



Asian Association of Women's Studies

KACP Collaborative Research Report

Gender Justice and Democracy in Asia

Asian Association of Women's Studies

[Phase 3] Korea-ASEAN Cooperation Project (KACP)
on Education and Exchange Program
for Young Scholars in Women's Studies



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Gender Justice and Democracy in Asia
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PREFACE

The Asian Association of Women's Studies (AAWS) recognizes that one of the priorities for fostering the ASEAN community is narrowing the development gap between women and men and among countries in order to provide opportunities for all under an equitable, inclusive, and caring ASEAN community. To address the said development gap and strengthen the alliance between ASEAN and Korea, AAWS proposed the Korea-ASEAN Cooperation Project on Education and Exchange Program for Young Scholars in Women's Studies, which we simply call as the KACP, to the ASEAN through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

In partnership with the ASEAN University Network (AUN), AAWS designed the KACP in three phases as an international academic project, which provides education and exchange opportunities for professors, professionals, and young scholars in Women's Studies. From 2012 to 2015, KACP Phases 1 and 2 engaged the participants in presentations, discussions, and debates on women's issues through international open fora, conferences and workshops; created a community of like-minded individuals advocating for gender equality and democracy in Asia; and immersed the keynote speakers, participants, resource persons, and guests into the lives and experiences of local women through different study tours and NGO visits in Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. KACP Phase 3 was meant to actualize the potential and need for Korea-ASEAN collaborative networking and research publication on studies of women in Asia. From June to December 2016, Phase 3 involved six collaborative research teams composing of one coordinator and three collaborators in rigorous research development workshops and presentations in Thailand and Vietnam, not to mention the individual and group fieldwork the collaborators conducted in their respective countries.

Besides the education, exchange opportunities, and collaborative research endeavor, AAWS was able to build the Korea-ASEAN Women's Studies and Leadership Network (KAWSLN), recognized by the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM-ED). Through the growing network and community of feminist experts in AAWS, we have survived each year, fulfilled the objectives, increased our interest, and sustained

the commitment we have for KACP. In fact, for three phases, we caught the interest and attention of about 500 applicants and selected only about 60 participants from Korea and ASEAN countries.

This **KACP Collaborative Research Report** presents the results of the said research development workshops, fieldwork, and presentations of six collaborative teams commissioned to address these contested issues and themes: (1) violence against women; (2) peace, environment, and security; (3) ethnicity, religion, and sexuality; (4) gender, migration, and culture; (5) femininity, pop-culture, and the beauty industry; and (6) gender, sex/sexuality education and culture. Each of the 18 research articles presented here underwent review and revision resulting from the discussions and comments by the coordinators and other suggestions received from the senior scholars and the larger audience at the Congress in Vietnam.

It is very important to note that the research results presented here have been submitted for publication consideration to the *Asian Journal of Women's Studies (AJWS)*, a quarterly SSCI-indexed journal owned by the Asian Center for Women's Studies of Ewha Womans University in Seoul, Korea and published by Routledge, Taylor & Francis, the leading publisher in social sciences based in the UK. Submission of any of these research articles to another journal is prohibited while these papers are still on screening process by *AJWS*. Citations are also not permitted without the knowledge of the research collaborator, coordinator or the KACP Secretariat.

Indeed, the KACP Collaborative Research project of AAWS has allowed us to actively engage ourselves in problematizing issues that greatly affect the women among the estimated 650 million total populations in Korea and ten ASEAN Member States. Through this intensive feminist participatory research and transnational collaborative efforts, I hope that we have made a stark difference in Asia and the ASEAN region.

KIM Eun-Shil, Ph.D.

KACP Phase 3 Principal Investigator & AAWS Vice-President (2013-2016)
Director, Asian Center for Women's Studies; Director, Korean Women's Institute
Professor of Women's Studies, Ewha Womans University, Republic of Korea

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Education, research, collaboration and networking are the core of the KACP imbibed and sustained by committed individuals and institutions in Korea and ten ASEAN countries, including Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. For this collaborative research work, AAWS would like to thank and commend the 18 young scholars, who were selected as research collaborators in six different teams, along with their research coordinators for their interest, professionalism, and passion in doing this tedious research assignment.

Without the generosity and commitment of the ASEAN and Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it would be impossible for the KACP to count the research accomplishments presented in this KACP Collaborative Research Report. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Ms. Rodora T. Babaran, Director of the Socio-Cultural Cooperation Directorate, for her full participation and support in different KACP events in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. In a very special way, we are so grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea for its generosity and guidance in carrying out this project, particularly Ms. Minjoung Park, the Consultant for the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund for making time to grace us at the 4th AAWS Congress in Vietnam during which occasion the KACP Collaborative Research papers were presented and deliberated on. We are also indebted to Prof. Nantana Gajaseni, the Executive Director of AUN, who has been supportive of the KACP since 2012; the AAWS Council and Secretariat led by President Grace J. Alfonso; the organizers from Ewha Womans University in Korea; Thammasat University in Thailand; Thang Long University in Vietnam; the University of the Philippines Open University in the Philippines; and all other institutions and individuals, who invested so much in order to make the Research Development Workshop in Thailand and the 4th AAWS Congress and KACP event in Vietnam a great success!

Thank you very much.

AAWS-KACP Secretariat

OVERALL SUMMARY

To investigate and draw from the findings an epistemological frame on the social, cultural, political, religious, environmental, and economic issues, occurrences, and conditions that are integral to achieving “Gender Justice and Democracy in Asia,” AAWS called for young women professionals and expert professors to collaboratively conduct research on six different themes listed below. Thanks to the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund, these six collaborative research teams composing of one coordinator and three collaborators from Korea and ASEAN countries successfully conducted 18 research studies after a series of research workshops, individual and group fieldwork, and paper presentations in Bangkok, Thailand and Hanoi, Vietnam from June to December 2016.

Violence Against Women. This research team explored the adaption of conceptual frameworks that would allow for a better understanding of the complex dynamics of local cultures, the political economy, and the universal human rights discourse in the planning of advocacy programs and projects against gender-based violence and the crafting of laws to eradicate violence against women. Employing the concepts of intersectionality, vernacularization and feminist comparative method, the team examined how culture and local cultural practices are key elements in the failures and successes of laws and programs that aim to protect women against violence in South Korea, Myanmar, and Lao PDR. As a result, the research papers underscored the importance of addressing domestic violence through legal protection, notwithstanding the unique challenges to legislating and implementing these laws. They also illustrated how this interaction between local culture and the international concept of human rights could shape the legislative agenda as well as the extent of the successes and shortfalls of the law.

Peace, Environment, and Security. The three individual research papers in this team aimed to explore women’s perspectives, narratives, and insights on conflict, war, peace, and peace building process in Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The research collaborators documented women’s personal but political narratives of war and conflict, analyzed the different layers of struggles that they experienced within gendered power relations, and explored the gendered dynamics within complex arrangement of land and resources

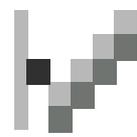
tenure that interlinked with agrarian conflicts including those caused by environmental-related policies and programs. Altogether, the research results deconstruct militaristic, linear, male-dominated view about conflict, war and peace; they deconstruct non-feminist leadership in peace building process; and they also deconstruct masculine view of environmental and agrarian conflicts.

Ethnicity, Religion, and Sexuality. Gender constructs in relation to women are very closely related to views about women's body and sexuality. Many cultures and religions prescribe what is seen as the appropriate way for women to dress and act (less so for men), either all the time in public or in certain religious or cultural circumstances. The research collaborators in this team discussed how ethnicity, religion and sexuality intersect in women's lives by looking at the public sphere of political participation (in Indonesia), the experiences of marriage in the circumstances of women pursuing higher education (in Thailand), and the narratives of women on the issue of femininity (in Malaysia). The studies revealed that women's gender roles and expectations are highly ordered by cultural contexts or spaces produced by religious and ethnic influences. Although the studies may be limited to the context of Islam, they present diverse ethnic and cultural situations and show how Islam interacts with ethnic and local cultures to form some variation on how gender constructions are produced.

Gender, Migration, and Culture. This research team conducted three case studies of women migrant workers that provide gender-sensitive insights on policies and institutions of international migration. In particular, one case investigated the gender differential patterns and use of remittances of Indonesian domestic workers, focusing on the empowerment and poverty reduction of women returnees and migrant families in Central Java, Indonesia. Another case study scrutinized existing regulatory governance framework and women's agency in the marriage migration of Filipino women married to South Korean nationals. And the third case study examined the current situations and policies of women's labour migration in Cambodia and discussed the existing regulations, laws and international agreement governing Cambodian women in international labour migration. The case studies illustrate substantial policy implications in terms of the enhancement of national government policies and regional governance between countries of origin and destination in order to protect women migrants, thereby harnessing their economic and social contributions to the sustainable growth of home countries.

Femininity, Pop Culture, and the Beauty Industry. The research collaborators from Brunei, Indonesia, and Korea explored how femininity is shaped by other cultural elements and power structures, especially patriarchy, capitalism and religion. The three research papers investigated how beauty interacts with other aspects of social life and how women negotiate their gender expectation through beauty. Beauty was displayed through images in order to be evaluated, regulated and marketed. Through constructing and projecting the images of feminine body, women negotiate with the notion of femininity and the value assessed by others in their societies. Beauty and fashion served as sites of control and contestation and were marketed by the capitalists against the backdrop of neoliberal globalization. The studies on this theme found that there are normative standards of beauty that regulate women's appearance and behavior and that the social media emerged as an important arena for women to contest these standards.

Gender, Sex/Sexuality Education, and Culture. The three research papers on this theme affirm the crucial role that education, religion, family, and culture play in understanding gender, sex, and sexuality. One collaborator unpacked the grand narratives of international institutions and local tensions between religious fundamentalists and classroom teachers and students in Indonesia; another collaborator analyzed the 'School Sexuality Education Standards (SSES)' in Korea and proposed feminist media literacy in sexuality education; and the third collaborator primarily examined the Framework on Sexuality Education and the Growing Years and Empowered Teens (eTeens) Series in Singapore. The studies revealed that the proliferation and sophistication of communications and information technology offer innovative approaches to teaching gender, sex, and sexuality. However, they certainly pose threats to young and adolescent learners as they become digital natives who fully take advantage of the global information that is widely disseminated in the internet. We hope that the international community, the national government, the school administration, concerned families, citizens, and individuals in Korea and ASEAN learn from the findings, recommendations, and implications of these studies.



Theme

1

Violence Against Women

On Culture, Human Rights, and the Politics of Crafting Laws to Protect Women against Domestic Violence: Case Studies from Myanmar, Lao PDR and South Korea

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Cultural differences among ethnic groups and the deeply entrenched patriarchal practices in communities are the major challenges to addressing issues of violence and discrimination, as these are compounded by everyday economic issues and by the larger socio-political milieu. To understand these challenges better, the research team employed as an overarching framework the feminist concept of “intersectionality” in order to address, and make sense of, the several overlapping and intersecting issues of received gender roles and cultural assumptions, ethnic specificities, economic realities and challenges, and state laws and decisions.

Intersectionality, a term that was coined by the legal scholar and theorist Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, broadly allows for the analysis of forms of oppression and repressive institutions, in relation to, and interconnected with, other systems of oppression; in short, different forms or factors of oppression can interact and overlap. This heuristic model illustrates the interface among different systems or factors and the important dynamics among them, which leads to a better, more nuanced understanding of issues. Originally designed to examine the triad of gender, race, and class, the concept has, in the past years, expanded as a general term to emphasize the interconnectedness of different forms of identity, which may have been traditionally examined separately. The important insight from this model of interconnectedness is the comprehension that “a unique identity,” and possibly a unique circumstance, “develops from an individual’s belonging to multiple categories simultaneously” (Davis 2015).

Based on our review of the literature and on our own experiences from the field doing advocacy work and this research, it became apparent for us that the principles of human rights, especially women's human rights, are widely accepted to the extent that hardly anyone would contest these. In fact, in nation-states like Lao PDR and Myanmar, gender advocates and government alike both support and promote the protection and pursuit of women's human rights as part of the development process.

It is in this context that we thought it important to emphasize that advocacy programs, and the crafting of laws, should ensure to take into account the cultural milieu and specificities of communities to allow for a better understanding, acceptance, and eventually, the "living" of the principles of human rights and gender equality. By taking into account the cultural norms and practices, as well as, cultural productions of our communities we thought we could understand better how to introduce and incorporate ideas and principles of rights that may have a different phrasing or "packaging" compared to local ones. Furthermore, if in case there are material sources and insights that could be drawn from our local cultures, even the very same patriarchal culture, to understand and to put a stop to issues of violence against women, then these should be mined and utilized.

The research projects of Su Yin Htun from Myanmar and Viengdavong Luangsithideth from Lao PDR examined local cultural issues, including early marriage and limited access to education, that continue to allow for violence against women and girls to flourish in their respective communities, even as consciousness-raising projects and advocacy to stop violence in these communities are still few and greatly needed. The prevalence of VAW in Myanmar may be traced to the unequal status of men and women in society. As prescribed by custom and culture, married women are expected to be housewives, primarily in charge of housework and childrearing. Meanwhile, the research of Heo Min Sook from Korea provides our research team with a more eloquent way of phrasing this intention of localizing "universal" discourses in her attempt to explore the context in which the Korean battered women's movement emerged and developed to combat domestic violence in South Korea.

Min Sook brings to our team the language of Sally Merry on “Vernacularization.” In the essay “Vernacularization on the Ground: local uses of global women’s rights in Peru, China, India, and the United States” written with Peggy Levitt, Sally Merry writes: vernacularization “is a process of creating meaning by connecting, in a variety of ways, the discourse of the global with local social justice ideologies, within the context of a particular organizational style and ethos” (Levitt and Merry). Moreover, they explain:

Instead of simply transferring human rights ideas as articulated in international law and conventions to local situations, the leaders and staff in the organizations we studied redefined and adapted these ideas to facilitate their understanding and assimilation. They modified aspects of women’s human rights so that they were comprehensible and appropriate in a particular context [...] In practice, human rights were a malleable discourse subject to many different interpretations and meanings which activists applied to particular problems in specific situations.

Overall, the research papers in this research cluster had hoped to illustrate the potentials of the lenses of intersectionality and vernacularization in dealing with the issues of violence against women, specifically domestic violence, in the Korean-ASEAN region, as the utility of a feminist comparative approach is explored for a more nuanced coalition/solidarity-building among the ASEAN and Korean communities and research scholars.

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Reflecting the Past, Sharing the Present: Anti-Domestic Violence and the Discourse of Women's Human Rights

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Abstract

This article explores the context in which the Korean battered women's movement emerged and developed to combat domestic violence in South Korea. It also addresses consequences and effects of institutionalization and state intervention in domestic violence with legislative reforms. Korean feminists' framing of "preservation of the family" for the campaign against domestic violence seemed to represent the best available alternative to construct domestic violence as a social problem and a crime within the South Korean cultural and political climate. While identifying benefits and changes resulted from legislative process in South Korea, this article emphasizes the significance of vernacularization of the women's human rights framework to rearticulate domestic violence as a matter of gender equality and social justice.

The Establishment of the Korea Women's Hotline

While the battered women's movement emerged both in the United States and Britain from the revived women's liberation movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the context of civil rights movements, a Korean women's group that politicized the issue of wife beating was formed during military authoritarian rule. Therefore, unlike Western countries where pre-existing feminist groups played a crucial role in building battered women's movements, a newly-formed women's group carved out an anti-violence against women's movement in South Korea. Founded in 1983, Korea Women's Hotline was the first women's group to exclusively focus on "women-only issue (wife battering)." For civil society organizations struggling under the hardship of the military regime, the formation of independent women's groups that

focused on issues like wife beating (considered a “private matter”) was not appreciated. Such issues were considered to have a secondary status far beneath nationalist and democratic struggles.

Feminist theorists have pointed out that women’s long exclusion from formal politics, including under authoritarian and military regimes, paradoxically contributed to women’s access to the political arena because of hardships experienced under military rule. In other words, in the context of authoritarianism that suppressed conventional political activities, greater political space was given to women because women’s activities were not regarded as political resistance or struggle—they were seen as social welfare and cultural activities. Susan Francheschet (2001) argues that “during the authoritarian period women can organize precisely because their gender associates them with the non-political sphere, thus their participation is not perceived as a threat to the regime” (210-1). In a similar vein Gerard Huiskamp (2000) found that feminist groups and women’s organizations were able to occupy political space due to the “cultural belief that women were inherently apolitical” (388-9). During the military dictatorship in South Korea, women’s resistance struggles swayed public opinion and garnered support and the attention of the mass media by playing on gender roles, especially that of the mother (Nam 1998, 3). For example, in street demonstrations women wore handkerchiefs (*sambae sugun*) on their heads, a traditional symbol of mourning and loss in South Korea used to represent the death of democracy (Nam 2000, 103). This created a cultural contradiction between Confucian inspired interpretations of motherhood and women’s roles in defense of the family on the one hand and the overt political objective of defense of the nation by women.¹

This aspect of Korean women’s participation in the democratic movement had important implications for the emergence of the Korea Women’s Hotline in 1983. Lee Hyun Sook and Jung Chun Sook (1999) point out that the preparation period (1980-1983) for establishing the KWH was precisely at one of the lowest points for civil society due to increased government repression and the consolidation of military authoritarianism (108). Despite these hostile conditions, the fact that KWH advocated

¹ Similar situations have been identified in Southeast Asia and Latin American for motherist human rights groups.

for and provided assistance to battered women seems to have protected it. Apparently, the KWH was not regarded as a major threat to the authoritarian government.

In the Korean context, Jung (2003) and Moon (2002) identified the military regime's appeasement policy after 1983 and the inauguration of a civil regime in 1993 as two extremely crucial political spaces for the development and spread of civil society, including women's movements. They argued that the loosening of political restrictions was a factor that fostered the emergence of "single-issue women's groups" (Jung 2003, 265; Moon 2002, 489).

Nonetheless, the establishment and achievement of KWH cannot be explained without understanding the roles, activities, and dedication of the progressive women intellectuals and activists who comprised the organization. These, in turn, were "products" of the "social education for women's program" of the Christian Academy and Young Women's Group (KWH 1983, 2). The experience of the national year of women in 1975 and the emergence of women's studies classes through the Christian Academy also played a role. They motivated some middle-class and intellectual women to address the issue of gender oppression and male dominance through the establishment of independent women's groups in South Korea.

The contribution of women intellectuals to developing the issue of wife beating was not confined to pushing the limits of the state. Just as battered women's movements in Western societies benefited from sharing information and experiences between and among countries, the Women's Hotline took advantage of even indirect exposure to feminist movements in Western countries. For example, intellectuals who visited battered women's shelters while studying abroad in the 1970s and the early 1980s played key roles in founding KWH (Han 2005, 97). In this respect, the emergence of KWH in Korean society cannot be explained with a single factor or unitary measure or even solely by local context or events.

In sum, progressive women became interested in women's issues and activities through their involvement in labor and democratic movements under the brutal military regime, and they used to their advantage whatever political opportunities emerged during and following military authoritarianism. At the same time, while some women's movements confined themselves to a meta-narrative of nationalism and democratization,

members still shared oppressive experiences as women. This contributed to a crossing of boundaries to support shared causes in spite of differences as factory workers, students, or intellectual women. The latter facilitated the subsequent establishment of autonomous and independent women's groups.

The Evolution and Activities of the Korea Women's Hotline

Following establishment, the KWH conducted and presented the first research results on wife battering in South Korea in 1983. Research indicated that 42.2% of 708 women respondents surveyed said that they had experienced beatings after marriage (KWH 1983, 4). In this research, KWH used the feminist term "wife beating" instead of the culturally-accepted term of "marital spat." The latter term represents conflict as a private, married couple's issue and ignores the gender-based power differentials suggested by the former term. Despite their scant resources² and an oppressive political milieu, this first survey on wife beating in Korean society drew widespread public attention through mass media coverage and reports.

KWH is widely credited with launching the first organized movement against violence against women in South Korea. It organized the first open discussions on wife beating and established a crisis hotline service with two telephones.³ Services were provided by volunteers who received feminist counseling education beforehand.

Although KWH's main goal was to construct the issue of wife beating as a social problem, its members decided to participate in democratic movements. KWH members understood women's issues in terms of sociopolitical factors such as capitalist exploitation, cultural mores, and military authoritarian regimes. KWH tied the causes of wife beating to the normative use of sexual and other forms of violence by the military regime, as well as to deeply-rooted patriarchy and institutionalized gender discrimination (Han 2005, 98). Given the goal of social change as a significant condition for eliminating wife beating, KWH members saw participation in democratic

² KWH began with donations from individual members and volunteers as staff.

³ According to Lee and Jung (1999), KWH received 541 calls in the first 15 days despite having just two telephone lines. KWH, mass media, and the Korean society were surprised by the number of calls and their content (113).

movements as one strategy. They participated by building coalitions with other progressive organizations and groups.

However, these activities caused an identity crisis among some members and staff of KWH. They raised a question of organizational identity – whether KWH is a counseling center, a women’s movement organization, or a political group. KWH also confronted challenges from progressive activists who regarded KWH’s activities on the issues of wife beating or sexual abuse as a disturbing activity of secondary importance at a time when building a democratic nation should be the primary goal (Lee and Jung 1999, 111). As a result of this internal discussion, KWH made a decision to build an identity as a women’s movement organization but supported a broad range of goals including struggling against “wife beating, sexual abuse, sexual discrimination,” attaining “women’s labor rights,” and building “an independent unified democratic society” (111). Following a declaration to this effect, KWH opened the first shelter for victims of wife beating in South Korea in 1987.

