accordance with Mavin's [14] argues, that women tend to have a 'competitive disadvantage' in career advancement. This finding is relevant to [6] who argue that gender bias often seen in leadership. Gender bias in leadership typically places women at a disadvantage relative to men. So that men continue to hold more powerful position than women.

Furthermore, the participation of women in this study did not perceive it as an obstacle in their careers. These findings

support the previous study of Marhaeni's study [13] that barriers derived from organizational factors are often perceived as commonplace because organizational policies or practices especially about career development have long been in operation. This has led to the frequent occurrence of women civil service themselves assuming the factor is no longer an obstacle. This kind of barrier is often regarded as a glass ceiling. This is in line with the opinion that gender bias has changed from 'the first-generation' that state the discrimination, to 'the second-generation' (bias more subtle and often invisible barriers to women) [6]; [7]. The second-generation bias is barrier for women arise from cultural assumptions and organizational structures, practices, and pattern of interaction that inadvertently benefit men [7].

Barriers that come from organization arises notion about relation between gender and organization. These assume arises the concept of gendered organization. Gendered organization that be stated by Halford et al [5] assume that gender become one of *substructure* in organization, or referred to as *gendered substructure of organization*. According Halford's view, organization and gender cannot analyze separately, but these two terms related each other.

While the traditional working pattern is still preserved in the bureaucracy, meritocracy becomes a necessity to be applied. Traditional pattern in development career will indirectly preserve the imbalance between women and men in career development especially in structural positions. Traditional working patterns that match the working life of men will benefit men in their career. Meanwhile, the implementation of meritocracy will somewhat be influenced by the characteristics of dominant groups which, in terms of gender, are male. This dominant group will determine the merit identification in the practice of merit system.

Almost all participant of this research perceived no bias in merit system practices. They still belief that merit system is the fairest system for promotion system in structural position. According to Song Hing et al [19] and McNamee and Miller [15], the practical of merit system are prone to occur bias. That is because merit identified by people who have success through that merit system. In identifying merit they will certainly involve their characteristics, including gender characteristics. Due that all participant are structural officials that part of them have role as decision maker, so that they feel no bias in setting the competency standards. This is in line with Kravits and Yuengling's [10] argue that in an organization that stresses meritocracy, decision-makers feel confident that their actions are unbiased and will be seen as unbiased. This is precisely the situation in which their biases are mostly affects their behavior [10].

Related to contingent perspective in gendered organization that argued by Kanter [9], managerial of bureaucratic life requires the creation of an environment, in which the manager or leader will share 'common-features' or Kanter calls it 'homo-sociability'. In this context, there is a tendency that male leaders will appoint other male leaders to establish and preserve the 'form of male homo-sociability'.

The other perspective of this problem is when a public service-oriented bureaucracy is demanded for democracy, including the element of representation, ie gender representation. That is becomes a clash with meritocracy within the bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is required to be able to make merit principles compatible with equity values. In Indonesian's bureaucracy, affirmative action against women that considered be able to overcome this clash, is still a debate between the group that agree with and the opposition [11]. Support for the gender based affirmative action is based on the argument that affirmative action for women can accelerate the empowerment of women, especially in public areas. While the increasing number of women occupying strategic positions in the bureaucracy, the more policy and gender responsive development. Meanwhile opposition of affirmative action based on argument that in recent years, women civil service has the capability and competence of civil servants that are relatively similar to the male, so they can compete in the promotion to positions in the bureaucracy.

IV. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to analyze meritocracy and gender equity empirically and theoretically. There are two things analyzed. The first, the traditional working pattern, such as the career pattern and the full-timer career that based on the typical working lives of men, make women have 'competitive disadvantage' in career advancement. Second, implementation of meritocracy is prone to invisible bias. When the bureaucracy is dominated by men who occupy high positions, the identification of merit will in some degree be influenced by their gender characteristics. As a result, policies are gender-neutral, which may lead to inequity against women. Meanwhile, affirmative action against women that considered be able to overcome clash between meritocracy and equity, is still a debate between the group that agree with and the opposition.

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