

ABSTRACT

GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN POLITICAL REALITY
A Study on Female Leaders in the Provincial Government
of Yogyakarta Special Territory

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This research study aims to describe, through the social construction perspective, how four female civil servants attain their present political reality, becoming top leaders in the Provincial Government of Yogyakarta Special Territory, where male leaders are usually dominant. There are three issues related to this. The first issue deals with how a social construction of women's careers takes place. The question arises regarding what kinds of childhood they think are related to their present status. The second issue deals with why women can reach the leader position. The question arises regarding what steps there are in their career paths and what experiences they have. The third issue deals with a variety of constraints that may hamper their attempts to reach the leader position. This focuses on how they cope with the constraints.

By applying the interpretive qualitative method (phenomenology), this study tries to investigate the four research subjects in accordance with their perceptions. The primary data are collected through in-depth interviews with the subjects. Besides, the data are also collected through other informants (not the research subjects) and observations, and by making use of secondary data as well as a variety of documents.

The findings of the study show that the construction of women's careers in the government begins with the self-confidence they have possessed since their childhood. When they have grown up, they externalize it by becoming career women, besides being wives and mothers. They can attain the top leader position because the self-confidence they have possessed since their childhood become objective and strengthening in the steps of their long career paths, so that they do not submit to the status quo condition. They admit that there are hidden constraints, but they realize (internalize) their competence, so that they can cope with those hidden constraints.

The conclusion of the study is that all female leaders are not born or present naturally, but are constructed (made/produced) by human activities. The construction involves three simultaneous processes, namely externalization, objectification, and internalization.

Key words: Female leaders, gender construction