In November 1991, KWH organized a campaign in Seoul to mark “International Day Against Violence Against Women.” They were joined by a coalition of women from 26 countries. KWH identified this and similar activities as actions of a “women’s human rights movement” involving international networks and coalitions in the mid 1990s. In the meantime, KWH extended its service activities through the establishment of local branches of the Hotline.⁴

In terms of organizational structure and democratic process, local branches have autonomy and authority to make decisions to recruit members and volunteers and to develop ideas and practices appropriate to their local area. At the same time, all local branches are closely connected in a network, sharing information and discussions and building coalitions to deal with emerging issues and challenges. As an umbrella organization, KWH fosters participatory decision-making and control. A system of co-representatives is one of the ways KWH “decentralizes” power within the

⁴ In 1997, the Korea Women’s Hotline split into 2 organizations – the Korea Women’s Hotline and the Seoul Women’s Hotline. As of 2007, KWH has 26 local branches under the leadership of three co-representatives. This year the Korea Women’s Hotline became a national network headquarter and no longer provided direct counseling services. The Seoul Women’s Hotline continued to provide services and both are in Seoul.

organization. Through a leadership structure that involves co-representatives and collaboration with professionals and staff members, KWH focuses on developing national agendas targeting women's rights issues and on incorporating feminist perspectives into state policies on women.

The evolution and growth of KWH cannot be understood adequately without addressing its human resources – the dedicated women activists. As the previous section already describes, many of these activists are former student/labor/democratic activists. However, this does not necessarily mean that KWH and other progressive women's organizations are the direct heritage of other progressive social movements. While progressive women activists benefited from participating in other social movements, they realized that so-called progressive movements and progressive male activists were not free of patriarchal values. This realization triggered women activists' decisions and choices to join a women's movement with explicit awareness of gender issues.

Identifying itself as a women's rights activist group today, KWH defines its goals as “protecting against all kinds of violence and advancing women's social position as well as establishing gender equality in the spheres of family, work, and society.” The organizational purpose that KWH clearly articulates in promotional materials and interviews is to realize women's full participation in socio-political and economic arenas, and then to maintain a peaceful and democratic society. The main activities of KWH include the Anti-Domestic Violence Movement, Family Equality and a Peaceful Community Movement, Spousal Property Partnership Policy Movement, Local Women's Media Movement, and the International Solidarity Program.

The establishment of a new civilian government in 1993 facilitated an environment that actively encouraged women's groups to participate in governance. Because of this, progressive women's groups considered obtaining legal entity status by becoming an incorporated association. KWH became a registered, incorporated association in 1994. But its members also were concerned about the danger of cooptation that could undermine the radical force of the progressive women's movement following incorporation. This was a controversial issue under the political circumstances of the time as explained in the following paragraphs.

According to Ji (2002), the umbrella organization, Korea Women's Association United, discussed possible incorporation for three years. But financial independence was considered to be a significant factor to maintain political independence and autonomy. KWAU was able to avoid incorporation initially through the unconditional financial support of the EZE (*Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe*/ Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development), which played a key role in the development of many Korean progressive women's movements. The Women's Hotline also was able to extend the number of shelters for battered women and children with their own funding from EZE in 1991. However, once South Korea became a member of OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) in 1997, EZE decided to stop its financial support in South Korea in order to help other women's groups in underdeveloped countries. This financial crisis hastened many women's groups' decision to incorporate. Transition to an incorporated association allowed women's groups to apply for governmental-funded projects, to do fundraising, and to seek corporate donations. Although funding is still a significant issue, KWH and its branches have been able to maintain relative financial independence and stability through recruitment of new, unpaid volunteers, members and donors. Volunteers are crucial to running the organizations and maintain the spirit and passion necessary to the struggle.

Because of its focus on combating domestic violence and promoting women's human rights in South Korea, KWH and its branches recently have sought possible opportunities for coalition building across Asia as part of the regional globalization process. Specifically, they have focused on the needs of immigrant women from Asian countries who come because of international marriages and for work. For example, KWH closely cooperates with the Mongolian National Center Against Violence (NCAV). In 2006, Volunteers Crossing Borders for Women's Rights, a sub-group of KWH, launched a fundraising project for establishing shelters in Mongolia. In 2007, KWH embarked on a project to help married immigrant women from the Philippines and Vietnam to arrange visits to their hometowns.

Legislation of Domestic Violence Acts and Its Consequences

The 1997 Act against Domestic Violence is two separate “sub”-acts. One is the “Prevention of Domestic Violence and Victim Protection Act” that focuses on victim services and the other is a “Special Act on the Punishment of Domestic Violence Crimes” which details police intervention and punishment for batterers. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family is in charge of implementing the prevention of DV and protection of victims act and the punishment of perpetrators act is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. This division of responsibilities has interfered with adequate implementation of both Acts, leading legislators and feminists to seek subsequent reforms.

The concept of “state intervention” refers to the fact that passage of the Acts represented institutionalization of DV policies and programs through direct state intervention, interpretation of the Acts, and state incentives for private programs.

At first, the acceptance of domestic violence as a serious social problem was associated with the appearance of expected and needed services for victims of domestic violence such as shelters and counseling centers. The earliest were primarily the work of feminist groups. Following passage of the legislation, ironically most new counseling services and centers were initiatives of non feminist organizations and private and public agencies. This was another warning sign that the feminists who understood the problem best were not going to remain at the forefront of solutions. Neither the state nor most new service centers revealed any notion that their work was relevant to women’s emancipation from all forms of violence; rather, it was to prevent family breakdown and to promote “healthy” families through counseling programs.

Legislative discussions also showed early on how the legislation was being interpreted in ways that could be used against battered women’s interests and threaten the more feminist and woman-focused services that might serve their needs for protection.

Each provision indicates the need for the establishment of counseling centers to help victims of domestic violence escape from the danger of violence...But, these facilitators should be designed to help victims return to their home and be careful not to be used as a tool for escaping from home...Because the ideal is that the

domestic violence problem should be resolved within the home, solving the problem through shelters and counseling centers should be allowed for some limited cases (A review report discussed in the Minutes of the special committee on social welfare, National Assembly, December 16, 1996, pp. 7-8).

As minutes from some committee meetings have illustrated, the way that domestic violence was defined and interpreted in the legislative process in South Korea in 1996 clearly demonstrates the powerful link between the chosen frame and subsequent policy outcomes. “The preservation of the family” gave the issue of domestic violence both legal and cultural legitimacy, but it also led to government responses that were made in the narrow context of the societal value of preserving families – in direct contradiction to the needs of individual battered women, children, and the elderly.

The most visible consequence of state intervention in domestic violence has been a proliferation of agencies and shelters to serve battered women and their children. The prevention Act specifies a state obligation for providing facilities to protect battered women. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MGEF) has primarily focused on offering limited financial support to existing and new counseling centers and shelters. As a result, the number of counseling centers grew rapidly. According to MGEF, 203 domestic violence and 25 combined domestic/sexual violence counseling centers are in operation and financially supported and monitored by MGEF as of January 2016; MGEF also supports 70 shelters for domestic violence victims as of 2016. While providing services for victims including free legal aid, MGEF has financially supported 120 counseling centers which run treatment programs for batterers since 2004.

All these efforts need to be appreciated and recognized as the effects and consequences of legislation of the Domestic Violence Act. However, there is a doubt whether providing various services for victims and survivors is enough to eradicate domestic violence. Considering the fact that constructing wife beating as a social problem was a goal of battered women’s movement, failing to make perpetrators responsible for their own behaviors is problematic. Especially, this imbalance has sent a wrong message that domestic violence is a private matter which leads to family

breakdown that may be resolved by marital counseling.

Fear about the Criminalization of Domestic Violence

While other societies continued an effort for stopping domestic violence by adopting assertive resolutions such as mandatory arrest and no drop policies (Heo, 2014; Nichols, 2014; Burgess-Proctor, 2012; Miccio, 2005), South Korean society turned to the backward reform that strengthened leniency toward perpetrators by making it easier for prosecutors to suspend indictments “with consultation.”

In this vein, the amendment to the Punishment Act that finally passed on July 2, 2007 did not remove the objectionable references to peace and stability in families and healthy families. Under these unchanged guidelines, it is very clear that “protection of women” does not mean to provide appropriate resources and support to help women be free from violence. Instead, appeasing men’s anger against women who report DV to police is the priority consideration and contributes to restoring the couple’s relationship. Given the assumption that domestic violence is a family matter, it is natural to believe that prosecution and punishment of batterers would threaten the stability of the Korean family system. This fear or anxiety concerning criminalizing domestic violence has contributed to the low rate of sentences and prosecution. The prosecution rate for domestic violence cases was 13% in 2014, 9% in 2015, 8% 2016. Data also indicates that incarceration rate for batterers of domestic violence was 1.82% in 2013, 1.79% in 2014, 1.85% in 2015. According to the survey by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2013, only 1.8% female victims of domestic violence called the police. While the state intervention reinforces gendered power rather than transforming public consciousness, abused women have been at risk of death from domestic violence. Because there is no official statistics on the number of women who are killed at the hands of intimate partners, Korea Women’s Hotline has estimated the number of victims who were murdered by their intimate partners or ex-partners through searching news reports since 2009. According to KWH, 91 women were killed by their husbands or partners and 95 women were survived from attempted murders in 2015. It showed that women died or almost died at the hands of their current or ex-partner at a rate of one every 1.9 days in 2015. Considering the fact that this number only

reflects reported deaths from popular press, it is not difficult to imagine how much higher the real number of victims of domestic violence could be.

Charlotte Bunch (1998) points out that violence against women is “an extension of the ideology that gives men the right to control women’s behavior, their mobility, their access to material resources, and their labor, both productive and reproductive” (60). Based on the perspective that violence against women has been the major obstacles to achieving women’s basic freedom and safety, this issue has also been recognized as a matter of human security. However, the experiences of Korean society show that legal achievement does not automatically guarantee the ways in which domestic violence should be dealt with. It is because of using a culturally resonant framework in addressing the issue to gain public attention and legislative support. However, it is also understandable why that strategy would be preferred, especially considering the cultural context in which the battered women’s movement are situated and negotiated (Heo, 2010). As long as the issue of domestic violence is recognized as the private and individual problem, the discourse of women’s rights free from violence will not bring the advantage to victims of domestic violence. Fear and hesitation of criminalizing domestic violence are fundamentally based on the idea that domestic violence is a matter of tension and conflict between couples rather than a matter of power, control, domination, and inequality. Therefore, it is still urgent to re-frame domestic violence within the discourse and practice women’s human rights and gender equality, especially in the locally situated context.

Vernacularization of Women’s Human Rights

With the passage of the law, there was widespread relief that domestic violence can be solved through legal intervention and government support. Despite the expectation that the construction of the law was a fundamental step to eliminate domestic violence, however, both pragmatic and personal obstacles have shown that solutions are far more complicated—even if the law were applied in criminal court—that domestic violence cannot be resolved solely through legal intervention. For feminist activists, unsatisfactory outcomes of state responses to domestic violence are always disappointing and sometimes incomprehensible. But also of increasing importance to

activists is the significant loss in bargaining power they have experienced following institutionalization of domestic violence policy making and dissolution of the anti-domestic coalition once legislative goals were achieved.

In the South Korean case, there are several answers depending on one's vantage point: "yes" or "no" or "in some respects." Some social movement theorists would argue that, yes, the anti-DV movement has been successful. Others would delve more deeply into obstacles or unpredicted consequences. I would qualify the notion of success. The fact that the anti-DV coalition was successful in passing the desired legislation, through which institutional changes have taken place, was an event of enormous significance because violence against women was firmly on the policy agenda for the first time. But these changes have not had the desired or a significant impact on resolving the problem of domestic violence. Regrettably, some desired impacts – raising the public's consciousness, implementing serious consequences and punishment for perpetrators, prioritizing victims' needs – have backfired.

Another problem that feminists are confronting is that sympathy for women's victimization, combined with institutionalization of the family protection frame, has led to the reintroduction of dualism between deserving and undeserving victims. State actors, counselors, and the general public have constructed a stereotype of a battered woman who deserves public attention and support only when she is the perfect victim who faithfully performed her duties as a mother, wife, and daughter-in-law. Even so, while the stereotype evokes emotions, it does not seem that the tragedy of such a woman's suffering is enough to encourage changes to the established law and policy.

Both failing to make abusers properly accountable and constructing ideal victims of domestic violence reflect how difficult to change attitudes, perceptions and behaviors related to domestic violence. Dominant discourse, including law and media, still prefers explaining causes of domestic violence as individual deviance or pathology rather than power and control. Under the framework of individual psychological traits, it is believed that domestic violence is about mutual violence, immature communication skills, or anger management. Although domestic violence as a serious violation of women's human rights has been an important discourse and tactic especially in international arenas, there is doubt on the applicability and advantage of women's

human rights discourse in the locally situated context. In this vein, vernacularization of women's human rights has been a recent interest as a strategy and practice to enhance society's understanding of how and why violence against women is a public agenda (Levitt and Merry, 2009; Goodale, 2007; Merry, 2003).

The way of constructing violence against women including domestic violence as subject of state policy affects the content of legislation, implementation, and prevention measures. Feminist scholars and advocates have identified violence against women as gender-based phenomenon and unequal gender relations (Anderson, 2009; Stark, 2007). It is also argued that violence against women should be recognized as a form of hate crime (Gill and Mason-Bish, 2013; Hodoge, 2011; Mcphail, 2002). While state provisions such as shelters, a variety of support and educational services are now being provided after the passage of the law, it is less clear whether the patriarchal nature of domestic violence is recognized and deconstructed through such interventions or policy.

As I mentioned earlier, therefore, vernacularization of women's human rights should be a fundamental step to eradicate violence against women. It refers to the whole process, which reevaluate and reconstruct women's role and gender norms based on gender equality and social justice. It also means the construction of women's human rights as understandable and relevant to ordinary practices, activities, and attitudes. In this sense, vernacularization of women's human rights is not about an adoption but the process of opinion formation. Criticizing both universalist and new universalist views of culture, Zerilli (2009) argues that universalism should be recognized as a political achievement rather than the assumed principle or norm that we need to follow or agree with. Her emphasis on cultural translation of the universal standard, therefore, considers the specific context as the significant locus for ongoing debates, discussions, and practices. As she points out, if vernacularization or localization of the universal norm can be regarded as the process of persuasion and negotiation, disclosing and revealing women's experiences within the specific contexts are the necessary parts of achieving universality. While there are the obvious justifications for protecting women's human rights, however, the backlash against gender-based victimization is widespread and increasing. Given the explicit intent "to reaffirm the patriarchal domination of women (Dragiewicz, 2008, 121), the locally situated feminist movements need to continually

seek various strategies and activities for whole society to recognize and accept that women are equal participants to the real world. All these efforts for achieving and improving social justice for women should be scrutinized, evaluated, and circulated as the locally developed vernacularization of women's human rights.

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Legal Protection Afforded to Women Against Domestic Violence in Myanmar

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Abstract

As Myanmar is a multi-ethnic country, every ethnicity has social custom and traditional culture for women. In tracing the Myanmar tradition, men hold higher status than women as the heads of family and decision-makers for both financial and social affairs. As a custom, married Myanmar women are usually housewives, who do the house work and nurturing of children. They face the intimate partner violence, sexual violence by non-partners, trafficking in women, torture or cruel act, discrimination, socio-cultural attitudes, male authority on day-to-day function, dowry disputes, high risk of reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections such as AIDS. It can be said that eliminating domestic violence against women remains a serious challenge in Myanmar. Even after the accession of CEDAW, Myanmar has no specific law even for violence against women and, so far, for domestic violence. It is consistently sure that Myanmar government needs to take up urgent and concrete measures to eradicate violence against women and to manage for care and rehabilitation among women who suffered domestic violence.

Keywords: traditional culture, violence, care and rehabilitation

Research Methodology

As my research paper is focused on the legal protection, which is referred on the international law, conventions, rules and national regulations, the provisions will be described on the case study, observation of international agreements and survey results. Then qualitative method is used as a method to organize and structure the data outside the legal provisions. So, the paper can be said to use the theory-led type because theory

is very important in qualitative research. Based on the theory, observational provisions and analysis of literatures, the paper will be pure (academic) research because I could point out the weaknesses by legal sense and contribute as recommendation.

Research Finding

The paper focuses on the need for legislation to provide for empowerment, support and protection of female victims or survivors. It leads to the adoption and enforcement of Myanmar national law on “Domestic Violence against Women.” Then, the paper critically recommends that the monitoring program for awareness raising campaign among women in society across different sectors.

Introduction

Violence against women is not confined to a specific culture, region or country, or to the group of women within a society. The different manifestations of such violence and women’s personal experiences of it are, however, shaped by many factors, including economic status, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, disability, nationality and culture. Gender-based violence refers to an act that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. In the society, gender inequalities are visible in many areas, including politics, education, media, cultural norms and the workplace. These fundamental inequalities create a rationale for humiliation, intimidation, control, abuse, and even murder.

Some cultural norms and practices empower women and promote women’s human rights. Some customs, traditions and religious values are also often used to justify violence against women. Certain cultural norms have long been cited as causal factors for violence against women, including the beliefs associated with harmful traditional practices, crimes committed in the name of “honour,” discriminatory criminal punishments imposed under religiously based laws and restrictions on women’s rights in marriage.¹ Domestic violence can affect anyone regardless of

ethnicity, religion, class, age, sexuality, disability or lifestyle.

Economic inequalities can be a causal factor for violence against women both at the level of individual acts of violence and at the level of broad-based economic trends that create or exacerbate the enabling conditions for such violence. These economic inequalities can be found at the local, national and global level. Women's economic inequalities and discrimination against women in areas such as employment, income, access to other economic resources and lack of economic independence reduce women's capacity to act and take decisions and increase their vulnerability to violence.

Definitions and Forms of Domestic Violence Against Women

Broader definitions include structural and cultural violence which limit women and girls in achieving their full potential, both personally and for the whole society. Domestic violence is now commonly defined broadly to include "all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence" that may be committed by a family member or intimate partner.² Some human rights activists prefer a board-based definition that includes structure violence such as poverty and unequal access to health and education. Others have argued for a more limited definition in order not to lose the actual descriptive power of the term. In any case, the need to develop specific operational definitions has been acknowledged so that research and monitoring can become more specific and have greater cross-cultural applicability.³

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life⁴. According to Article 2, "violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following;

¹ United Nation, Ending Violence Against Women from Words to Action, 2006, pg.31.

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domesticviolence>.

³ UNICEF, Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls, June 2000. Pg.2.

⁴ Art.1, General Assembly Resolution 48/104 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>.

- (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs”.⁵

General Recommendation 19 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women defines “gender-based violence as violence directed against a woman because she is a woman or violence that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.”⁶ CEDAW Recommendation 19 also states that violence against women is a violation of the right not to be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as protected by Article 5 of UDHR and Article 7 of ICCPR. In recent years, the view has been affirmed by the Committee Against Torture, which is the monitoring body of the Convention Against Torture (CAT).

Violence against women is a global issue of pandemic proportions, which has an impact on all societies. It violates the rights and fundamental freedoms of the women whatever their religion is. Such violence can have a devastating effect on the lives of women and even on their families and communities. This gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on the basis of equality with men. The violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or

⁵ Art.2 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979.

⁶ General Recommendation 19 of CEDAW.

arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.⁷

In the research of the UNICEF in 2000, there are a lot of the different forms of domestic violence against women. They are physical, emotional, sexual, media and violence in armed conflict. The physical violence is covered with physical abuse by corporal punishment in homes, violence in the context of discipline, punishment or control. Emotional abuse encompasses a range of behaviours on a continuum of severity, which are repeated and sustained in an abusive relationship. There is a consensus internationally that a heavy diet of media violence has a negative effect on child development, though the extent to which media violence causes children to become violent is a more controversial issue. Violence against women and girls in the context of armed conflict will not be covered by the present UN violence study. In this research, men who use physical violence against their partners also physically abuse their children.⁸

To sum up, these definitions refer to the gender-based roots of violence, recognizing that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. It broadens definition of violence by including both the physical and psychological harm done towards women, and it includes acts in both the private and the public life. The Declaration defines violence against women as encompassing, but not limited to three areas: violence occurring in the family, within the general community, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the State.

International Commitment on Domestic Violence Against Women by Myanmar

Myanmar is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1997), and is committed to international policy initiatives to improve the situation of women, including the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA). In a very recent development, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has established the ASEAN Committee on Women and Children (ACWC), which Myanmar is anticipating to be

⁷ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

⁸ Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls, UNICEF, No.6, June 2000, P.4.

an active member.

In Article 2(e) of CEDAW, it requires its signatories to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise,⁹ which the CEDAW committee interpreted as the basis for holding states responsible for failing to prevent, investigate, and punish acts of violence perpetrated by private citizens against women. Furthermore, CEDAW's Article 3 specifies that, State parties shall take in all field, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural field, all appropriate measures, including legislation to ensure the full development and advancement of women for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercises and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.¹⁰ Article 4(c) imposes a duty upon states to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women whether those acts are perpetrated by the state or by private persons.¹¹

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW) establishes complaint and inquiry mechanisms for the CEDAW. The Optional Protocol is a subsidiary agreement to the Convention. It does not establish any new rights, but rather allows the rights guaranteed in the Convention to be enforced. Articles 8-10 create an inquiry mechanism. Article 11 requires parties to ensure that those complaining under the Optional Protocol are not subjected to ill-treatment or intimidation. Article 13 requires parties to inform their citizens about the Convention, the Optional Protocol, and the rulings of the Committee, so as to facilitate complaints. Articles 12 and 14 govern the procedure and reporting of the Committee in handling complaints. The Protocol was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 6 October 1999 and enforced on 22 December 2000. As of October 2016, the Protocol has 80 signatories and 108 parties, but Myanmar is not yet a signatory member¹².

⁹ Article 2(e) of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women.

¹⁰ Article 3 Ibid.

¹¹ Article 4 (c) Ibid.

¹² "Parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women." United Nations. Retrieved 11 October 2016.

Adherence to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, its Optional Protocol and other relevant international human rights treaties and the removal of reservations constitute measures to address violence against women. Similarly, the inclusion of the principle of equality of men and women in national constitutions or similar legislation, in accordance with international standards, enhances the framework for addressing violence against women. National plans of action to protect women's human rights and to improve the promotion and protection of women's human rights are part of its compliance measures. States are also required to allocate an adequate budget to address violence against women. Myanmar has yet to enter the Optional Protocol. So Myanmar has yet responsibilities to follow provisions and to implement measures on domestic violence against women.

Myanmar is one of the 189 members of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), which provides women's rights to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girl children.¹³ After participation, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement established the Myanmar National Committee for Women Affairs (MNCWA) in 1996 to enhance the advancement of women. The Myanmar National Working Committee for Women's affairs (MNWCWA) was subsequently formed and was followed by the formation of state/division, district and township levels Working Committees for Women's Affairs. The Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWWAF) was established in 2003 to assist the MNWCWA to carry out its functions for the development and security of women and to enhance cooperation with national and international organizations.¹⁴

The 2004 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region recognized that violence against women both violates and impairs their human rights and fundamental freedoms. It calls on member states to take necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and intensify efforts to develop and improve existing legislative, education and social measure and support services aimed at the prevention of violence against women.¹⁵ ASEAN Human Rights Declaration also affirms the equal dignity and rights,¹⁶

¹³ Article 29 of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing Declaration, 1995.

¹⁴ <http://mncwa.tripod.com/mncwa/id8.htm>.

¹⁵ Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in ASEAN Region, 2004.

personal liberty and security¹⁷ and against torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment of person.¹⁸

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) was signed at the 37th Meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Jakarta on 13 June 2004, a milestone in the regional effort to address the issue of violence against women. In the context of strengthening regional cooperation, collaboration and coordination for the purpose of eliminating violence against women in the region, each Member Country, either individually or collectively in ASEAN shall endeavor to fully implement the goals and commitments made related to eliminating violence against women and monitor their progress to encourage greater regional and bilateral cooperation in the systematic research, collection, analysis and dissemination of data, including disaggregated by sex, age, and other relevant information on the extent, nature and consequences of violence against women and girls and on the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes for combating violence against women.¹⁹

The International Bills of Human Rights comprised of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international human rights conventions such as CEDAW and CAT protections for battered women. However, Myanmar is not yet a member of CAT and ICCPR. In CAT, it focuses on domestic violence, while the ICCPR guarantees all persons the right to effective legal protection and remedies. International human rights instruments are flexible and can be invoked in various ways depending upon the situation of each victim. Furthermore, the application of human right instruments varies depending upon possible reservations entered by each State party.

Historical legal protection on Domestic Violence against Women

In Myanmar history, the laws of ancient Myanmar are provided with three great elements: Yazathat, Dhammathat and Phyathton. The criminal legislation was the

¹⁶ Article 2, ASEAN Human Rights Declaration.

¹⁷ Article 14, Ibid.

¹⁸ Article 14, Ibid.

¹⁹ Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the ASEAN Region.

Yazathat, which was issued by the Kings. The civil legislation and family affairs were governed by the Dhammathats that were somewhat similar with the customary laws of the land. It was written by famous monks and scholars and it was collected by the records of social customs. Phyathtons were the records of judicial decisions rendered by various monarchs and judges. After the British rule came to Myanmar, the British government ruled on criminal and civil matters by their laws such as criminal codes, civil codes, contract laws etc. But the family matters were decided by Myanmar Customary Law. So Myanmar culture and traditions have prevailed for a very long time in Myanmar history.

In the Dhammathats, which is Myanmar Customary Law, Myanmar women pay respects to their husband by doing house works. Every Myanmar woman has five duties that she is guilty of:

- (a) With regard to food, when she takes her meals before her husband does or when she often, in her husband's absence, eat rich food; or when she gets up late in the morning and the first thing she does is eat; or when she eats the greater portion of any food obtained and leaves a little of it for her husband;
- (b) With regard to behavior towards men, when her conduct towards all men she comes across with is as free as with that of her husband;
- (c) With regard to dress, if she puts on inappropriate dresses when she attends feasts or stays at home or goes on or attends to her duties as a wife
- (d) With regard to property, when she gives away, sells, or mortgages it without the knowledge of her husband; and
- (e) With regard to looking, when she looks at a man with eyes as restless as those of a crow or when she is in a habit [of glancing] at men when they are dressing or undressing, or when they are bathing.²⁰

If she makes any wrong behind her husband, he has the right to beat on her back with stick or hand that the Myanmar society accepts as warning. This usual acceptance is one of the reasons why women have lower status than men. But these are outdated

²⁰ King Wunmingyi U Gaung, Digest II, "Digest of Burmese Buddhist Law Concerning Inheritance and Marriage: A collection of Texts From Thirty-Six Dhammathats", Yangon Hantharwaddy Press, 1909, p. 15.

social norms of the Myanmar society although some families use these norms. If a woman suffers physical and mental assaults by her husband, she can sue in court by criminal or civil suits or both. However, in the jurisdiction of the court, a woman could not get the protection as a victim of domestic violence because there is no specific provision about domestic violence against women in Myanmar.

However, women are entitled to claim the divorce by anyway pursuant to Myanmar Customary Law. There are mainly three kinds of divorce: divorce by mutual consent, divorce when the husband enters into priesthood or *Rahan*, and divorce by matrimonial fault. In case of misrepresentation to marry, a girl was induced by misrepresentation to marry a man, and the deceived person may claim dissolution of marriage and a decree for divorce can be granted to the wife on the grounds of misrepresentation.²¹ Adultery by husband is not in itself a sufficient ground for divorce by the wife though the wife may be entitled to resist a claim by the husband for restitution of conjugal right.²² If, however, the wife commits adultery, the husband may divorce her or condone the offence.²³

Although Myanmar has no specific law on domestic violence against women, Myanmar women can get fair jurisdiction by the Penal code and Myanmar Customary Laws such as Burmese Buddhist Law, Hindu Law, Mohameden Law, Christian Law and the traditional customs of the ethnic groups. The main statutory laws, which interact with the people in everyday life, are the Penal Code (law relating to offences), the Transfer of Property Act (relating to the purchase, sale and other transactions of property), the Contract Act (relating to making agreements and contracts), the Partnership Act and the Companies Act (relating to business dealings), the Bar Council Act (relating the enrolment of lawyers to practice), and the Myanmar Medical Act (for practicing doctors). For procedural matters, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Code of Civil Procedure, the Evidence Act and the Court Manual are the primary laws upon which the legal system is based.

²¹ May Oung, U, A selection of Leading Case on Buddhist Law, British Burma Press, Rangoon, 1914, p. 94.

²² Ma Thein Nwe V Mg Kha (7 Ran 415), Ma Ein V Te Naung (5 LBR 87).

²³ Maung Maung, Dr. Law and Custom in Burma and the Burmese Family, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1963, P 77.

As mentioned above, there are Burmese women who praised Buddhist, Muslims, Christian and Hindu in Myanmar. The laws regulating marriage, divorce, and inheritance vary according to their respective customs. Buddhist laws do not discriminate women, save that bigamy or polygamy is allowed for men, while women can have only one husband. Buddhist Law does not explicitly regulate the provision for maintenance, in contrast to Islamic Law (but now this polygamy status is repealed by the Monogamy Law 2015). Maintenance remedies for Buddhist women are to be pursued under the Code of Criminal Procedure. Buddhist women are protected by Myanmar Customary Law when they marry men of other religion or nationality. Burmese women of other religion do not have this legal protection. In case of divorce, Buddhist women have equal rights to men in respect of property inheritance.

The Buddhist Dhammathat code does not give an age requirement for men to marry. It only specifies that the man must be “mature.” If he is mature, he can marry. This was decided in a 1975 case decision. As for women, they must also be mature, which means that they must be at least 16 years old and they must have their parents' consent. This is different from Burmese Customary Law, which stipulates that women can marry after the age of 14. If there is no such consent, parents are allowed to nullify the marriage. But if a woman and a man have been living with the woman's guardian for a long time, then parents lose their power to separate them and must accept the marriage. The question remains whether guardians are different from parents in this case. If a woman is older than 20 or when she is married, she no longer requires permission from parents or guardians.²⁴

If Christian women in Myanmar want to marry, they have to go through a church ceremony or arrange for court marriage. For Muslim women, Islamic Law regarding marriage and divorce is strict with male preference. For men, only maturity is required. This basically means reaching puberty. If maturity is not evident, the man must be at least 15 years old. Regarding women, Islamic Law says, "Presumption of Law" without further details. For Hindu women, Hindu Customary Law gives no limit for the age of men to marry. But this is not the case for women as the age of sixteen is defined

²⁴ Andrew Huxley, “The Importance of the Dhammathats in Burmese Law and Culture,” vol. 1, *The Journal of Burma Studies* (1997) pp. 1-17.

as mature. Under the Hindu marriage law, a man must be 18 to marry. Hindu parents sometimes arrange marriages for their children before puberty (at the ages of 10 or 12). Such marriages are not considered void in spite of the young age of the children.

Due to the different laws for different religions in Myanmar, the Special Marriage Act of 1872 regulates mixed marriages. According to this law, men must be 18 years old and women 14 in order to marry. If a couple share the same religion, they can follow the respective religious laws. Women in Myanmar do not usually feel discriminated due to tradition and customs. Main issues relating to women are the imbalance in workforce participation, the labour potential of women and their role in social and economic development.

Divorce is allowed under Myanmar Customary Law if one of the three following conditions are met: (a) there is a mutual agreement to divorce, (b) the husband becomes a monk, (c) a crime is committed by either the husband or wife. Crimes consist of the husband committing adultery, (which is a normal criminal case), the wife committing adultery (which is a serious criminal case), cheating (although the law does not describe in detail what this involves), or “fabrication in many ways” (again, the law does not say what this involves).

The Myanmar Divorce Act of 1869 is only for Christians. A husband can apply for the dissolution of marriage on the grounds of adultery, but a wife cannot. A wife may divorce if (1) her husband changes his religion or marries another woman, (2) the husband commits adultery, which is incestuous, or bigamy with adultery, (3) the husband marries another woman with adultery, (4) the husband commits rape, sodomy or bestiality (although the law does not say toward whom, nothing is said about marital rape), (5) the husband commits adultery and the cruelty is so bad that it entitles the woman to divorce, (6) the husband is adulterous and deserts the wife for two or more years without excuse.

Following divorce, financial support may be required under the Christian Law Section 36, which says that the husband is liable for payment depending on the order of the Court. But payment cannot exceed 20 per cent of the husband's average income in the three years prior to the Court's order. The wife's money is also taken into consideration. The Court will decide what is reasonable, with provisions regulated by

the Code of Criminal Procedure. Regarding division of property, there are very few guidelines under Christian law. It will be necessary to look at the case law, but basically it depends on the case and the reasons for divorce. The ratio in property division varies accordingly. Regarding the custody of children, customary law must follow the Guardians and Wards Act of 1890,²³ as here may be no different practices based on religious differences²⁵.

In Myanmar legal history, women face domestic violence in cases of marriage, divorce, and other internal affairs such as wife abuse, wife beating, and sexual intercourse. However, they don't realize themselves that the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another are domestic violence. In the case study, some women are solved by negotiating by the elder people, parents and religious customs; some claimed the judicial proceeding by the civil court in accordance with Myanmar Customary Law; some took action by the Criminal law with the offences of causing hurt, rape, sexual harassment etc.; and some didn't take any action. It can be concluded that Myanmar women have the opportunity to approach judicial access from the competent courts in Myanmar.

Settlement on Domestic Violence Against Women by Myanmar Laws

The provisions relating to the fundamental rights including the equal rights of women and duties of the citizens are clearly enshrined in the State Constitution. Article 22 of the Constitution of the Union of Myanmar (2008) states that all citizens shall be equal before the law, regardless of race, religion, status, or sex enjoy equal opportunities, enjoy the benefits derived from his labor in proportion to his contribution in manual or mental labor and have the right to inherit according to law. In addition, Article 32A of the Constitution states that the Union shall care for mothers and children²⁶.

The gender equality has never been a big issue in Myanmar mainly by the fact

²⁵ S.30 of the Christian Marriage Act of 1872, "The Burma Code", Vol. XI, pp. 43-71.

²⁶ Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008.

that Myanmar women traditionally enjoy high degree of equal rights with men. Their rights are being protected by Myanmar tradition and the existing laws. It ensures that Myanmar women will continue to have full privileges to enjoy these rights. The relevant provisions for the rights and responsibilities of the citizens guarantee that no citizen will be subject to discrimination because of his or her race, native, religion, position, status, culture, gender or financial status.²⁷

Forms of violence such as marital rape, physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse and psychological abuse have been confirmed from various sources. However, in Myanmar, there are a lot of provisions on the wrongful restraint, wrongful confinement, criminal force, criminal intimidation, rape, kidnapping,²⁸ slavery,²⁹ procurement of minor girls,³⁰ assault,³¹ defamation³² and grievous hurt³³ in respect to the violence related to criminal offences. But in practice, a woman doesn't ask the police's help and doesn't file any law suit although she gets hurt due to her husband. Then Myanmar society such as the family, community leader, the older people used to settle by negotiating ways and by taking bonds not to happen later. So Myanmar women fall in the circle of violence again and again.

In Myanmar Criminal Law, every person has the right to defend his/her own body and his/her property. Nothing is an offence done in the exercise of private defense.³⁴ These provisions protect not only women but also men. In respect of rape, the legal definition of rape and the examination of rape and its process are not appropriate for rape survivors. Rape is defined in the Penal Code as "the penetration of man's organ (penis) into a woman's vagina"³⁵. So when medical personnel examine a survivor by inserting fingers or stick, it is like one more rape of women. This practice of "Finger Test of Rape" should be reconsidered. Also treating only the

²⁷ Mr. Kyaw Thu Nyein, *Check Against Delivery*, 2012. p.1.

²⁸ S.369 of the Penal Code of 1861, "The Burma Code", Vol. VIII, pp. 1-142.

²⁹ S.370, *Ibid*.

³⁰ S.366, *Ibid*.

³¹ S.358, *Ibid*.

³² S.500, *Ibid*.

³³ S.323, *Ibid*.

³⁴ Ss. 96 and 97 of the Penal Code of 1861, "The Burma Code", vol. VIII, pp. 1-142.

³⁵ S.376, *Ibid*.

“penetration” as rape is insufficient to address the plight of surviving women. Hence, the definition of rape needs to be reviewed and modified.

In the case of *Union of Myanmar vs. Ma Mei Thee (a) Ma Than Nyo*,³⁶ Ma Mei Thee struck her husband with a tool which did not make sense whether it was a stick or knife while she was being beaten by him. She thought that she can use the private defense as she was hurt in body and mind. The Court decided that she did not have enough time to do rational thinking for the use of private defense legally. Therefore, it was hard to say that she used private defense beyond the provisions of S.100 of the Penal Code. So she was not guilty of this criminal charge and she was completely acquitted.

Most of the cases relating to domestic violence are proceeded under section 323 of the Penal Code (voluntarily causing hurt). The Penal Code is very old, which was enacted since British Colony, thus, the penalty and fine provided are not consistent with the present period. According to section 323 of the Penal Code, the offender shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term, which may extend to one year, or with fine, which may extend to one hundred kyats or with both. Thus, it is considered that it is not an effective punishment when the court makes a decision to impose the offender only with fine. Therefore, for a more effective deterrent punishment, the amendment of Penal Code relating to the provisions of penalty and fine was made in 2016. According to section 22 of the Law Amending to Penal Code, the fine for section 323 is replaced with one hundred thousand kyats. The reason for divorce under Myanmar Customary Law is that the wife, who is the victim of the domestic violence, wants to claim the rights and remedies for her. As a court, there is no applicable specific law to solve effectively for domestic violence so the court cannot give an effective remedy and penalty for the action of domestic violence.

Myanmar has special laws to protect women’s rights, as well as to prevent domestic violence against women. These are the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association Law 1990, Myanmar Buddhist Women’s Special Marriage Law 2015, Monogamy Law 2015, Population Control Law 2015, and Religious Freedom Law 2015. Myanmar Buddhist Women’s Special Marriage Law is applied for Myanmar

³⁶ *Union of Myanmar vs. Ma Mei Thee (a) Ma Than Nyo*, 1993.

Buddhist Women and non-Buddhist men. The women can claim the rights from the court regarding the domestic matters such as marriage, divorce, partition, succession and guardianship of children of Myanmar Buddhist women and non-Buddhist men.³⁷ By this law, if the Court finds that Buddhist women suffer any physical or mental violence by men, the man shall waive the portion entitled to him from property owned by both parties, and pay compensation to the Buddhist woman; the guardianship of all children shall be with the Buddhist woman; and the man shall pay maintenance for children who are minors³⁸.

Monogamy Law 2015 is concerned with all those who are living in Myanmar, Myanmar citizens who live outside of Myanmar, and foreigners who marry with Myanmar citizens while living in Myanmar.³⁹ After this law came into effect, any marriage between a man and a woman in accordance with any law or any religion or any custom shall be legitimate only if monogamous.⁴⁰ The law prescribed the offences as well as the penalties. If a man or woman commits any offence, he or she will be subject to imprisonment which may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine.⁴¹ The law also prohibited the polygamous marriage for all of men and women:

- Any man or woman who is already married with one spouse or more than one spouse in accordance with a law or a religion or a custom shall not enter, while the original union is still legally recognized, into another marriage with another person or conduct an illegal extramarital affair.⁴²
- Any man or woman, if he or she was previously married, can enter into another marriage with another person, only after declaring the previous marriage and showing evidence of legal divorce with his or her previous spouse.⁴³
- Any man or woman who is already married in accordance with a law or a religion or a custom shall not enter, while the original union is still legally recognized, into another marriage with another person or conduct an illegal

³⁷ Section 2 of Myanmar Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law, 2015.

³⁸ Section 27, Ibid.

³⁹ Section 2 of Monogamy Law, 2015.

⁴⁰ Section 4, Ibid.

⁴¹ Section 13, Ibid.

⁴² Section 10, Ibid.

⁴³ Section 11, Ibid.

extramarital affair.⁴⁴

With regard to this fact, the Supreme Court had decided in the case of Daw Mee Mee Tun vs. U Mg Mg Lwin⁴⁵ that: “In this case, U Mg Mg Lwin frequently committed sexual intercourse with other women. Moreover, he married with a second wife during the period of the first legal marriage. It was held that it is contrary to Myanmar custom and social life and constitutes the grievous cruelty to Daw Mee Mee Tun. Therefore, the first wife has the right to divorce and the husband, who committed a grievous matrimonial fault, shall waive all his property rights.

In order to protect the rights of women and girls, Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs (MNCWA) was formed in 1996 as the fulfillment to implement the Beijing Declaration and platform of Action. The MNCWA has identified six areas of concern for the advancement of Myanmar women's education, health, economy, culture, and violence against women and girls. In addition, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAF) was established in December 2003 to take effective measures of women's affairs in implementing the principles and guidelines laid down the MNCWA. There are certain progressive steps taken by the State. State has assigned Gender Focal Department to Department of Social Welfare and assigned its staff to respond to violence against women in collaboration and coordination with Myanmar Women Affairs Federation (MWAF) and other INGOs/ NGOs.⁴⁶

Humanitarian response to women's protection and advancement throughout Myanmar is enhanced through the National Protection Working Group comprised of three technical working groups: Child Protection, Women's Protection, and Displacement, Land and Relocation) The Women's Protection Technical Working Group (WPTWG) is a multi-agency network comprised of INGO, NGO, and UN Agencies. Also contributing to these efforts is the UN Gender Theme Group (GTG) comprised of UN gender focal points.

The National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women is an expression of the Government of the Union of Myanmar's commitment to the protection,

⁴⁴ Section 12 of Monogamy Law, 2015.

⁴⁵ Daw Mee Mee Tun vs U Mg Mg Lwin, Myanmar Law Report, 2012, P 48.

⁴⁶ <http://mwaf.org.mm/en/mwaf-activities>.

promotion, and realization of the rights of women and girls. This is an integrated Government approach to improving the circumstances of all women and girls in Myanmar. Actions combine to improve outcomes for women and their families in the public sphere, the workplace, the home, and the community.

The Ministry of Social welfare, Relief and Resettlement will have increased capacity in recognizing, responding, and reporting on the needs and rights of women. To strengthen capacity and systems for women's protection, in accordance with Myanmar's expressed commitment to international standards, treaties, and agreements, the DSW and its partners will establish multi-agency mechanisms to address key challenges Myanmar women face as delineated in the Beijing Platform for Action. These include livelihoods, education and training, health, violence against women, emergencies, the economy, decision making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights, media, the environment, and the rights of the girl-child.

Traditionally, working at home, the worsening economic situation has brought women into paid employment while maintaining the same level of household responsibility. Often daughters are forced to carry this burden, taking them away from school. Women work primarily in the informal sector – as factory workers, street vendors, prostitutes and domestic help. Both in local workplaces, in forced labor, and as migrant laborers in factories and as housekeepers in neighboring countries, women report both being exploited as workers and being exposed to sexual and physical violence, without recourse to legal protection.

Challenges for the Protection of Domestic Violence Against Women in Myanmar

The Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveyed to the women and girls of Phyar-pon, Kayar, Meikhtilar and Rakhine with Myanmar Action Aid in 2014.⁴⁷ The survey compared the knowledge of women and girls how to get assistance in the case of violence to the police station and the assistance of community leaders with the same knowledge. Then they did that scolding was the suggested and reported action for teasing and forced sex within marriage. Respondents, however, stated that rape should

⁴⁷ Gender Analysis Brief in November 2014.

be reported to the police, and 35.7 percent reported actual abuse. Additionally, 23.1 percent of respondents suggested three to seven years of imprisonment for forced sex within a relationship, but 36 percent stated the actual action was a police report. Of the fourteen abuses identified through the KAP, forced sex within the relationship and trafficking solicited the most severe ideal actions imprisonment and death sentence, respectively. The actual action in this case was the filing of police report. Respondents aged 60 and over wanted more severe actions for abuses than what is actually practiced. Data based on marital status showed at least 50 percent of unmarried, married, or widow/divorced women agreed that scolding, as a way of punishment for forced sex within marriage, was on par with the actual action taken in the community.⁴⁸

In implementing international commitments, budget, capacity building plans for all different levels and awareness-raising tools (example, developing learning tools for illiterate women in illustration with different ethnic languages, education sessions through radio, TV channel) should be set for the awareness raising of women all over the country. The state should have a protection and prevention mechanism, law, and measures for all kinds of women regardless of their religions, cultures, and traditions. It is hoping to include the applicable definition on violence against women for both public and private sectors in its protection of violence against women law. The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW 2013-2022) outlines the need to develop and strengthen systems, structures, legislation, law enforcement, and practices to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and to respond to the needs of the vulnerable systems and services (i.e. medical, psychological and legal) available to women and girls who experience violence.⁴⁹

In order to protect women against domestic violence, specific law on violence against women, anti-rape law, anti-sexual harassment law is needed in Myanmar society. There is a need to sign the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. Myanmar is now on the way to enact the Protection on Violence Against Women Law by consultation with NGOs, women-led organizations and international actors although the draft is still in process. The law should provide explicit definition of violence against women,

⁴⁸ www.actionaid.org.

⁴⁹ Behind the Silence: Violence Against Women and their Resilience Myanmar, The Gender Equality Network Yangon, Myanmar, 2014, P.72.

which is covered with domestic violence, specific procedures, accessible service centers, and clear implementing and accountability mechanisms in accordance with the UN General Recommendation 19. Then there are some laws that need to be amended, particularly provisions that discriminate the rights of women such as the Law of Special Marriage of Buddhist Women.

Table 1. Necessities to protect the women against domestic violence

	Sector	Challenges
1	Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drafting the laws such as Prevention the violence against women law covered with domestic violence, Anti-Rape Law, Anti-Sexual Harassment Law - Implementation of the laws by the concerned departments and courts - Establishing the monitoring and reporting system in accordance with UN GR 19 and 23 - Forming the counselling council to facilitate the victims of domestic violence for the immediate protection - Building the legal and paralegal service provider for the marginalized women victims
2	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drafting the curriculum involved on women's rights and violence against women in the Universities - Holding formal speech in the secondary and high schools about the violence against women and girls - Developing and implementing nationwide guidelines for teachers and school counsellors to recognize signs of child abuse and respond to children's experiences of violence sensitively within and outside school and coordinating with local authorities and police
3	Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution of news about violence against women in all of the media sectors such as radio, television, journals, newspapers, videos and movies, social media network - Coordinating with media on ethical and safe reporting of domestic violence trends, as well as on-going efforts to address women's experiences of abuse - Conducting media training on how to ethically and safely report on violence against women to ensure the rights of survivors and promote women's rights
4	Health Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contributing awareness raising campaigns about negative health impacts of social discrimination,

	Sector	Challenges
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving women's access to reproductive health care service - Ensuring that strategic plans with effective mechanisms to collect data for monitoring and evaluation - Developing the training curricula for midwives and traditional birth attendants to recognize and sensitively recognize symptoms or risk factors linked to intimate partner violence such as maternal depression
5	Human resources (Research and Development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementing the complementary quantitative surveys on women's experiences of sexual abuse - Doing research with men on their perceptions and perpetration of violence against women - Conducting the monitoring and evaluation research on existing prevention and response programme interventions to build evidence-based of what works to prevent and respond to violence against women in Myanmar
6	Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leading women roles by NGOs, GOs, and religious community - Providing information to informal sources of women's help-seeking behaviours (e.g., family members, neighbours, etc.) on how to safely and effectively respond to violent incidents (e.g., bystander approach) - Continuing to support women's groups that provide safe and non-judgmental spaces for women to discuss and explore female sexuality.

Source: The Gender Equality Network Yangon, Myanmar⁵⁰

It can be clearly seen in the above table that the Myanmar government needs to protect women from different sectors. First of all, specific law will be provided to criminalize domestic violence as offence by stipulating penalties, as well as by providing civil remedies. Then the sub-committees on the protection of domestic violence should be formed to monitor, report, and take care of the victims of domestic violence. Next, women's rights, violence, and domestic violence against women should be put as a subject in the syllabi of high schools and universities. The formal and informal awareness raising campaigns on domestic violence are needed to held around the country. Furthermore, all of the media channels should distribute the knowledge

⁵⁰ Behind the Silence: Violence Against Women and Their Resilience Myanmar, The Gender Equality Network Yangon, Myanmar, 2014, P.74.

sharing program on domestic violence against women. One of the considerable facts is that there should be paralegal services to help women who were unwilling to cooperate with the prosecution because of fear of retaliation on their suffering of domestic violence.

Conclusion

Domestic violence such as physical, mental, and sexual occurs in the family or community in social relation as harmful traditional practices. Then the reasons why most women become victims of domestic violence in Myanmar are poverty, lack of or low education, early marriage, less probability of work opportunity, religion and racial discrimination, low income of big family and so on. Currently, Myanmar is moving forward to gain sustainable development in all sectors by closely monitoring the human rights impact through the National Human Rights Committee Against Women. It becomes not only a woman's issue, but also a problem of the society and the state itself that affects overall development although it has been viewed as a family issue since the olden age. In international level, Myanmar cannot be successful to implement the CEDAW obligations without applying communication procedure and inquiring procedure, which are provided in the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. It can be concluded that there is still a problem to solve the domestic violence urgently. If the domestic violence can not be solved, there are a lot of impacts on women and their children: being secretive, silent and afraid to tell; maturing inappropriately and showing regression towards the mother and siblings; being fearful, hyper-vigilant, mistrustful, anxious and sometimes excessively agitated; experiencing feelings of guilt and helplessness; and thinking that violence is their fault. Therefore, there is a need and must to stipulate the perfect legislation on domestic violence against women in Myanmar.

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Reducing Violence Against Women and Children on End Child Marriage in Lao PDR

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Abstract

Education and health for women and girls in Laos in recent decades have been improving. However, women are still dying of childbirth and girls continue to drop out of school at alarming rates, especially in rural areas. Women don't hold decision-making power in their households. Economic opportunities for women, although improving, remain constrained. It's clear that gender inequality hinders development. However, Laos is trying to overcome these challenges. Based on these conditions, this qualitative research focused on: 1) public awareness raising on violence against women and children, 2) promotion of the advancement of women and gender equality, 3) promotion of children's rights in education because of education patterns among girls and boys and the effect on delaying marriage, 4) strengthening the capacity of concerned organizations and responsibility of social organizations. This research is qualitative research with the following focus and objectives: 1) to give public awareness related with violence against women and children which should be increase related with awareness and responsiveness of law enforcement, 2) to promote the advancement of women and gender equality and increase understanding on gender equality, 3) to promote children's rights in education, and 4) to strengthen the capacity of concerned organizations and responsibility of social organizations. Results of this research are: 1) public awareness raising on violence against women and children should be increased, as well as the awareness and responsiveness of law enforcement, 2) need for the advancement of women and gender equality and increase the understanding on gender equality, 3) need for the promotion of children's rights in education because of education patterns among girls and boys and the effect on delaying marriage to raise awareness on the above issues and the related dangers

among youth in Laos, and 4) strengthen the capacity of concerned organizations and responsibility of social organizations. Based on those, more and better work with communities, men and boys, and in school are also needed to challenge and transform damaging attitudes from an early age that eventually perpetuate violence against women.

Keywords: child marriage, human rights, education, law

Introduction

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), is a country which has a population 6.689 million people in 2014, 80% of which live in rural areas, while 60% are under 25 years of age. Lao PDR is a landlocked country, which creates another level of vulnerability as most trade must pass through Thailand. It is ranked 122 out of 169 countries in the Human Development Index (2011). Approximately 80% of its population live in rural areas and about 70% live on less than USD 2 a day. Lack of livelihood opportunities is pushing greater numbers of women, especially younger, from rural to urban areas, and Laos also has a long history of migration to Thailand due to that country's proximity, cultural and linguistic similarities and higher economic standing (2000).

The high illiteracy rate among women, especially those in certain ethnic groups, and the persistent gap between literacy rates of men and women (89% for men and 78% for women aged 15-24) is a cause for concern. This is compounded by an inadequate educational infrastructure and cultural attitudes that hinder girls' education and force them to drop out to assist in agricultural work or domestic chores. Women's ability to obtain non-agricultural employment and participate in decision-making is severely hampered by their low levels of education. For example, boys or girls from other ethnic groups do not share the same progress in school enrollment rates. Progress in education for girls and women remain among the lowest, and education is widely perceived as an indicator of the status of women and even more importantly, as an agent for the empowerment of women.

Education and health for women and girls in Laos in recent decades have been improving. However, women are still dying of childbirth and girls continue to drop out

of school at alarming rates, especially in rural areas. Women don't hold decision-making power in their households. Economic opportunities for women, although improving remain constrained. It's clear that gender inequality hinders development. However, Laos is trying to overcome these challenges.

The prevalence of gender-based violence, especially domestic violence, is widespread, although a largely "hidden" problem, with underlying causes such as weak or absence of definitions and distinctions of violence in legislation that address domestic violence or marital rape, culture of silence and impunity, poor access to justice for women in rural, ethnic communities, and an absence of data and information on the incidence of violence and on the availability of services for survivors, especially among young women where 60% of victims are from girls between ages 12 and 18 years. In a survey by GRID in 2009, though not nationally representative, it showed that physical violence, including sexual, by a male intimate partner occurs in all provinces, and the survey found that the most commonly attributed causes of physical violence against women were alcohol, drug use, money, and work-related problems of their spouses.

Based on that condition and in this regard, the key triggers of Violence Against Women (VAW) were identified within the following four themes :

- 1) failure of a woman to meet the expectations of gender roles, including respecting her husband and his sexual demands;
- 2) jealousy/mistrust/infidelity by the husband, including presence of a mistress;
- 3) alcohol or drug use; and 4) unemployment/financial stress/money.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2006 found that nationally, 81% of women (aged 15-49) believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife/partner for any of the following reasons: when she goes out without telling him, when she neglects the children, when she argues with him, when she refuses sexual relations with him, and when she burns the food. Female sex workers are particularly at risk of sexual and other forms of violence, including high level of violence and abuse by clients "manager" and authorities and there is no legal protection or support. Laos' law increasingly recognizes women's rights, particularly with the 2004 adoption of the Law

on Development and Protection of Women (LDPW). However, many factors affect how violence against women are defined and whether it is even considered. Some causes are problems within the family and spousal violence, which has become a major cause of divorce in Laos. Domestic violence is the second most common cause of divorce. Regarding rape, it is criminalized by law, with punishment set at three to five years of imprisonment. Longer sentences and/or capital punishment are for victims under the age of 18 or in cases of serious injury or death. Lao law does not contain specific penalties for child prostitution, but the penalty for sex with a child under age 15 (the age of consent) is one to five years of imprisonment and fines. Domestic violence is illegal, though there is no law against marital rape.

Moreover, the marriage age of girls from 15 to 18 years old is prevalent in rural areas. Ethnic Lao partners have a considerable degree of freedom in choosing a spouse, and marriage among young ages is widespread. Many girls are also quick to divorce or become widows and it poses as a continuous problem appear in my country. Young marriages among rural women are much more likely to rely on village-based justice and on customary law. This is because they tend to be illiterate and have limited Lao language skills and less educated on rights and [less] knowledgeable on issues, while those in rural ethnic regions are less able to travel from their villages. Knowledge about customary law is also quite limited, but the link between custom and Lao PDR is that many ethnicities indicate that the range of customary practices is likely to be diverse, orally reproduced, and linked to traditional relationships to land, as well as to traditional gender roles.

Method and Objectives of the Research

Based on those conditions, this research was qualitative research, with the focus on: 1) public awareness raising on violence against women and children, 2) promotion of the advancement of women and gender equality, 3) promotion of children's rights in education because of education patterns among girls and boys and the effect on delaying marriage, and 4) strengthening the capacity of concerned organizations and responsibility of social organizations.

Based on those focus, the objectives of the research are: 1) to give public

awareness related with violence against women and children which should be increased related with awareness and responsiveness of law enforcement; 2) to promote the advancement of women and gender equality and increase understanding on gender equality; 3) to promote children's rights in education; 4) to strengthen the capacity of concerned organizations and responsibility of social organizations.

Finding

Public awareness rising on violence against women and children

Raising awareness on the different forms of violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence is an important element in the prevention of violence because heightened awareness is the first step in changing attitudes and behavior that perpetuate or condone various forms of violence. In this section, it highlights the campaigns aiming at preventing and combating the different forms of violence against women. Through video clips and posters, campaigns at Laos at the national level are instrumental tools to raise awareness and foster societal and political changes. Violence against children is not a private matter and needs to be brought to public attention. As a result, inspired by the global violence initiative, UNICEF has initiated a communication campaign together with the government, civil society and development partners to raise awareness among policy makers, the general public and the media about the issue of violence against children. Key messages are being developed and disseminated through various communication channels. The government is also implementing a national campaign on patriotism and development to develop families, villages and districts that practice gender equality and are free from domestic violence, particularly violence against women and children.

The national study on women's health and life experience in 2014 in Lao PDR has explicitly shown that violence against women is widespread and socially embedded, and it has a significant impact on health and well-being of women, children, and families. Lao PDR highlighted primary prevention, protection and responses. In line with these principles, the need to address, prevent, and respond to violence against women requires concrete action plans by various actors across sectors and agencies. Policy-makers, national and local governments, donors, NGOs and CSOs should refer

to these recommendations when formulating policies and implementing programmes/projects to support women and children subject to violence. Laws and policies play a crucial role in changing attitudes and behaviours that promote gender inequality, as well as developing comprehensive strategies on awareness-raising and appropriate services to protect and support survivors along with strict punishment of offenders.

There is a growing recognition globally that violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV) are serious public health problems and a violation of a woman's human right. WHO's latest systematic review that collected scientific data on VAW (WHO, 2013a) revealed that 35% of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) or non-partner sexual violence. Intimate partner (IP) is defined as a person in a close relationship that may be characterized by physical contact, an emotional connection and a sexual relationship as a couple, often with knowledge about each other's lives.

The majority of this violence is committed by an intimate partner and 30% of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partners. The terms GBV and VAW are often used interchangeably, although GBV occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender along with unequal power relationship between men and women in the context of specific societies.

Currently, two major laws stipulate prohibition in relation to VAW in Lao PDR and are addressed from the perspectives of criminal offenses, women's protection and violence prevention and responses. First, Lao Penal Law that addresses general incidents of physical, emotional and sexual violence, but definitions of these forms of violence remain unclear. Penalties for violence include imprisonment and fines or re-education depending on the severity of violence as outlined in Article 90 (Battery), Article 95 (Insults) and Article 128 (Rape).

Second, Law on the Development and Protection of Women. The LDPW Act was enacted in 2004 and became the nation's first comprehensive bill in response to domestic violence (DV) and anti-trafficking issues. This landmark bill was an important step towards the protection of women and children from various forms of abuse.

Third, New Law on Resistance and Prevention of Violence Against Women and

Children. The National Plan of Action and Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children (NPAVAW) was approved in early 2014. The NPAVAW specifies concrete actions and activities to prevent and protect women and girls from violence through enhancement of the quality and quantity and health services, police and judiciary systems, with relevant training and advocacy to achieve gender quality.

Although Lao PDR has developed associated laws such as the Penal Law and LDPW, the narrow definition of violence against women provides many loopholes for perpetrators of violence to avoid persecution. In response to these issues and the recommendation of CEDAW (Recommendation No.24), the Government of Lao PDR drafted and recently approved the new law on VAWC endorsed by the NA and is soon to be enacted. The new law on VAWC covers the definition of violence, ways to prevent and prohibit violence, as well as protect citizens along with judicial proceedings. These components are designed to address deficiencies in the LDPW that exclude violence between unmarried couples and marital rape. However, the new law on VAWC is just the beginning of a complex process to better respond to women's needs with provision of effective services alongside the transformation of social norms that currently reinforce constructions of masculinity conducive to respectful and equal relationships between women and men.

Legislation is most likely to be implemented effectively when accompanied by a policy framework in line with an action plan or strategy. The NPAVAW (2014-2020) in Lao PDR supports the implementation of basic elements of the new law on VAWC, encompassing prevention, protection, partnership, legal assistance and integration support. For effective implementation of the new law on VAWC and NPAVAW to be achieved, heightened public awareness and advocacy are essential to achieving social transformation and systematic reforms by influencing attitudes, behaviours, policies and practices. Dynamic strategies are needed to drive forward media campaigns and policy advocacy initiatives such as support and mobilization of journalists and the media to promote gender equality as primary prevention for violence against women and children. This can be done through electronic and printed publications to enhance public awareness and spark active dialogue on the issue, development of materials for

awareness-raising through TV programs, campaign DVDs, and teaching materials at schools for nationwide dissemination, inclusive public relations approaches such as broadcasting and publication of public documents that are accurately translated and interpreted into local languages considering the ethnic diversity of Lao society, acceleration of policy advocacy to disseminate the enactment of legislation and development of the NPAVAW, and advocacy for campaigns that raise awareness, including whether the new law on VAWC and NPAVAW are properly administered in terms of allocation of resources for implementation, as well as effective interventions, including achievements and impacts of projects or programmes.

The Laos country Public Awareness and Advocacy Campaign remains low and neglected because the government has limited funding, thereby making the legislation ineffective. Securing resources, especially sufficient funding, is central to successfully undertaking implementation efforts and sustaining them. Children can face multiple protection risks and because these risks are usually interlinked, vulnerability in one area often leads to increased vulnerability in others. As a result, addressing complex and often interlinked factors such as poverty, family breakdown, violence, disability and ethnicity requires a holistic and systemic response to identify families at risk, address their needs, and prevent such problems from happening in the first place.

Other types of violence such as controlling behaviours and economic abuse are important factors to measure not only the level of violence, but also the degree of freedom to ensure women's space to participate in activities and decision-making. Regarding controlling behaviours, one-third of ever-partnered women experienced at least one type of controlling behaviour, nearly 20% were constantly monitored and scrutinised by their husbands/partners regarding their whereabouts and 15.4% reported partners often suspected them of being unfaithful. These figures are higher than the prevalence of physical or sexual violence. Several other studies demonstrated that men's controlling behaviours are significantly associated with a higher likelihood of physical violence (Heise et al., 1999), sexual violence (Jenkin, 2000) and such controlling behaviours are closely related to power motives, which represent male dominance and control over females as well as subordinated systems of cultural oppression that promote masculinity. In the qualitative survey, a woman interviewed

said her husband's controlling behaviour was aggravated by physical violence in association with his jealousy and scepticism of her faithfulness, particularly when away from the household or when at work. In terms of economic abuse, 6.8% of women experienced having income taken away or being refused money, particularly in urban areas. Although wives are traditionally in charge of controlling household finances in Lao PDR, those who experienced economic abuse stressed in IDIs that husbands often doubted how money was spent. In turn, husbands overspent in relation to alcohol and sometimes also on friends, as well as so called "beer girls" in bars or nightclubs. Economic abuse is closely associated with the lack of mutual trust between a couple and can become exacerbated by alcohol and infidelity.

The government, with support from UNICEF and other partners, is working to develop a system to support these efforts in similar ways that health and education systems advanced over the past decades. This involves developing and strengthening laws, policies, regulations, services and capacities, particularly in the social welfare and child justice sectors, as well as in health, education and security, establishing key roles and responsibilities, and improving coordination between the different actors involved in protecting children.

Examples to date include the development of community Child Protection Networks, creation of a national counseling hotline service for youth, establishment of Child Court Chambers under the central and provincial court, strengthening of provincial counseling services through the Lao Women's Union Counseling and Protection Units, development of a Juvenile Criminal Procedure Law, assessments of child and family welfare system and the justice system as it relates to children, and important discussions around the initiation of the social work profession in Lao PDR. Building the child protection system provides a more cohesive, sustainable and cost-effective way to address child protection concerns, resulting in longer-term impacts for all children.

From my interview in a remote rural at the division educational province in Khammuean, I got information that the government has made efforts to change social, cultural and gender norms that promote violence but it is very difficult and there are many barriers to addressing violence against women, which are primarily rooted in

traditional gender norms and violence-condoning environments with unequal gender-defined power relationships. In Lao PDR, half of women and men think VAW is acceptable if women do not adhere to traditional gender roles and responsibilities. So changing beliefs, norms, attitudes and stereotypes on gender are, therefore, essential, and enhanced awareness on gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) must not only be achieved at the national level, but also in the community level. Such efforts can be undertaken through community-based training underpinned by gender norms and masculinity and a process to transform attitudes towards gender roles and power relations. For example, the process of gender analysis in training can provide tools to understand the causes and consequences of VAW. Participants will be enabled to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of violence and develop strategies to eliminate violence and to increase community awareness on women's rights (Tumursukh et al., 2013), considering its role in family disputes including VAW.

Promotion of the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality

Promotion of the advancement of women and gender equality is one of the measures of the State to ensure women and men have the same values and equal opportunities in politics, economy, education, society and culture, family affairs, national defense and security, and foreign affairs as provided in the constitution and laws. The State creates conditions for women to be aware of their rights and exercise their rights, including improving the economy for women through access to education, vocational training, labour skills development and necessary financial resource to enable women to have working opportunities and have good living conditions

The Lao PDR has made steady progress on its gender equality targets. It is on track to realize parity between boys and girls by 2015. In higher education, however, equality is not as prevalent, falling to 77 girls per 100 boys by the time they reach tertiary education. Women and men account for equal proportions of the total workforce, but there is a wage gap between male and female workers. A quarter of the national parliament in 2012 was composed of women, giving the Lao PDR one of the highest proportions of women in parliament in the region. The Lao PDR remains primarily a source country for victims of human trafficking. Young women and girls,

especially those from economically disadvantaged demographics, may be forced into Thailand's commercial sex trade or domestic service, garment factories and agricultural industries. Approximately 72% of trafficked children are young girls under 18 years of age. The government has adopted several laws, regulations and plans to combat trafficking and is a signatory to numerous regional MOUs that seek to prevent, combat and assist human trafficking victims.

Lao PDR is highly committed to the promotion of equality between men and women. Its gender strategy, aimed at reducing poverty, is founded on the important role played by Lao women in the society. The effective participation of women, especially poor and ethnic-minority women, is essential for the country to achieve its goals of reducing poverty and improving living standards. The government focuses on advancing equality between women and men and on promoting women's empowerment not only as human rights, but also because they are a pathway to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and securing development that does not harm the environment. Our support rests firmly on the belief that equality between women and men should underpin every aspect of human development: effective governance, poverty reduction, environment and sustainable development, and crisis prevention and recovery.

Despite notable progress by women in Lao PDR, gender inequalities are reflected in lower school enrollment of girls, high maternal mortality and lower representation of women in government decision making positions, civil service and the judiciary. Yet equality between women and men, and empowerment of women, has large and important "multiplier" effects on economic and human development.

In the qualitative results, some interviewed women survivors had university or vocational college education or worked in skilled positions with the government, while others had limited education as low as grade 2 to completion of primary school. Their experiences and tolerance of violence in marriages did not appear to differ by education level. Instead, a husband's education and career success could be a more significant factor. Despite an education, most women faced financial struggles, in part due to lack of support from husbands/partners. Adult men in FGDs said a woman's low education could limit her ability to talk to her husband and keep him calm, implying a woman's

skill set was important to maintain family harmony. However, this was not confirmed by women survivors as violence did not always depend on women's particular action or inaction or a decision to argue/challenge their husband nor education level.

The policy makes every effort to ensure that women's concerns are addressed across all of our programmes, working to ensure that women have a real voice in all governance institutions so they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision making. Encourage the development of activities that address the needs of poor women, especially in rural areas. And also cooperate closely with Government Ministries and other United Nations agencies to identify the most effective ways to promote policies and practices that do not discriminate against women.

The Goal 3 targets require a better understanding at all levels of the dynamics that sustain and/or create gender inequalities, as well as targeted policies, strategies, actions and re-prioritized public expenditures. In turn, this requires committed leadership and political will to trigger social change because gender inequality has been deeply rooted. Establishment of the Lao National Commission for the Advancement in Women (Lao NCAW) provides an excellent opportunity for the Government to consider gender issues across sectors. A need exists to further collect and disseminate data specific to women and men. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and at all levels by 2015 such as: 1) ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, 2) share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, and 3) proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

One of the region's poorest countries is still heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture. Lao PDR has experienced some economic growth in recent years following tentative reforms and has taken some positive steps forward towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals. The primary challenges to gender equality are enabling equal access for women and girls to opportunities and resources, particularly for rural and marginalized women. Illiteracy, poor reproductive and basic health, food insecurity, and economic disenfranchisement rank high among development priorities for women.

With regards to the MDGs, Lao PDR is "off track" with MDG targets for Goal

2 on universal primary education and also for Goal 3 on eliminating gender disparity in all levels of education. Gender gaps are narrowing in primary and secondary enrollment, but challenges persist in education completion. While the gaps are narrowing, girls are still poor and dropout rates, especially among girls, are consistent. These rural-urban divides have ranked Lao PDR as one of the lower performers in the East Asia and Pacific region in girl's education.

Although Lao PDR has made progress in education to diminish gender gaps in enrollment rates at the primary level. National primary school enrollment rates have risen steadily in recent years, thereby narrowing gender gaps. Since 2007/08, the gender gap in enrollment rates at the primary and lower secondary level decreased approximately by two percent. With this said, a dropout trend is on the rise with girls in secondary school. In primary school enrollments, geographic disparities persist. The rates are lower in the North and South and in rural areas, and consistently lower for girls in all groups, except for urban six to ten year olds. Rural areas without roads have the lowest access rate: about half of the children there are enrolled in school. Overall, however, girls still make up a larger proportion of the school-aged population (6-20 years) that has never been to school: 17 percent of girls versus 11 percent of boys. While progress has been made in reducing the gender gap in secondary school enrollments, improvements vary significantly across regions and between rural and urban areas. In urban areas, more girls than boys are attending secondary school, but in rural areas without road access, there are only half as many girls as boys.

Gender parity is significantly lower in the North than in the central and Southern regions. A 2005 World Bank report on schooling and poverty in Lao PDR found that in lower secondary school, the average gross enrollment rate masked large socio-gender disparities, from 54 percent of Lao-Tai urban boys enrolled to seven percent of rural girls enrolled from non-Lao-Tai groups. In summary, the enrollment of girls was lower than boys at all levels of education.

The literacy rates reflect a legacy of gender bias in access to education. The literacy rate for women in Lao PDR significantly improved but remains lower than the rate for men. Youth literacy is also improving, but young women still report lower literacy rates than young men. Among young people aged 15-24, self-reported literacy

rates are on the rise, but remain significantly lower for young women because of infrequent school attendance of poor girls from rural areas, especially at higher-grade levels which has persisted since 2000. The reasons for low school attendance include girls' household responsibilities, including caring for younger siblings, and farm work. Financial constraints also impede girls' schooling, such as the cost of clothing and school supplies, as well as the opportunity cost of girls' lost labor. Physical factors are important, including the distance to the nearest school, road access to the school, and the presence of separate latrines for girls and boys. Within the educational experience itself, the language of instruction matters. Lao language is a barrier to education for many non-Lao Tai girls, poor relevance of school curriculum to students' lives, rigid school schedules, poor quality of instruction, limited number of teachers from non-Lao-Tai groups, and inadequate school facilities.

Finally, socio-cultural factors also affect girls' participation in education. Such factors include: level of parental support, lack of awareness of opportunities arising from education (especially among ethnic groups), parents' education levels, and cultural traditions, including early marriage for girls, especially among non-Lao-Tai groups. There also remains a lack of female role models in education, both as peers, mentors and examples of what girls can do with education. Lack of facilities, access and malnutrition negatively affect educational outcomes. Lack of locally available school facilities presents a barrier for girls to complete the full five grades of primary school and also safety concerns hinders girls' enrollment. Many school environments are not yet inclusive or safe enough to sustain girls' participation.

Regarding health and nutrition, outcomes have improved but lingering challenges keep women at risk. Lao PDR's health outcomes have improved in a number of areas, including the coverage of antenatal care and births attended by skilled medical staff. However, lingering challenges in the sector continue to place women of reproductive age at particular risk. Death related to pregnancy and childbirth remains the number one cause of death for women of reproductive age in Lao PDR.

Lao PDR is "on-track" for meeting the under-five mortality MDG, which calls for two-thirds reduction in under-five mortality from 1990-2015, but "off-track" for meeting the maternal health MDG, which calls for three-fourths reduction in maternal

mortality over 1990-2015. This suggests that there has been progress on child health, but not as much on maternal health in the country. High fertility rates and maternal mortality rates are combined with poor nutrition and lack of access to basic health services, particularly in remote areas. Lao PDR's high maternal mortality rates make it one of the worst performers in the world on this indicator. Lack of access to family planning and maternal health services, combined with persistence of certain traditional practices not only endangers the lives and health of women and girls, but also has serious negative intergenerational impacts on family health, education and livelihoods. In some cases, women face particular gender-based constraints in accessing care due to mobility limitations based on social norms and heavy domestic duties. In traditional settings, women often rely on their husbands and families in their health seeking behavior, with male members deciding whether and where women will seek healthcare. Encouragingly, there appears to be no disparities (on average) in rates of immunization between girls and boys. Moreover, I found that their not wanting to go alone and physical access were additional problems reported. Language and communication concerns were reported by 13 percent of women.

For example, 64 year-old Phiel from a village in Luang Prabang Province remembers the day she gave birth more than 30 years ago. Only her husband attended her birth. They used a bamboo stick to cut the umbilical cord. "*I delivered my babies on a mat on the floor of my house,*" she said. "*We used the grass under the mat on the floor to stop the umbilical cord from bleeding.*" Such practices, though to a lesser extent, still continue in many remote villages.

The government is aware of the need to expand the coverage by skilled birth attendants in rural and underserved areas. Studies have shown that Lao women prefer female health care providers, who are in short supply. Government projects like an ADB-supported Health System Development Project is helping address these concerns by training women health practitioners and building clinics in remote areas, predominantly resided by non-Lao-Tai ethnic groups. Female village health volunteers, paramedics and other local health workers who speak the ethnic language are also being trained to function as skilled birth attendants.

Promotion of Children's Rights in Education Because Education Patterns Among Girls and Boys and the Effect on Delaying Marriage

Education is not only a human right, but also a powerful tool for women's empowerment and a strategic development investment. There is a clear multiplier effect to educating girls: women who are educated are healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn more income, have fewer children, and provide better healthcare and education to their children compared to women with little or no education (Klugman et al. 2014). The benefits of education thus transmit across generations as well as to communities at large. Where girls have greater educational and economic opportunities, they are more likely to pursue those opportunities than to have children in their teenage years. Yet a host of structural, social, and financial barriers prevent girls' enrollment and completion of both primary and secondary schools.

Child marriage is one of the most prevalent and serious violations of human rights. The issue needs urgent attention in South Asia, where 46 per cent of children are married formally or in informal union before they are 18. Girls are significantly more likely than boys to be married as children – 30 per cent of girls aged 15-19 years are currently married or in union in South Asia, compared to just 5 per cent of boys in the same age bracket. So why does child marriage happen when we know that the social, economic and human costs are so high? The answer lies in how deeply rooted child marriage is in the social norms of many societies, fuelled by tradition, religion and poverty. Awareness of the legalities of child marriage is outlawed in most countries around the world. It has little bearing on behaviour because customary laws, social norms and poverty-driven economic needs often trump national policies and legislation. Child marriage is a far-reaching issue that impacts not only the lives of the children who are married, but also the lives of those around them. When girls marry young before their minds and bodies are fully developed, they often become pregnant long before they are ready. Pregnancy is the number one cause of death among girls aged 15-19 worldwide. Child marriage also reinforces the gendered nature of poverty, with limited education and skills bringing down the potential of the girl, her family, her community and her country. These impacts extend throughout a girl's adult life and

into the next generation.

More than 80% of children living in poor and remote areas are not able to attend school because of limited school accessibility and classroom facilities in their areas. Gender gaps are narrowing in primary and secondary enrollment, but challenges persist in education completion. While the gaps are narrowing, girls are still poor and dropout rates, especially among girls, are consistent. These rural-urban divides have ranked Lao PDR as one of the lower performers in the East Asia and Pacific regions in girls' education.

Lao PDR has made progress in education to diminish gender gaps in enrollment rates at the primary level. National primary school enrollment rates have risen steadily in recent years, narrowing gender gaps. Since 2007/08, the gender gap in enrollment rates at the primary and lower secondary level decreased approximately by two percent. With this said, a dropout trend is on the rise with girls in secondary school. In primary school enrollments, geographic disparities persist. The rates are lower in the North and South and in rural areas, and consistently lower for girls in all groups, except for urban 6-10 year olds. Rural areas without roads have the lowest access rate: about half of the children there are enrolled in school. Overall, however, girls still make up a larger proportion of the school-aged population (6-20 years) that has never been to school with 17 percent of girls versus 11 percent of boys.

Education is widely perceived as an indicator of the status of women and even more importantly, as an agent for the empowerment of women. Education and health for women and girls in Laos, in recent decades, are improving. However, women are still dying of childbirth and girls continue to drop out of school at alarming rates, especially in rural areas. Women don't hold decision-making power in their households. Economic opportunities for women, although improving, remain constrained. It's clear that gender inequality hinders development (Chazje, 199).

Girls living in poverty in rural areas are far more likely to be married than girls living in urban areas. Although child marriage affects girls and boys, the impact on girls is more pronounced and can be life-threatening. "Girls who marry early usually have their first child at a younger age than those who marry later," says Tanushree Soni, a gender specialist in Asia for children's development organization Plan

International.

“This exposes girls to higher sexual and reproductive health risks. Girls are pressured to prove their fertility soon after marrying and they have little access to information on reproductive health or the ability to influence decision making on family planning.”

For example, from my interview: “I was 15 years old when I got married,” says Nuan, 18, who lives in the northern province of Bokeo, Laos. Bordering Thailand and Burma, it’s the smallest and least populous province in the country. It’s also one of the most diverse homes to 34 ethnic groups living in an area defined by the Mekong River, which brings both trade and tourists. In some parts of Bokeo, when a girl turns 14, she’s seen as mature and ready for marriage. Many parents encourage their daughters to marry early as a way to avoid the social stigma associated with out-of-wedlock pregnancies. But once a girl is married, she usually drops out of school.

Child marriage is a common, if not underreported, issue in Southeast Asia, where between 10-24 per cent of women aged 20-24 years old are married by the time they are 18. In Vietnam, 12 per cent of women aged 20-24 were married before their 18th birthday. In Cambodia, it’s 23 per cent. In Laos, where the legal age to marry is 15, figures can be hard to come by, but according to 2005 data from the United Nations, 20 per cent of women aged 15-19 were married, divorced or widowed, compared to six percent of men.

Girls from families in lower wealth quintiles are more vulnerable to child marriage and there are multiple factors that aggravate this vulnerability. The first factor has to do with fewer years in school. Girls from these families are excluded from attending school because of the costs associated with education. The respective governments in Lao PDR have set up free school programmes for all and there is some indication that this is enabling girls to stay in school longer. However, there is also evidence to show that the availability of scholarships is far from universal. In addition, the indirect costs of education, such as transportation and extra tuition, make it harder for some families to keep their girls in school. The cost of education continues to be a deterrent for girls from poorest families. The limited resources in these families are more likely to be spent on a boy’s education than a girl’s. The expenditure on a son’s

education is seen as an investment by parents, unlike the expenditure on a daughter who will eventually move to her marital family. It was also commonly reported that if a girl is not in school, parents are more likely to arrange her marriage sooner.

Therefore, knowledge and experience to raise awareness about the impact of early marriage on the life of girls, increased use of media to inform and support norm change to end child marriage, and increased commitment of programmers to prevent and mitigate risk of child marriage are necessary steps. It is equally helpful that the government develops supportive policy frameworks with adequate resourcing across ministries to increase educational, economic and social opportunities for girls at risk of child marriage. Women and children should be protected from violence abuse and neglect and the government should implement mechanisms to safeguard them. The government of Laos is currently working to strengthen the development of legal, regulatory, social welfare systems.

Strengthening the Capacity of Concerned Organizations and Responsibility of Social Organizations

This is very important as the organization must have the ability to represent the interests of women from more remote areas and should have deep understanding of specific sectors on gender issues with effective streaming in practice. However, streaming with daily work must be relevant at provincial and capital administrative levels to create a broad network of gender focal points and give more policy to narrow gender gaps and strengthen the development of legal, regulatory, and social welfare systems. Women and children should be protected by the government from violence and abuse by fully implementing key existing laws and policies to combat violence against women and ensuring adequate resources are made available. More and better work with communities, men and boys, and in school are also needed to challenge and transform damaging attitudes from an early age that eventually perpetuate violence against women.

Access to the formal legal system is limited in practice for both women and men in Lao PDR. Because the formal Lao legal system has such a short reach, quasi-judicial and customary law institutions are the means by which most people access justice with

important gender implications. Across the country, central government laws and regulations are not consistently applied or enforced. The state prefers resolving issues at the village level, a practice with significant gender implications. The practice of rewarding “case-free villages” and “cultural villages” that have not made referrals to district courts encourages the smoothing over of disputes at the village level. The majority of women’s disputes are resolved at this level.

Rural women are much more likely to rely on village-based justice and on customary law. This is because they tend to be illiterate and have limited Lao language skills and are less educated on rights and legal issues, while those in rural ethnic regions are less able to travel from their villages. Knowledge about customary law is also quite limited, but the link between custom and Lao people’s many ethnicities indicate that the range of customary practices is likely to be diverse, orally reproduced, and linked to traditional relationships to land, as well as to traditional gender roles. There is a question of whether village-based justice can avoid strong patriarchal gender bias and provide adequate protection for women. It then makes access to opportunities and policies difficult for them, where certain traditions and beliefs are obstacles to change and where women are considered the weaker gender. Majority in the rural areas have strong belief in the traditional culture where women must devote all their time for their family.

Discussion

Education in the Family

Child relationship in the family is a very important factor for the growth of children's education, especially with regard to behavioral and emotional attitudes. This is because the family is the first institution to teach children through example given by parents on how the child explores his emotions. The family is the first and primary environment for child development.

Knowles, et al (2005) suggested that the family is very functional in instilling the basics of emotional experience because that first experience gained by the child is brought to school later. Combs & Whisler (1997) also confirm that the family is the institution of learning and growing to deliver the child to the growth and further

learning.

Referring to the statement above, education in the family or family child care patterns will greatly affect the emotional development of children. When children are raised in a family with positive emotions, the emotional development of children will be positive. However, if the parents are in the habit of expressing negative emotions such as anger with aggressiveness, irritability, disappointed and pessimistic in the face of problems, the emotional development of children will be negative due to the circumstances in the family.

Furthermore, with regard to education in the family that affect the behavior of students in the school, Cangelosi (1993) suggests that the role of parents in the family is not only as controller of the learning outcomes of children in school, but also as provider of motivation and good atmosphere in the house which will bring a sense of comfort in the heart of the child from his home to his school.

The relationship between parents and teachers at school will also be able to reflect the mood of the student. This is also similar with the views of Willis (2006) and Lane, et.al (2014), who argue that the openness of good relations between institutions, which in this case is the school and the family, will bring an atmosphere of comfort to its members, which in this case is a child or student, in carrying out his duties and minimize the potential of emotional instability.

Based on the description in the above presentation, source of anger among students or children in the family can be minimized by paying attention to family education. In this regard, dikadodai primarily by parents: (1) their model – education in the family will only be successful when parents are able to educate by being exemplary both in patterns of thought, word, and deed; (2) consistent attitude – results of education in the family will be as expected when done consistently; (3) their understanding – understanding will feed into the parents' opinions regarding the internalization of parental commitment.

Socially Outside of School

Socially, outside of school is also influential as a source of anger on students in general that can be brought to school such as: (1) the child fills his playing time in

the community, (2) children interact with their peers in the community, (3) children interact with their friends to fill the void mood that is not found in the family because of certain situations and conditions in the family, (4) children interact with friends in study groups or similar activities such as health club, studio arts, and culture; and (5) a child of their time interacting with friends mostly through social media in cyberspace.

Kauffman & Brigham (2009) mentioned that the potential instability of emotions and behavior of school children who do not get enough family education is due to the influence of the association that is not well controlled, and therefore, the conditions will be carried in the learning process in schools.

Similarly, as confirmed by the results of research by Safari et al (2014), education has focused on two factors which are considered very important and show high demand for improving emotional skills. The first factor involves being attentive to the youth's problematic behaviours such as aggression, social stress, dropping out of school, depression and loneliness. The second factor is insufficient training required for students to improve their awareness levels of their responsibilities within society.

Atmosphere Environment in School

Higgins et al (2005) mentioned that there appears to be a strong link between effective engagement with staff, students, and other users of school buildings and the success of environmental change in having an impact on behaviour, well-being, or attainment. The natural environment also helped determine how the mood of the students, both in behavior, emotions, and in an atmosphere of learning, including the process and learning outcomes to be achieved by the students (Sanjaya, 2010).

The natural environment in schools also require attention. Learning under natural conditions, fresh, and clean is always more effective than the other way around. School in a natural state of frenzied, too crowded is also less conducive to students' behavior and emotions, as well as in the process and the achievement of optimal learning results. So natural conditions are good as it is conducive to encouraging participation and decisive influence in the optimization of studies. The state of bad nature give a bad effect on students, while the state of good nature help provide a positive influence for all member schools in it, including mindset, behavioral, and emotional patterns of

students in particular (Zeidner & Olnick, 2010).

In line with the above statement, it can be interpreted that any environmental role and influence and every behavior and way of thinking of each individual is different as is the role and influence of the environment. Although the environment is not a fully established pattern of behavior and thought patterns of an individual respond differently to a stimulus or a given environment. But the role and influence of the environment play very big for individuals to behave and think. In this regard, it was also confirmed by Schutte et al (2009) that there were differences in behavior and emotion in a student as shown in schools that have natural, beautiful environment as compared with a school having otherwise.

Friendship Peers in the Community

Relationships with peers can be interpreted in four senses: (1) peer who is a close friend in the form of groups or individuals because of their emotional ties, (2) peers in the form of group assignments or study group in the tasks given by the school, (3) ordinary peers as fellow students in their environment; and (4) peers moment because the similarities in the problems being faced.

Fourth understanding peer into all potentially in antagonizing women and children when (1) lack of compatibility in perspective by the ego of each person, (2) the existence of tendentious or unilateral input from other persons who are not first addressed by existing persons, (3) there are no good understanding related with how important protection for women and children is from the violence; (4) the existence of jealousy because the atmosphere in the family or community; and (5) the existence of jealousy because of the lifestyle.

The influence of peers in the community environment, which contributes as one of the possible causes of the violence for women and children, was as put forward in Bhave & Saini (2009). According to them, the strong influence of the peer group in the community also has the potential to lead to the weakening of individual ties with parents, community, and conventional norms, which will ultimately lead to easy emergence of violence for women and children.

To make sense of the statement above, the peer relationships in the community

was also able to bring out the violence for women and children if 1) peer relationships are sources of emotion, both to gain pleasure or to adapt to stress which cannot run harmoniously, 2) peer relationships as source of cognitive for problem solving and knowledge acquisition cannot run with maximum for individual attitudes that appear in the community, 3) peer relationships as a context in which the basic social skills (e.g. social communication skills, collaboration skills and the skills of incoming group) as a whole cannot be obtained or improved because of the envy and/or jealousy that arise in children, and 4) peer relationships as a basis for the establishment of other forms of relationships (e.g. relationships with siblings) cannot run harmoniously due to the emergence of differences of opinion of children and also women who do not quickly resolve issues properly.

With regard to the four above, then the peer relationships that function harmoniously among women and children starting in the family will be able to refine the relationship and those friendships in the development of social competence of women and children, especially in controlling emotion and anger that arise among women and children (McCulloch, 2008).

Relationship Among Parent-Children-Community

Family involvement in the dynamic behavior of the children in both attitude and emotional level. This is because education at the family also emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in educating children. However, less attention to the children will equally bring emotional impact for them that leads to emotional instability. With regard to the support of the family, Hermino (2014) stated that education in the family that affects the lives of children in the future is determined by: (1) security, (2) a sense of autonomy, and (3) a sense of initiative. All three of these conditions need to be created so that children and women feel safe and comfortable, and there is also a necessity for family support in the process of emotional development and character education of children.

Effective communication in the fabric of cooperation between parent-children-community can lead to miscommunication and miscoordination if it is not done as effectively as possible and in the right situation. As stated by Trumbull

(2003), effective communication is essential to create strong family and children and to increase parental involvement. Just as parents are skilled in the art of parenting, they also require knowledge and skills to effectively communicate with their environment community.

Exemplary Habituation in the Community

Habituation exemplary in community consists of two things. The first is in accordance with the exemplary saint or patron that were believed by the congregation of monks, who manage the foundation of the character building. Second is the habituation exemplary conducted by the parents, heads of community, and community members in the form of religious activities, openness of heart, discipline, and care for the environment. Against the exemplary habituation, this is in line with the kind described in Wiyani (2012) that habituation is exemplary activities in the form of everyday behaviors that are not programmed because it is done without limitation of time and space. Exemplary is the behavior and attitudes of teachers and education personnel and learners in providing an example through actions who are expected to be good role models for other students.

With regard to the activities of habituation that no school is to expand the children's characteristic, it is done by familiarizing specific positive behaviors in everyday life at school. Habituation is a process of forming attitudes and behavior that are relatively sedentary and are automated through a learning process that is repeated, whether taken together or separately. It will also produce a competency in the management of understanding on how to respect each other that may arise or is emerging within women and children (Bhave & Saini, 2009).

Conclusion

First, public awareness raising on violence against women and children should be increased, as well as the the awareness and responsiveness of law enforcement and the government on the issues of gender violence, including child bride; prevention, protection, and provision of assistance to the victims of violence and handling of such violence to protect the rights and legitimate interests of women and children aimed at

eliminating all forms of violence against women and children; uphold the roles, dignity of women and children; achieve gender equality; and contribute to social development in order to maintain peace, public order, solidarity, justice and civilization, as well as the protection and development of the country.

Second, promotion of the advancement of women and gender equality increase understanding of gender equality, enable more women to join decision-making positions, provide opportunities for women and girls to access health care, education, training, employment, income generation, infrastructure, and social protection, promote wider participation of women from all ethnic groups in economic activities and social services, and strengthen gender machinery in-country, especially the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (NCAW). Increased agricultural productivity and opportunities for off-farm jobs are pulling some households and certain regions out of poverty and providing new economic opportunities for women by reducing vulnerability and increasing opportunity. Especially for women in the rural, men must be more understanding about gender and women and men must get equal rights.

Third, promotion of children's rights in education because education patterns among girls and boys and the effect on delaying marriage to raise awareness on the above issues and the related dangers of youth in Laos. There is also a need to increase awareness regarding child marriage laws and the consequences of child marriage among individuals, families and the community by using media to inform and support norm change to end child marriage, increasing commitment of programmers to prevent and mitigate risk of child marriage, and developing supportive policy frameworks by the government with adequate resourcing across ministries to increase educational, economic and social opportunities for girls at risk of child marriage.

Fourth, strengthening the capacity of concerned organizations and responsibility of social organizations is very important. The organization must have the ability to represent the interests of women from more remote areas and should have deep understanding of sectors, specifically about gender issues with effective streaming in practice and these must stream with relevant daily work at provincial and capital administrative levels, thereby creating a broad network of gender focal points. It will also be helpful to have more policies that will narrow gender gaps, strengthen the

development of legal, regulatory, social welfare systems for women and children, ensure government protection among women and children from violence and abuse, including fully implementing key existing laws and policies to combat violence against women with adequate resources made available to do so. More and better work with communities, men and boys, and in school are also needed to challenge and transform damaging attitudes from an early age that eventually perpetuate violence against women.

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Theme

2

**Peace, Environment,
and Security**

Peace, Environment, and Security: Gendered Dynamics of Struggles within Multilayered Power Relations

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Conflict, peace, and security, as well as peace building process also have gendered dynamics. Women and girls face different problems and situations in conflict areas. The United Nations has recognized this situation by enacting United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), whose main goals are the need to address women and girls' specific needs, and to reinforce women's capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery processes, in conflict and post-conflict situations. Women and girls also have important role in peace-building at different levels. Subsequent UN resolutions have highlighted the role of women as key actors in economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy. Notably, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2122 (2013) recognises "... that the economic empowerment of women greatly contributes to the stabilisation of societies emerging from armed conflict".

At the ground level, however, peace is always considered as the issue or matter handled or only related or concerned the two conflicting parties. In the case where conflict has turned into war, many peace-building processes exclude women, or their perspectives are hardly heard, as they are considered as mostly non-combatants. A number of peace process around the world has suggested so. In a number of the peace talks, only very few, or even none of women of the conflicting parties played significant roles as peace negotiator. There has also been limited attention on women's perspectives, narratives, and insights on conflict, war, and peace.

There has also been limited attention on gender dimension of the complex connections among environment, development and conflict. In some cases, conflicts were triggered by the politics of natural resources that involved different actors at different levels (from local, national to international). A number of factors contribute to the connection between environmental issues, poverty, and security. According to The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), “the real sources of insecurity also encompass unsustainable development, and its effects can become intertwined with traditional forms of conflict in a manner that can extend and deepen the latter.” Gender dimension linked to different layers of power relations within complex linkages of environment, insecurity and different forms of conflict (including agrarian conflict that could be further developed into armed conflict as it already happened in some areas), need to be further explored.

The collaborative research on peace, environment, and security is aimed to explore women’s perspectives, narratives, and insights on conflict, war, peace, peace building process, as well as on human security. The first research project entitled “Uncovering the Sub-Alternity: The Peace Process in Women’s Perspectives, Narratives, and Agencies” was carried out by Dr. Eka Srimulyani of the State Islamic University of Ar-Raniry, Aceh, Indonesia. The second research project entitled “Strengthen Feminist Leadership for Effective and Sustainable Peace Building Process in Myanmar” was conducted by Ms. Mai Aye Aye Aung of Myanmar Institute of Theology, Myanmar. The third research project entitled “Seeing the land as a woman: the role of kinship and conjugal relationship in access to land and forest in Kala Tongu Village, Central Highlands of Vietnam” was carried out by Ms. Phan Phuong Hao of the Institute of Culture Studies, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam, who is also Ph.D. student at the School of International Development, University of East Anglia, United Kingdom.

The above three individual research projects explored, documented, and analyzed personal but political narratives of women of different social backgrounds

about war, conflicts including environmental and agrarian conflicts, peace and peace building process, human security. These research projects analyzed layers of struggles of women within gendered dynamics of power relations of conflicts, peace and peace building process, and “intervention” through formal peace negotiation or through formal environmental project. Altogether, the individual research projects contribute to the following analytical aspects: (1) They deconstruct militaristic, linear, male-dominated view about conflict, war and peace. (2) They deconstruct non-feminist leadership in peace building process. (3) They deconstruct masculine view of environmental and agrarian conflicts.

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Uncovering the Sub-Alternity: The Peace Process in Women's Perspectives, Narratives, and Agencies

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Abstract

Bringing history and looking at the facts from the eyes or perspectives of women are overlooked in most important phases of people's history and narratives. One of these are in war time, as well as peace process. Peace is always considered as an issue only related to two conflicting combatant parties. Mostly non-combatants, women are excluded from the process and their perspectives are often hardly heard. A number of peace process around the world has suggested so. In a number of peace talks, only very few and even none of the women play significant roles as peace negotiator. Therefore, to balance the perspectives and narratives, the small research is aimed to study women's perspectives on peace, their initiatives, positions, and roles during the armed conflict and during the peace process. It also tries to uncover specific narratives and their insights on war and peace. To gain data, the research will employ in-depth interview with women from conflict affected areas, women leaders, civil society organizations, which engaged in the humanitarian actions during armed conflict and peace process, and peace organization. This research will also utilize the case study method to study the subject deeply by focusing on some women to observe their narratives and agencies in peace. The focus of this research is Aceh, one of the provinces in Indonesia that experienced three decades of civil war from 1976 - 2005. This research is expected to offer new realities by looking at the women and peace process, by documenting the narratives of the sub-altern in the context of armed conflict and peace process. This will also deconstruct the perspectives of war that was always analyzed from masculine points of view and the perspective that war is only a matter between two conflicting [armed] groups, and disregarded other civilian groups of the community such as women. From a practical point of view, this research is

expected to produce some insights that can be followed up to produce an inclusive peace that embraces all of the community groups, including women, which quantitatively constitutes half the total population.

Introduction

Aceh, is the Indonesian province that experienced three decades of civil conflict between Geraka Aceh Merdeka (Aceh Independence Movement) and the Indonesian central government from 1976 to 2005. As any other civil conflict/war, this conflict also has a great impact on the life of people in this region, including women in Aceh. Some of them became widows and single breadwinners for the family when their husbands were killed or kidnapped. In some circumstances, they also became “weapons of war.” They were kidnapped, raped or tortured in order to make their male family combatants surrender. For security reasons, men had to leave their village. In some instances, women took over the public affairs of the village. Men’s exodus was common during this armed conflict in Aceh with some villages referred as *gampong janda* (widow village) as the majority or even almost all of the women populations were widowed.

The Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/GAM (Aceh Independent Movement) was founded by Hasan Tiro on December 4, 1976. The movement was claimed to be established as the reaction or response toward the unjust policies of the Indonesian central government by exploiting the natural resources but provided little for the welfare of the local people. The factors were also used to link political ideology and betrayal of the Indonesian central government on some privileges and special rights for Aceh as Daerah Istimewa (special region). In the early phase of this armed conflict history, the rebellion of GAM was suppressed by the central government through intensive military operation namely Nanggala operation. This military operation was aimed to combat the movement and their important figures or actors. At that time, to avoid the worse situation, Hasan Tiro, the founder of GAM, went out from Aceh and lived in exile in Swedia. On the one hand, the military operation was considered successful from military points of view since the power of GAM became weak. But on the other hand, it also caused serious civilian hostilities.

During the next phase of this armed conflict, the Aceh Independent movement recruited more followers from the local people from different areas in Aceh; they were trained in the military and grouped into several military command. Some of them were also selected and sent overseas for military operation in Libya. Several cohorts of those trained in Libya returned back, and consequently, the war also intensified in several spots in Aceh. In reaction, the Indonesian government launched Operasi Jaring Merah, a more intensive military operation to combat the GAM combatants. This phase occurred until the end of the New Order government when Suharto stepped down from his 32 years of presidency in 1998. Over the years of military operations, civilian hostilities occurred, and women, as other non-combatant groups, were among those who also suffered due to the armed conflict.

On the other hand, women were among the first groups who campaigned publicly that peace is the best solution to end the armed conflict and avoid more civilian hostilities and suffering of the people. This was quite peculiar as the mainstream discourse within the community and several organizations in were on advocating for either a referendum or independence for Aceh, which were considered the primary options to end the armed conflict. The willingness of women in the conflict area to come together to Banda Aceh and the efforts of several civil organizations led women's organizations to arrange the First Aceh Women Congress in February 2000 in a local term known as *Duek Pakat Inong Aceh* (DPIA) I, which was also an interesting case or context of women's agency to be discussed in this paper.

That was the background where this research was located. Generally, the research tried to shed light on women's stories, perspectives, and narratives on peace and war to balance the existing mainstream of peace and war that apparently disregarded women's experiences. The methodology utilized in this research is a qualitative research based on in-depth interview with few women to explore their experiences and perspectives. The women interviewed came from different backgrounds and areas.

These issues became more significant as in a number of cases, political power had indeed dominated the discourse of those parties working for peace building, compared to the other resolution conflict agenda of compensating the victims, the empowerment in post conflict, psycho-social treatment and others (see, Senanayake,

2009). Not only that, most of the narratives on peace were dominated by particular figures and groups and undermined the other groups' agency like women, although some of them had quite active role in campaigning for peace such as during the First Aceh Women Congress in February 2000 (See Kamaruzzaman, 2000). Even before that, some researches or works such as Siapno (2002), for instance, have already portrayed the dynamic agency of women during Aceh conflict period. Although, some works on Aceh conflict and peace such as Miller (2009) did not capture their agency in specific details.

Women and Peace Building

During the period between 1989 to 2005, there were eleven types of military operations, which include the Military Operation Status or DOM/ Daerah Operasi Militer (1989-1998), Post-DOM (August-December 1998), Wibawa Operation (January-April 1999), Sadar Rencong Operation (May 1999- May 2000), Cinta Meunasah Operation (June 2000-January 15, 2000), Moratorium (January 16, 2002-February 15, 2002), COHA (December 9, 2002-May 17, 2003), Martial Law 1 & 2 (May 19, 2003-May 18, 2004), Civil Emergency 1 & 2 (May 19, 2004-May 18, 2004), and MOU Helsinki (August 15, 2005).

In 2000, the effort for ceasefire started by the Swiss Centre for Humanitarian, namely Henry Dunnant Centre, in which then *Jeda Kemanusiaan* Agreement (Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, CoHA) was signed in 2002. During the CoHA process, there were only very few women involved, although women were the group concerned and worked on peace advocacy. Still, as part of their agency, according to Suraiya Kamaruzzaman, a well-known female Acehnese activist, women's group actually lobbied the government to request for more women to be involved in the process. Women also lobbied Aceh Independent Movement. Nevertheless, this CoHA peace talk, unfortunately, only lasted for a very short time. After its failure, several violent cases emerged again in different parts of Aceh province. In 2004, the Indonesian presidential election has brought General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Yusuf Kalla to be the sixth Indonesian president and the vice president. As the vice president, Yusuf Kalla actively initiated several peace talks effort in community conflicts areas

in Indonesia such as in Poso and Maluku.¹ It was also Yusuf Kalla who initially approached the GAM leaders overseas to [re]start the peace talk. In the tenth anniversary of MoU Helsinki in August 2015 in Banda Aceh, in his keynote speech, he told the audience “the stories behind the scene” about the Aceh peace talk. The mission was started by his trusted person, who approached GAM leaders, and then they proceeded to seek facilitation from CMI (Crisis Management Initiative) led by the former president of Finland, Marti Arthisaari.

Women were fed up with the armed conflict and all of its impacts. Although as other ordinary civilians, they did not have any power to do something that could stop it. One of the local women activists said, “Since the conflict, it does not only affect two parties or two families. During the conflict, these two engage in conflict while others becomes victims. Those who did not have share in the conflict who can push [peace process].” I said that this was because the people in Aceh feared weapons. But if we go to the village, we talk to women, and when women begin to be articulate, [we said] we are fed up with this conflict. If GAM and TNI would be in conflict, they should go to the jungle. Women’s groups have become frustrated. Eventually there was *mogok*...eventually others occurred, but their perceptions were similar. If it had already started, it was only them who can solve and it will end, women were not considered part of this.²

Meanwhile, their male counterparts still thought about power and glory if Aceh were to be independent from Indonesia. Such a discourse was hardly heard from women’s group; only very few of them, including the faction from the first Aceh women congress. The faction had a close link to combatant groups, whereas others were neutral and tended to opt for peace as the solution.

The way to peace talks

The huge natural disaster of earthquake and tsunami hit Aceh in December 2004 and killed more than 200, 000 people and caused a massive destruction along the west

¹ The conflict in Poso and Maluku was different from the ones in Aceh as the conflict in those areas was religious communal conflict, not ideological conflict for struggling of independence from Indonesia like the one in Aceh.

² An interview with a local woman activist.

coast area of Aceh, including the capital city Banda Aceh. This natural disaster has made Aceh, which used to be closed from the outside world, open for humanitarian aid from all around the world. Both GAM and Indonesian military were also part of the humanitarian work post-tsunami Aceh. For GAM leaders, the tsunami disaster that hit Aceh badly made them decide to ceasefire in order to reduce the grief from the people in Aceh. This disaster was also believed to be the catalyst that made the two conflicting parties return back to the peace talk table to restart the dialogue and negotiation again.

Where were women during this peace talk? Apparently, their roles were recognized in assisting the victims of armed conflict through their humanitarian works both in organizations or formal individual effort. The first leader of Aceh Reintegration Body cited that during the conflict it was women who could go and assist people more freely in the field. Also, a leader of a local organization that supported referendum mentioned the international attention paid to Aceh after several publications showed that non-combatants and civilians such as women and children were victims. Also, the testimony of some women who were abused also dragged national and international attention to the Aceh conflict. Two women, Aceh Faridah Ariani from Pidie region and Suraiya Kamaruzzaman, a lecturer from State University in Banda Aceh received Yap Thien Human Rights Award in 2001. The roles of women during the period of conflict can't be undermined although it was not well-known to a number of parties even in Aceh nor was it well documented. Nevertheless, in the peace talks, it was very apparent, almost none of them were involved.

The absence of women in Aceh during the formal talk like the first round of Helsinki Agreement was due to the mindset that the conflict can only be resolved by those combatants who were directly engaged. In this case, women were considered as outsiders of the conflict constellation although they had significant roles and agency, mostly without using the weapon. The mindset focused on conflicting parties of GAM and TNI and considered them as the main player who can solve the problem was also the policy undertaken by the mediator organization itself. According to one of the Aceh peace activists, if such kind of perception existed, it was clear it will never engage the victims or those...since the conflict had to be resolved by the conflicting

(combatants) groups only.³

Women's activist like her believed that women were having enough experience and knowledge to engage and contribute to the peace talk. There have been several stories of what women have been doing during the previous conflict situation such as doing some informal "negotiation" with related parties or people when their husbands or children were kidnapped. This included the negotiation undertaken by women to let them return back from IDPs camp to their village to ensure that they can harvest from their lands.

Duek Pakat Inong Aceh (DPIA) 1 (First Aceh Women Congress)

The first and biggest event that consolidated major groups of women in Aceh during the conflict was the First Aceh Women Congress, namely *Duek Pakat Inong Aceh (DPIA)* held in February 2000. This was a significant event to be aware of in discussing women's roles and agency in the history of Aceh peace building. Their efforts preceded even the UNSCR 1325, which was released months later in September 2000. In congress, several representatives of women from all of the districts in Aceh came to join the congress amidst the terror they received when they were involved in the event. The agenda was clear: to support peace as a solution to end the conflict. However, among women activists who participated in the congress, there were also those who did not agree on the agenda. Among the issues part of the agenda, I still remember someone, who now have passed away, once said that when we talk about peace, there is no peace. Women's groups are just anybody, and those who can make peace are GAM and TNI.⁴

One of the initiators of the women congress was a female lecturer from Syiah Kuala University of Aceh said:

If people were objective, they would see that *Duek Pakat* was the first person or the first institution that raised the issue of peace as solution for Aceh [armed] conflict. Before that, nobody spoke about peace, although after the women congress, a number of people wanted to be heroes of peace. With the strong

³ An interview with a local woman activist.

⁴ Interview with a local woman activist.

determination of our friends despite all of those barriers, the congress that was successful (to be held) was the Aceh women congress, whereas the congress of Aceh people (initiated by men) never happened until today.

The *Duek Pakat* congress was a very obvious women's movement. Apart from this phenomenal congress, several women's organization like Flower Aceh worked with the conflict affected community at the grassroots. They had to be very careful in handling so many women's issues during the conflict such as rape, sexual harassment, and other gender-based violence. The programs of the organization Flower Aceh handled human right issues. But this did not bring them into an easy position as some combatant groups put them in terror and blacklisted to visit their village. To avoid unnecessary conflict, organizations like Flower Aceh had to find different strategies to enter the village safely, including using the education program approach as an entry point.

One of the congress' mandate was the establishment of Balee Syura Ureung Inong Aceh, an organization that continuously works in the spirit of the congress. This organization, with the support of UNIFEM (UN Women), held the Second Aceh Women Congress in 2006 after the signing of peace agreement. The organization branched out in several district levels in Aceh. Until now, although without enough financial support, some organizational branches such as the ones in Aceh Barat district are still able to conduct some programs on anti-violence against women and worked with some local female religious leaders for the campaign and advocacy to some *majelis taklims* (Islamic study group) in the region (conversation with the leader of Aceh Barat Balee Syura Ureung Inong Aceh).

Women in Helsinki Peace Agreement

The peace talk that led to the signing of the peace agreement in 2005 was the negotiation which was facilitated by CMI that began in January until August 2005. Both GAM leaders and the Indonesian government representatives plus experts from both sides engaged to discuss several critical issues such as the governance of Aceh, human rights, amnesty and integration, arrangements, the establishment of the Aceh

Monitoring Mission (AMM) and dispute settlement. From the Indonesian side, it was the Minister of Justice and Human Rights who acted as chief coordinator. He was assisted by Sofyan Jalil, the Indonesian Minister of Communications and Information who is an Acehnese himself, Farid Husein, and two officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. GAM side was represented by Prime Minister of the Government of the State of Aceh, Malik Mahmud. He was accompanied by Dr. Zaini Abdullah, GAM's foreign minister, Bakhtiar Abdullah (GAM spokesperson), and Nur Djuli and Nurdin Abdul Rahman. In later rounds, Irwandi Yusuf and Shadia Marhaban were also engaged in the peace talks. GAM was also supported by an academic from Australia, Damien Kingsbury, to assist them in formulating option for negotiation throughout the process. Apart from those, there were very little observers from Aceh or Indonesia who come to Helsinki. Looking at the composition of the people engaged in the peace talk, there was almost no women except for Shadia Marhaban, who came at the later round. Shadia herself was rejected by some people engaged in the peace talk. For GAM side, the idea to let Shadia was a strategy to bring a special image of the inclusiveness of GAM. Shadia was, at first, considered as "flower" of the peace talk. But later on, she showed her real understanding of the situation in Aceh. As someone who lives close to Aceh and a journalist herself, she has more knowledge on Aceh. From the Indonesian side, no woman played a role during the peace talk.

In the negotiation, several key issues became the focus, but the issue on women was not included. The reason why women's issue was not discussed was because for them, the most important thing was to ensure peace and security first in Aceh before anything, and it was the experience of conflict everywhere that women's issues seemed to be marginalized. Shadia was invited to be part of the five-team of GAM side as she was the only person who knew the current and real situation in Aceh prior to the peace talk, whereas other male leaders of GAM spent very little time in Aceh and had inadequate knowledge from the ground. Her presence as part of the five-team was appreciated by Marti Ahtisaari, who was from CMI and was the mediator of the peace talk. The Indonesian government was not able to bring women to the table. In fact, one of the Indonesian women delegation was rejected as she was considered as someone who did not understand the issue and had no idea about Aceh.

As someone who understood the current Aceh situation better, Shadia became the reference for critical issues such as the number of GAM combatants. As someone who had spent some period of time in the jungle with GAM groups, she had an idea about GAM situation. Her knowledge has been an advantage, although at the first time her presence was rejected. For GAM side, Shadia was initially invited to bring a different image of GAM as a non-conservative group. The most difficult issue being solved between the two negotiating groups and made the peace talk stuck was the issue on local political parties in Aceh. For the Indonesian government, the existence of local political parties will be a thread for national unity. For GAM side, this is a very crucial issue since the failure and success of the talk relied on how this issue will be resolved accordingly. The peace talks and its MoU Helsinki Agreement concerned more on political issues, reintegration and such. This was also reflected in the LOGA (Law on Governing Aceh), the law that was derived from Helsinki MoU. In the LOGA, there were only very little articles dealing with women's issue. That is why afterwards, several women's organization mobilized their links to advocate that the LOGA would have more gender sensitivity. Some scholars and community figures, who were concerned on gender and women issues in general, were invited to be part of the team for this advocacy in central government through the parliament in Jakarta. One of them was Dr. Nurjannah Ismail, a well-known woman scholar from the State Islamic University of Ar-Raniry recognized for her progressive ideas on gender and Islam.

However, for formal peace talk before the signing of Helsinki, it was only one woman, Shadia Marhaban, who engaged in the process. Shadia herself was in a difficult position to join the peace talk in the second round and be accepted as a full team member of the GAM side negotiators. The process seemed to disregard the fact that it was the women's group that was among the first that advocated and campaigned for peace in Aceh.

During the post conflict and post-tsunami rehabilitation from 2005 to 2008, the women's organizations mushroomed in Aceh. They received support from both national and international agencies. Although it was tsunami that triggered the rehabilitation efforts, the programs were also coincidental with the post-conflict rehabilitation, even the latter lasted longer. During the Aceh armed conflict in 1999, women organizations

like Flower Aceh started to campaign on women's rights and peace. Flower Aceh initiated a different kind of campaign through the support of The Asian Foundation. The idea was to show and bring the message of peace, such as the image of children who played in front of the house with a message "they deserve to live peacefully."

Also, a number of women participated in the program to strengthen the role of women village leaders through the training on Conflict Transformation and Management. The training was conducted in Banda Aceh, Pidie, Nagan Raya, Aceh Timur, Aceh Selatan, Abdya, Aceh Barat, etc. The facilitator of the training recognized that it was those women/participants who had such a rich of experience of dealing with conflict in their own ways. Some of them conducted negotiation on the ground with either GAM or Indonesia military when their families or communities were kidnapped or sentenced to jail. They also supported one another when their families were affected and became victims of the armed conflict.⁵

There was also a local women's organization founded by ex-combatants, namely LINA (Liga Inong Aceh) that had several branch offices, particularly in conflict affected areas. Supported by other donors, LINA conducted several programs to support women's participation in peace building and politics. Although politically, this organization was linked to GAM, LINA was considered as an independent women ex-combatant organization, not a women wing organization. Among the founder of this organization was Shadia Marhaban herself, the woman who engaged in peace talks in Helsinki. Another active organization in supporting peace building and conflict resolution was Balee Syura Ureung Inong Aceh, which was established from the recommendation of the first Aceh women congress.

Women, War and Peace: Stories and Narratives

When the peace agreement was signed, some of the women involved in the advocacy for peace and human rights argued that the struggle has not ended yet. However, for all of them, peace is a must. With peace, many things can be done and achieved. "Honestly speaking, with peace, we can live better now."⁶ No one would

⁵ Interview with a well-known local woman activist.

⁶ Interview with one of previous woman combatants.

argue about this. However, another woman, who was also an activist concerned on the sustainability of the Helsinki MoU peace agreement, claimed that if the MoU Helsinki's points could not be implemented well, then another struggle might arise. She referred to the previous armed civil conflict, the first one after the Indonesian independence, which was then followed by the last armed conflict of the Aceh Independent movement and the Indonesian government in 1976 to 2005. It was believed to have resulted from the failure of the previous conflict resolution. As a woman combatant, she was wanted and had to rescue herself outside Aceh for the sake of her security and safety. She was also part of the investigation team that examined human rights abuse that occurred in the field and was sometimes trapped in the battlefield between two armed military groups. "My reason to join the movement was my very personal choice, and it started from my activism in campus when I joined several organizations," she said. She was told by a senior member of the history of Aceh about the struggles and the suffering of the local people during the armed conflict. This has raised her awareness, and she was invited many times to conduct the investigation of the cases of those being called. She was also involved in some of the advocacies for rape victims and those who were injured during armed conflict. In order to do those help, she sometimes had to risk her life.

When asked about the war, she said war is painful, especially for those who have to risk their lives. War does not recognize anyone, and everyone could be killed. Also, from an economic point of view, war makes the economic life difficult. People could not go out to earn their livelihood. [To me] war was threatening. Now [after peace] it seems to be better, more wealth for Acehnese people...during the armed conflict time, people could be easily suspected and targeted...perhaps this was very prevalent in the city, but in the rural areas, it was the situation...

Due to her activities, she was on the wanted list in 2002, then in 2003, she left Aceh for security reasons. But then, she decided to go back to Aceh after the tsunami. She participated in the first Aceh women's congress in 2000 but was not involved in formal peace talk like CoHA or Helsinki Peace Talks. However, after the peace talks, she worked for an organization named BRA, which was responsible for Aceh reintegration as mandated by the Helsinki peace agreement. For her, "peace is the

solution as there is no victim. If the peace talks fail, it will [cause] more suffering for the Acehese people. After the DOM and the tsunami disaster, without peace we could not develop.” She also realized it was only one woman engaged in the peace talk in Helsinki, whereas others like her have different agencies during conflict and war time in Aceh.

Meanwhile, another woman I interviewed were the former student activists. When discussing the roles of women in peace process, they ensured that they did whatever they could to “campaign” for peace. Some of them were exposed to broader opportunities to gain more knowledge and skills on conflict resolution and such. She had a hard time during the armed conflict as a student activist and a leader of one of the student organizations concerned on Aceh’s issue. She was on the list and wanted. Her marriage turned from a happy moment to an “escape” moment to avoid military check. After the peace agreement in 2005, she got the opportunity to pursue her master’s degree in Jakarta and just returned back to Aceh. I met her both in Jakarta and in Aceh. She is also now one of the lecturers at one of the public universities in Banda Aceh. Nevertheless, she cannot get rid of the spirit she had during the armed conflict and her engagement with the previous affiliated combatant political parties. She termed it as the struggle for the dignity of the Acehese. “I am not doing things for selfish objectives. Whatever I did is for the betterment of our society, something that I have been concerned with since my youth.” For this purpose, she does not care whether she will earn or benefit. Sometimes she has to “sacrifice” her time, energy, and money to achieve her objectives.⁷ She felt that she and her group are already concerned and conducted some initial effort for peace. She mentioned another local woman who, from the very beginning, tirelessly worked on peace issue until the end. With this information, she also suggested that women’s role like her has to be written and documented so our generation knows the history and the actors well. When asked on one of the most impressive moments of conflict time for her, she said it was when the police kidnapped her and some of her friends, punished them and sentenced them to the jail. However, during the period of time, she still resisted and committed to what

⁷ Interview with a former student activist, who is now a lecturer at one of the universities in Banda Aceh, during the armed conflict.

she believed in and struggled for. What she also strongly believes in is if the Helsinki peace agreement fails, another rebellion movement will most probably emerge again in Aceh. In her opinion, her current “political” engagement through a local political party was part of securing or ensuring that agreements could be applied well.

A similar suffering impression of conflict was also shared by another woman, who as a “civilian”, had a bitter experience during the armed conflict. Being suspected as a member of a combatant group, she denied many times about this accusation. Several times she had to avoid being kidnapped by staying in a humble place outside her home together with her children without proper facilities. “I was afraid that dangerous animals like snake would harm us when we stayed in a place outside our home near a well, which had no floor and roof and with coconut leaves as walls, and it was fine till the end.”⁸ What was interesting from her comment was how previously they were pursued, investigated, and hated by the police. But now that there is peace, her daughter is even engaged to a police. The integration is going on in its own way in a diverse context of the local people.

The two other women interviewed were from civilian background. One of them was a female religious leader in the Western part of Aceh. She had a number of students living in her *dayah* (Islamic boarding school). She has a number of women study groups, mainly women who came to her and learned Islamic knowledge. She and other women groups sometimes had to be very careful when physical confrontation occurred. A woman I interviewed from Aceh Barat district mentioned that she felt very grateful for peace. “Living in armed conflict situation was terrible, sometimes while conducting the teaching for women and children, the bullet passed on by our sides. Alhamdulillah, we were still protected by Allah, if not, nobody knows what would have happened to us.”

Another woman I interviewed was an elementary school teacher aged 43, who stayed in the village with those from non-Acehnese ethnicity. She confessed her village was relatively secure, but still she said “we lived in fear, especially when the battle occurred in a nearby village or place. We had to be careful. We could not speak, talk, and discuss freely even with our neighbor as any topic could harm us

⁸ Interview with a woman from combatant family.

when it was associated to either combatant or military group.” Her narrative indicated that civilians like her and others are being trapped in two armed conflicting groups. She understood the war in Aceh as “an armed conflict that caused a number of people from working safely. It caused people to whisper if they would like to talk and caused fear to go anywhere.”⁹ However, as an ordinary civilian, she did no particular effort to campaign for peace. “What I did is a very simple one such as to remind our children to avoid any further conflict, including ethnic based conflict.” “The peace is like what we had today. No more gun shooting. Everyone can work conveniently, enjoy their lives with neighbors, and greet anyone without necessarily finding out if s/he was a member of the Aceh Independent Movement or the Indonesian military. Especially for a teacher like me, I could freely engage in teaching students without any fear caused by anyone¹⁰...peace no longer gave us fear for doing our daily work in the paddy field and in our social interaction with our neighbors.”¹¹

Reflective Remarks:

Their stories and narratives on peace and war at least confirmed how, on the one hand, women were considered as passive groups during the armed conflict. However, on the other hand, their efforts to assist others and to work on peace advocacy were also prevalent. Their commitment to still work on sustaining peace is also quite apparent among different women whom I have met during the research. The stories and narratives disappeared in the grand narratives of armed conflict and peace that focused more on power, politics, and others but little attention was given on the inclusiveness of different groups’ perspectives and objectives in looking at peace. This could be started from the idea of bringing the sub-altern narrative and stories to the fore so the marginalized groups and perspectives can be brought to the discourse and common knowledge of the people. For this particular purpose, this research is only the beginning. Serious and deep field-research should be undertaken for further

⁹ Interview with an elementary female teacher

¹⁰ As for the information during the Aceh armed conflict, hundreds of schools were burned. A number of school principals and teachers were kidnapped, tortured or even killed, and a number of school activities, especially in conflict prone areas, were not conducted properly.

¹¹ Interview with an elementary female teacher.

understanding of the sub-altern narratives and agencies like women in the grand narrative and stories of peace all over the world. With this approach, their agency, which used to be associated as passive, might be understood in a different way. In addition, their simple thought on war and peace could be a powerful insight for other and future peace building efforts in other parts of the world. In doing this, it is necessary to revisit the notion of agency and explore the different agencies that were the sub-altern model or pattern to the fore by exploring the “herstories” and personal but political narratives.

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Strengthening Feminist Leadership for Effective and Sustainable Peace Building Process in Myanmar

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Abstract

This research highlights the significant role of feminist leadership which requires paying attention to power sharing, authority, and decision making in peace building processes in Myanmar with the view of gender and peace agenda. It argues the need of feminist leadership not just women involvement in peace and reconciliation in Myanmar. Although it is important to increase numbers of women in leadership, feminist leadership is more than leadership style based on female socialization and awareness of gender binary and stereotypes, which believes that men can also be pro-feminist and lead with feminist goals in mind. The distribution of power and seeking democratic relationships are complex goals of feminism that demand that the country attends to look not only on gender, but also to other forms of oppression and privilege because Myanmar people's life experiences, values, and thoughts reflect the impact of ethnicity, race, class and gender.

The need for gender sensitivity to design a lasting peace that will be advantageous to empowering women as decision makers and actors in all areas of peace building is vital for a country like Myanmar with 135 different ethnic groups, excluding other minorities, and religious conflicts that are ongoing along with civil war. Poorness in transparency, accountability and consistency, as well as peace and conflict issues, create a fertile ground for growth in gender justice in the long run in such a country. Therefore, the research questions "How are women strengthening to become feminist leaders for peace process and what are the suitable ways for this progress?" This study aims to explore on acknowledging the role of women as peacemakers and peacebuilders in the community level, regional level, and country level and ensure that women's needs are addressed. The researcher interviewed women peacebuilders in the

national level, who are currently nominated for N-Peace 2016 award. These remarkable women have actively participated in the country's development, peace, gender, and political fields in the country level.

Respondents were approached to complete life stories interview in a convenient area with care which did not interfere with their work or family duties within September 2016. Life stories interview was designed to provide insights of women leadership in peace process. Ethical requirements, including formal approach and confidentiality, were ensured. This study raised the requirement of feminist leadership in peace process to fill the gap of gender justice and women empowerment needed in Myanmar. If post-military regime government understands the important roles of women leadership in peace building process and gives sustained support for their efforts, then even the challenge of women leadership for peace and positive peace can become an achievable goal.

Introduction

People are facing challenges unparalleled in history. These global challenges call for global solutions and these solutions require cooperation on a scale beyond compare in human history. In a globalized world, the sources of many of these challenges are multidimensional, increasingly complex, and spanning national borders. For this reason, finding solutions to these challenges deeply requires new thinking. Today, there is more intra-state conflict and a greater variety of actors and types of violence. The reasons of conflict are complicated: economic, social, environmental, as well as political. In a global level, fewer people die in the battlefield, yet the impact on civilians are increasingly severe: deaths, displacement, and ruined or disrupted livelihoods. Every post-conflict situation is unique. It is quite easy to agree on the importance of peace and reconciliation, but much harder to achieve it. Overcoming post-military regime countries like Myanmar cannot be improved without a broad set of enabling circumstances that includes peace and security, workable physical infrastructure, functioning core institutions, including a professional public security, an adequately educated and trained labor force, a regulatory and legal framework that fosters a country's growth and whose rules are enforced, and government policies on peace. Any

single one of these is difficult in a fragile post-conflict environment and when taken altogether is a challenging task.

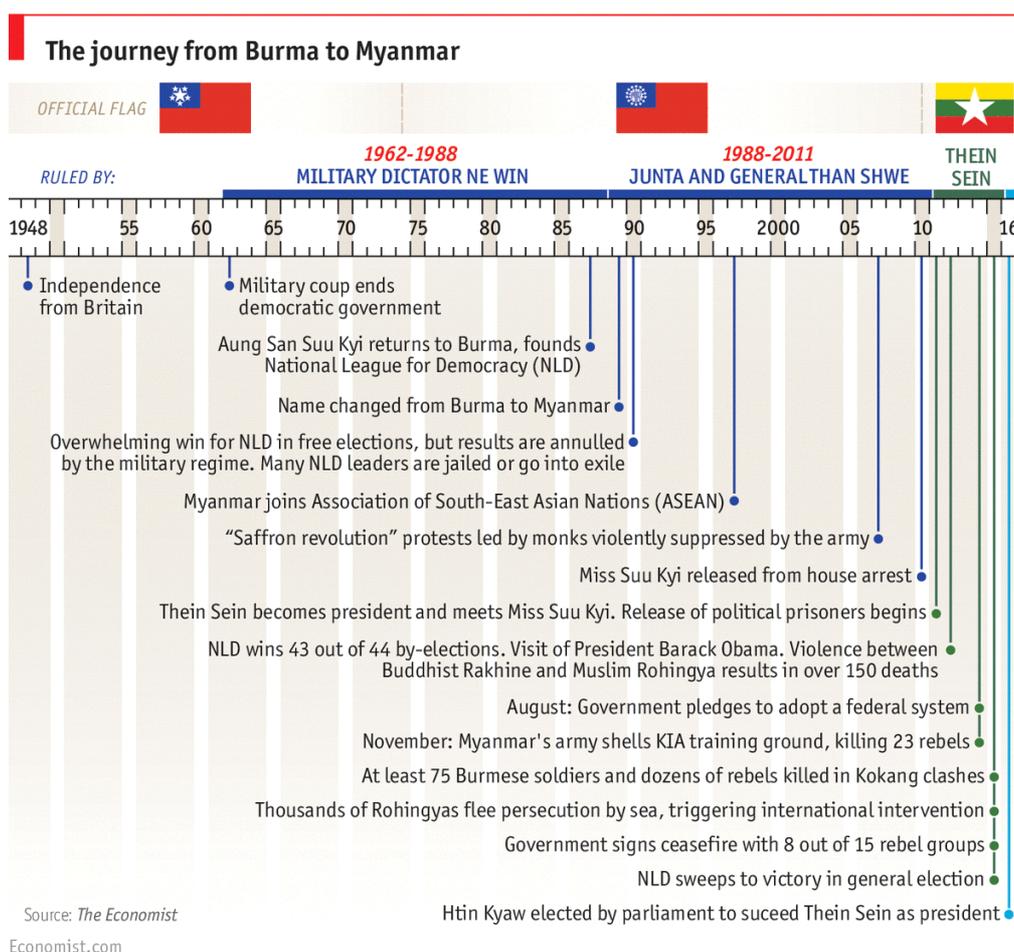


Figure 1. The Journey of Burma to Myanmar

(Source: The Economist)

Focusing on this challenge requires a transparent government that can implement a country strategy for national peace building. Myanmar had the first civilian leader after more than 50 years of military rule. Most of the citizens assumed that it is the best way for a country's democratic journey. But on the other hand, there is only little

hope for other minorities such as Kachin Independence Army, Rohingya refugees, etc. For these reasons, people are questioning what changes lay ahead for ethnic and religious minorities and people's issues for reconciliation? Currently, many formal peace building activities and policies are undermined because of lack of mutual understanding and acknowledgement of diverse communities in which they operate. Therefore, the urge in gender sensitivity to plan a lasting peace that will be beneficial to empowering women as decision makers and actors in all areas of peace building is important for Myanmar. There are 135 different ethnic groups excluding other minorities with an awful combination of religious conflicts and civil wars.

Peace is an essential prerequisite, without peace it will not be possible to achieve the levels of cooperation, trust and inclusiveness necessary to solve other challenges. The United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It also stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security (UN, n.d.). The international community has recognized that women's participation and leadership is vital to achieving and sustaining peace. Women are proven agents of change and should be able to do even more. Women are greatly concerned about war and violence and actively work to find and create peaceful solutions around the globe. History clearly demonstrates that real peace and security are not possible when women are not involved in peace processes (Business, 2016) However how can we bring women's experiences for a country's peace and reconciliation process and how can this issue be brought up on the table?

1. Background of the Study

Early this 2016, Nobel Peace Prize Winner Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party contested 44 of the 46 open seats including a seat for her. Six months ago on 15th March 2016, parliament elected Htin Kyaw as the next president, an economist and long-time confidante of Aung San Suu Kyi, the first civilian leader

after more than 50 years of military rule. It is easy to forget that Myanmar remains entangled in quite a few numbers of the world's longest-running civil wars because of the optimism of current economic growth especially in the commercial capital of Yangon, Myanmar.

The Panglong agreement was signed on 12th February 1947 by General Aung San, the father of Aung San Suu Kyi and three of the largest non-Burmese ethnic groups – Shan, Chin, and Kachin people – that today make up about two-fifths of Myanmar's population. The Panglong agreement promised “full autonomy in internal administration” to “frontier areas” as today's ethnic states were then known. Aung San was assassinated after the agreement on 19th July 1947 before the independence from the British. After the independence, military government ruled for over 60 years and the spirit of the Panglong Agreement was never honored (Team, 2016). On the other hand, civil war is still going on in the different parts of the country and Rohingya issue, which started in 2012, continues until now.

Myanmar has transformed into a parliamentary system since 2010 but many complain that the step of political reform has slowed or even delayed. During these years, Myanmar's foreign investment has never stopped and it tripled between 2010 and 2013, a rate exceeding that of any other ASEAN country except the Philippines though admittedly from a tiny base. It is not hard to see why Myanmar sits between markets of the two most populous countries in the world: China and India (Team, 2016). Meanwhile, the workforce in neighboring Thailand, a manufacturing powerhouse, is ageing and growing more expensive. Myanmar's population of 51 million is both young and cheap. The country abounds in natural resources, including gold, jade, timber, rubies, oil and natural gas, yet many of these resources lie in territories controlled by ethnic armies. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Myanmar wants peace.

The considerations on business and economic development in peace negotiations is a highly controversial issue that many believe affect the main problem of political and national identity issues in Myanmar. For our country, it is significant to agree that major grievances that fuel conflict are related to economics, namely negative impacts of development projects on local communities and competition over control of

economic resources between local ethnic groups and the central government (Myanmar Peace Monitor, 2013). The Myanmar Peace Monitor has observed six main economic grievances, the economic roots that drove conflict in Myanmar. These grievances include militarization of economic projects, lack of ownership and management power over natural resources, land confiscation, environment and social impact of economic projects, poverty and underdevelopment in ethnic areas. Still many are worried that business is taking precedence over politics in peace negotiations, particularly in business concessions and in the development and fair distribution of natural resources. In this case, ethnic leaders said that economic powers and political powers are two sides of the same coin.

Many hope that the resounding victory of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party could revive the Panglong spirit, but who knows. New elected government is only 150 days old and they are still struggling with handover process although all Myanmar citizens have very high expectation of them. The previous reformist government tried to respond to economic grievances that drove conflict in Myanmar by initiating a multitude of bills, policies, development plans, commissions and committees under the existing constitutions that non-state armed groups have always pointed out to reconsider, especially in peace negotiation process. The current contradiction between simultaneous peace talk and violence have never been effective because of continuous dominance of the military in the market and all levels of administration. Racial and religious violence remains a highly sensitive issue in Myanmar. On the other hand, the centralization of key ownership and management power over natural resources stipulated in the 2008 Constitution also mean that the government's enthusiasm for decentralization reforms will not solve the ethnic struggle (Myanmar Peace Monitor, 2013).

The 21st Century Panglong Conference began in Naypyidaw on 31st August 2016 with an emphasis on unity in a federal union and 750 stakeholders discussed specific issues in relation to politics, security, economics, land and the environment. National League for Democracy Patron Tin Oo and UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon addressed the attendees with opening speeches highlighting the importance of Myanmar's peace process (Nyein, 2016). In this opening ceremony, Aung San Suu Kyi said, "Now our

ethnic people in unstable areas are wondering what the outcomes of the conference will be. Their hopes have been dimmed for a long time. We surely can't ignore their suffering." She also mentioned that any peace process can't be successful without public support. Peace is not something that leaders can delegate from above, and it is not born in peace conference rooms. Active participation and support from the public is required. However, the question how far can we go still arises.

2. Problem Statement

Drivers of peace are multi-faced, complex and systematic, but improvements in peace are ultimately dependent on the increase of women participation, economic well-being and decrease in corruption. The United Nations Security Council made a strong call on the international community to strengthen its commitment to ensuring that women play a more prominent role in conflict prevention, resolution and in post-war peacebuilding (Centre, 2013). It is important to ensure women's full and meaningful participation in peace and security issues, and committed to increase focus on their adequate access to justice in conflict and post-conflict settings. Actions to not only increase the number of women in peace-making, but crucially to improve the way gender issues are addressed by peace and security institutions, including government itself. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said, "Women's participation in peace efforts is a matter of gender equality and universal human rights and crucial to achieving sustainable peace, economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy."

In Myanmar, a post-military regime country, the state's recovery and rehabilitation must be viewed as a top priority for peace. Since racial and religious violence remains a highly sensitive issue, tackling socio-economic equality by effectively using women leadership as a tool of peace process and ensuring a win-win situation for all is significant. Focusing on this challenge requires a transparent government that can come up with a country strategy for national peace building. Effective peacebuilding requires an inclusive approach, with as broad a range of stakeholders as possible involved in designing a country's strategy and with the results inclusive of the participation of all people. All the areas of peacebuilding will be more

successful if given to the citizenries – women, young people, civil society, and the private sector – who will play their part in the process. Policies and reforms can be designed to address different needs and harness the specific potential of each group. It is vital to have women involved in every stage of efforts to reassert the rule of law and rebuild societies through transitional justice. Their needs for security and justice must be addressed. Their voices must be heard. Their rights must be protected.

In reality, it is sad to be told that both Myanmar government and non-state armed groups believe that peace negotiation process is nothing related with women, and recently, both parties agreed to include women participation in peacebuilding only because of a strong urge from different NGOs and INGOs to integrate gender equality in peace process, but there is no concern to include women in decision making level at this stage. According to the country's 2014 census, 51.8% were females compared to the 48.2% of the male population, which made women population 3.6% higher than that of men in the country. However, women participation in national peace talk is less than 10% in the parliament. Even among the 10% of women in the national level peace negotiation, some of the participants are substitute representatives from different parties and they did not have any decision making power in the meeting. Some of the civil society organizations for women's rights and gender equality range from small-scale to bigger network movements with national and international NGOs that reinforce women's decision making power and advocate for the percentage of women in peace negotiation up to 30% since Myanmar is one of the United Nations countries that fulfill the UN's fundamental requirement for peace process. But what possible ways should be implemented to increase the number of women leaders in peace process? This concept is easier said than done.

On the other hand, the most anomalous fact is women in our country also believe that peace and conflict resolution is the men's job, and we can also assumed that our national leader might also have the same idea because of her recent acts for peace negotiation processes in Myanmar. Some of the goals of the civil society organizations working for women's rights and gender equality are hard to achieve and their sisterhoods are still in the struggling stage. Therefore, the women's rights movement in Myanmar faces very slow progress because awareness on the importance of gender

equality is not being fully grasped and endorsed.

Peacebuilding, therefore, not only contains peace negotiation with non-state armed groups, but also needs to improve broad-based improvement that will benefit and protect all citizens. To be able to do ambitious economic and political reforms, tackling power sharing, economic fairness, and military reforms will be a critical factor in the success and speed of achieving peace and development.

3. Feminist Leadership in Myanmar Context

Leadership is culturally defined and shaped by context, culture, human interaction and experience. In Myanmar, leadership is virtually associated with men. Views on leadership as male domain is well-defined and socially accepted. Leadership was denoted using words that suggested autocratic attributes rather than communal and empathetic attributes (Oxfam, CARE, Trocaire, ActionAid, 2013). Therefore, both men and women see other people's potential and capacity through a lens shaped by stereotypes about gender, sex, race, class, and income level. Whereas the common association of men rather than women with leadership is not unique to Myanmar, there is no public debate and contestation of this issue. The notion that leaders are males except from national advisor is largely undisputed. Certain NGOs are advocating the requirements of gender-balance to government organizations, including parliamentarians as well as grassroots communities but the way they approach led to "equality" rather than "equity" of men and women. The term "feminist" is a very sensitive in Myanmar, with a negative sense even within the gender activist groups. Some handful feminist leaders in Myanmar agreed that feminist leadership is leading with the values of feminism in mind and feminist leadership is about collective leadership, democratic power structures, and consensus-building. People of all genders can be feminist leaders because feminist leadership is not just about women playing leadership roles, but the practice of power that is visible, democratic, legitimate and accountable at all levels in both private and public sectors and requires a lot of work to do.

A Few Thoughts About Lasting Peace

Conflicts in Myanmar have a unique combination. Valuable natural resources lay in ethnic regions and civil wars, with different ethnic armed-groups against national military, are still on-going. Moreover, religious conflict between Buddhist and Islam, where 87.9% are Buddhist and 4.3% are Islam according to the 2014 census, is a very sensitive issue apart from civil war. Previous military ruled over 60 years and economic power became two sides of a one coin because they gave power of economy to the cronies that served them. Therefore, economics is inextricably linked to peace negotiations and power politics especially when considering issues of ownership and management power over natural resources in ethnic regions, legal sustainability of non-state armed groups, and tackling socio-economic inequality in ethnic areas. Economics is entangled with quite a number of different problems and cases, including legal land rights, land repossession, transparency, governance, military strategy, political reform, rural development, social development and the politics of large development projects. In all these issues, ethics also plays a key role in terms of politics, economics, business, as well as personal. Peace negotiation, therefore, not only contains negotiation with non-state armed groups but also the need to improve broad-based improvement that will benefit and protect all citizens. To be able to do ambitious economic and political reforms, tackle power sharing, pursue economic fairness, conduct military reforms, promote inclusiveness of different people, and enhance gender sensitivity will be a critical factor in the success and speed of achieving peace and development.

Women leadership is an essential part of peacebuilding. It can provide crucial dividends to the peacebuilding process and it is a necessary foundation for long-term development of the country. It is quite easy to agree on the importance of gender equality, but much harder to achieve it. Overcoming post-military rule in the society cannot be improved without a broad set of enabling circumstances with gender sensitivity that includes peace and security, workable physical infrastructure, functioning core institutions, including a professional public security, an adequately educated and trained labor force, a regulatory and legal framework that fosters economic growth and whose rules are enforced, and government policies on commerce

that encourage business and private sector development. Any single one of these is difficult in a fragile post-conflict environment.

Methodology

A qualitative-based life story interview was conducted to women peacebuilders in leadership position and N-Peace nominees for 2016 within September of the same year. Life story interviewing method is most suitable for this type of research because it is qualitative and gathers information on the subjective essence of a person's life that is transferable across disciplines. Three respondents from different ethnic and religious background were carefully selected for interview. To be eligible for selection, the female respondent must not be younger than 30 years old and has worked for peacebuilding in the national level for at least three years prior to interview.

Respondents were approached to complete a life story interview (see Appendix 1) in locations which did not interfere with their work or family duties. Their names, status, and answers were not be published without their approval. The results were anonymous and confidential and were not linked to their workplace. The story telling data were translated back to English from Burmese. The qualitative life story interview was designed to highlight the importance of women leadership in peacebuilding to provide insightful ideas and thoughts into the ways of how Myanmar women peacebuilders can empower and lead in their respective areas for peace. In the end, results of the research will draw attention to government and citizens to become gender sensitive and develop power sharing mechanism.

This research mainly uses “life story” method. An individual life and the role it plays in the larger community are best understood through a story. We become fully aware, fully conscious of our lives through the process of putting them together in story form. Telling our stories enables us to be heard, recognized, and acknowledged by others. Telling a life story makes the implicit explicit, the hidden seen, the unformed formed, and the confusing clear. The life story interview can help the teller, the listener, the reader, and the scholar to understand a broad range of psychological, sociological, mystical-religious, and cosmological philosophical issues (Jaber F. Gubrium, James A. Holstein , 2001).

The life stories interview included three professional working women who were active participants in women leadership and peacebuilding process in the national level. All of them were N-Peace nominees. N-Peace is a multi-country network of peace advocates in Asia seeking to advance women, peace & security (WPS) issues. It supports women's leadership for conflict prevention, resolution, and peace building, and promotes the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and related resolutions at regional, national and community levels (N-Peace, n.d.). N-Peace awards were first launched in 2011 to recognize women and men leaders and peacebuilders creating change at the grassroots to national levels in Asia. There were six nominees from Myanmar for 2016 and this research was able to conduct three out of six nominees. The main question of the interview fell into four main parts. The first question was a personal biography of the respondents. The second question asked the driving forces on how women became peacebuilder. The third one was mainly to discover success stories and barriers or struggles as women peacebuilder. And the fourth and final question asked for possible ways to lean in as women peacebuilder. All the data were carefully noted down. Phone recorder was also used for further detail analysis.

1. Limitation of the Study

The basic constraint of this study was sample size. Life story interview can be seen as a method of looking at life as a whole, and as a way of carrying out in-depth study of individual lives, the life story interview stood alone. On the other hand, there are only a limited number of women leaders who are currently working for peace in leadership level. For these reasons, this research conducted interviews with three participants who were able to participate in the complete study. Each participant was a woman peacebuilder in the national level aged between 30 and 50. This research was not able to include insight thoughts of young girls and women who are currently working for peace in different levels and this research didn't cover all national level women peacebuilders because of time and financial constraints. In addition, there were very little sources of previous literature reviews on women peacebuilders based in Myanmar and the research needed to interpret findings into English from Burmese

since interviews were done in Burmese as medium of communication.

Data Analysis and Findings

1. Life Stories Research

1.1. Nang Raw Zahkung

Driving Forces to Work for Peace

Nang Raw Zahkung grew up as a daughter of the first doctors in Kachin minority during the 1970s in the northern part of the country called Kachin State. As a member of the Kachin family living in the civil war zone, the world's longest running civil war, it shaped her longing for peace. Since her parents were doctors, and they lived near the hospital. She recalls hearing bombs and blasts and knowing her mother would be on her way to the hospital the whole day and night. The 1970s was the period of the strongest civil war between Kachin ethnic armed-groups and the government military. Minefields from unknown groups were everywhere even in the schools, cinemas, and railways. Therefore, her childhood was filled with the sounds of bombs and blasts, the noises of the ambulance, and fear, knowing her mother would not be with them whenever she heard those echoes because of her parents' profession.

On the other hand, a steady stream of children, who were not less than 10 and who were from civil war affected areas, were brought up by the pastors from different critical conflict areas to give them food and education. Although her parents were not rich, they were all treated equally as members of the family. She could not understand her parents as a child, but she learned and valued the importance of equality and humanity later in her life.

Her first degree was agriculture. Learning together with students from different ethnic backgrounds opened her mind into a new way of thinking about mutual understanding and negotiation. In 1987, her father's job transferred from Kachin State to Yangon, the former Capital City of Myanmar. In 1988, the whole family experienced and suffered nationwide pro-democracy protests known as "8888." After the post-8888 uprising period, she actively participated in church activities as a youth leader. When her sponsor from the US cancelled her further studies, she no longer

applied for another opportunity and became a full-time housewife and mother, who managed the family's home and cared for her children. She gave her full attention to her children, a huge contrast from the little attention she received when she was a child.

In 2000, Rev. Dr. Saboi Jum, who was the pastor of her church and one of peace makers between the government and KIO since 1980s, offered her to participate in Nyein (Shalom) Foundation and pursue initiatives towards the attainment of peace and development of the country. However, she could not make up her mind at that time. After four months of the offer, a huge turning point occurred in her family when her husband, a major of the government army, could not get any promotion because of his minority Christian religion and Kachin ethnicity. When people suggested them to change their noticeable ethnic names and religion on paper, they finally decided to let him resign from his job while she joined the Nyein (Shalom) Foundation.

"Equality, without discrimination, mercy, and humanity," which she learned from her parents and her previous experiences of atrocities of war on children and their families, drove her thirst for peace. Her early work led to a Fulbright Scholarship in international development, conflict resolution, and public administration which, combined with her personal experience, allowed her to bring practical and academic knowledge to her role as a member of the technical team involved in Myanmar's peace negotiations. In 2013, she agreed to assist the ethnic armed organizations negotiating for peace with the Myanmar government because "lasting peace requires a level field," and she understood that her expertise and skills were vital.

Successes Stories in Peacebuilding

Nang Raw is an active member of Myanmar's civil society. With the recent transformation of the country, civil society actors gained more space and are now able to conduct a wider range of activities. In the field of peacebuilding, the Shalom (Nyein) Foundation has been a pioneer for more than ten years. As the Shalom Foundation Assistant Director (Policy and Strategy), Nang Raw supports several peace processes around the country by bringing expertise to negotiations and creating platforms for dialogue.

Nang Raw had some successful peace negotiations, which she received trust from both parties in the family and national levels. Last year in October 2015, Myanmar's government and eight armed ethnic groups signed a nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA), the culmination of more than two years of negotiations aimed at bringing an end to the majority of the country's long-running conflicts. Nang Raw contributed as an enabler and technical consultant for Kachin Independence Army (KIA) by preparing documents and negotiation points for successful and peaceful negotiation with the government. To be able to do this, sometimes she needed to discuss and negotiate with the government technical consultants on certain matters. Nang Raw and her colleague, Ja Nan Lahtaw, Director of Shalom Foundation, currently serve as advisors to the ethnic armed groups, which signed a historic Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement with the government of Myanmar.

Furthermore, she also organized public consultations in remote villages. She is currently involved in the promotion of participation of Civil Society in 21st Century Panglong as one of the working committee members. Nang Raw has consistently advocated for a more meaningful role for women and civil society in Myanmar's peace processes and peacebuilding.

The View of Feminist Leadership

According to Nang Raw, feminist leadership is essential for sustainable peacebuilding process in Myanmar. She believes that women should have equal access to all forms of power: political, economic, and social, which is what feminist leadership is to her. People with feminist perspective and vision of social justice, individually and collectively, should use their powers, resources, and skills to mobilize others for equality and the realization of human rights for all. Such is what is needed in the peacebuilding process in Myanmar.

Possible Ways for Women Leadership in Peacebuilding

This may be a provocative question, but most negotiations are dominated by men, many of whom were once active combatants. What about peace negotiating tables set for those who are going to build peace, including women? According to Nang Raw,

the absence of professional backgrounds in peace studies becomes a critical issue for women in Myanmar when talking about women leadership in peacebuilding. Although women and girls played active roles on the front lines as combatants and peace activists, knowledgeable in peace studies and having a solid sense of political and social are vital to becoming a woman leader in peacebuilding process. Even though women know that women issues needed to be addressed, negotiating with finesse is one of the key success factors for women leaders. Women should know the right timing to discuss the issues and it should also be logical. She also mentioned that, “You have to prove that you can level with them.” Furthermore, constant learning, hard work to succeed, and building communication skills are the most fundamental factors to feminist leadership and effective and sustainable peacebuilding process in the country.

1.2. Khin Ma Ma Myo

Driving Forces to Work for Peace

Khin Ma Ma Myo was born in 1979 in Taungyi, the capital city of Shan State and one of the rebelling cities at that time located in the eastern part of the country. Growing up with her grandfather, who always shared the knowledge about the country’s political issues and conditions by listening to the radio, watching the news on TV together, and storytelling made her familiar with politics since her preschool age. Many well-known political activists of that region used to come and visit her grandfather’s home for meeting and she always joined whenever they came and visited him because of her inquisitiveness. Her curiosity did not stop there. “My kindergarten teacher was a Karen ethnic teacher so I asked her about KNU (Karen National Army, an ethnic non-state armed group that represents the Karen people of Myanmar),” she said. When she attended primary school, she used to participate in extra-curricular school activities such as poetry reading and U Nyo Tun, who was one of the teachers of her school, encouraged her to read a lot books. Later, he became the leader of protests for that region in the nationwide pro-democracy protests known as “8888.” Although she was still in pre-adolescence during the 8888 uprising, she got all the flyer protests through her mother’s medical clinic. She had time alone to read more of

political books in her grandfather's small library during the school's closedown period. Hence, her childhood was sealed with the voices of her grandfather and discussions about the unfair treatment of the government towards political activists, which led to her eagerness to learn more about politics thinking she might join the insurgency when she grows up.

Her native town, Taunggyi is not like others because activists with different ideologies on politics were there and the mainstream of distribution of their idea was through book rental services. Since she was a bibliophile on politics, she visited most of the book rental services in the city. Reading all different ideologies became her pursuit. After the "8888" period, she joined a study group called "Ponnayate" in Taunggyi, which was organized by political activists of that region and she somehow participated in some of their activities. After she passed the matriculation exam in 1996, she came to Yangon to attend some computer and English courses in 1997. After two years, an outrageous tragedy happened in 1999 when the organizers of Ponnayate study group from Taunggyi were inspected by the government. One of the leaders accepted all the blame and he was put in jail. Khin Ma Ma Myo joined the medical school in Mandalay the same year after that event. Although Khin Ma Ma Myo did not do anything, her name appeared in the blacklist and she was forced to sign not to get involved in politics in her school in 2002. When she refused to sign, they suggested that she transfer to a different program but she has never been able to transfer successfully. That was how she was kicked out from the university and how her education was cut by the government. When she thought of joining the rebellion, her seniors encouraged her to engage in politics in a more academic way.

At the time, she believed that peace can be obtained by only one out of three things: arms, education, or people power. Her articles and writings were full of those ideologies. In 2002, she got accepted in one of the universities in England, but the Myanmar government did not issue her a passport and visa for unknown reasons. She had to use many strategies, including giving under the table money to authorities to get a passport, although that was the most regretful activity she had to make in her entire life.

Nowadays, Khin Ma Ma Myo holds a raft of academic qualifications. She holds

a Bachelor of Arts (Honors) in International Studies and a Master of Arts in Economics (Political Economy) from the University of Aberdeen. From the same university, she also holds a Master of Science in Strategic Studies, where she specialized in defense management, strategic planning and national security policy, and a Master of Research (Political Research) specializing in peace and conflict studies. Khin Ma Ma Myo also holds Diplomas in Business Administration, Information Technology, Government and Politics and Journalism from universities in the United Kingdom, and is an alumnus of the University of Cambridge Enterprisers Program. She is a Peace Leadership Fellow of the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) based in Cambodia.

Successes and Struggles in Peacebuilding

During a time of upheaval in Myanmar, Khin Ma Ma Myo spent many years as a Coordinator for the Burmese Democratic Movement Association from 2003 to 2004 and as Media and Campaigns Director for the Democratic Federation of Burma from 2004 to 2008. Since 2006, there were four strategies that she thought were possible ways for the country's revolution: 1) founding armed-group for revolution, 2) giving pressures to UN, 3) using people power movement, and 4) putting revolutionary people in government sectors. All strategies became harder to achieve. Her group selected "People Power Movement" as the last resource and she began as editor and writer for the Burma Digest Online Journal where she highlighted about people power movement in her writings. In 2007, Saffron Revolution occurred as a people power movement to remove subsidies on the sale prices of fuel that increased from 66% to 100% within a week. The various protests were led by students and political activists, including Buddhist monks, who took the form of non-violent resistance but dozens of protesters were arrested or detained. Although Khin Ma Ma Myo and other activists were planning to enforce them to reach a dialogue level with the government, it failed to attain that level for many reasons.

During the freeze period, she emphasized on writing online blogs and publishing. Khin Ma Ma Myo has written for and been published widely in the Burma Digest Journal, Renaissance Journal, Burma Today Journal, Women Rights Journal, Maukka Education Magazine and various political and education journals. She previously

worked as chief editor for the Freedom Journal of Burma and she was also elected as Joint-General Secretary of the Free Burma Federation from 2008 to 2012 by promoting “Peace from Below” strategy. She is the author of *China and Indian Ocean: Strategic Interests in the 21st Century* (2010), *Poverty Reduction* (2013), *Women and Politics* (2013), *War, Conflicts and Peace Article Series* (2014), *Gender and Politics* (2014) and co-author of many publications, including the *Handbook of People Power Movement*, and *Fighting for Freedom and Anti-Dictatorship Struggles*.

In 2009, she tried to oppose the government’s 2008 Constitution, but there were two debate approaches, which were “Vote No” (no participation in government voting system) and “No Vote” (participated but voting “No”). Though she supported “Vote No,” the government reinforced all citizens to smoothen the progress of the election and, therefore, Khin Ma Ma Myo and her fellows needed to tone down for different reasons. She said that “There were many theories in terms of politics and peace. Previously, I only had revolution in mindset and I did not think about a theory that we could go along with politics and peace. When thinking about democracy, there were three steps we needed to integrate. These were liberalization, transition, and consultation. If we can educate people about peace education in the liberalization stage and if we can introduce peace building process in the transition stage, we can have a peaceful democratic federal country. Previously, I only focused on revolution. But now, my study trend was changed into peace and conflict transformation starting from 2011. I now believed that self-actualization and self-change is the most fundamental approach in peace negotiation. Ever since, my articles and writings were focused on conflict resolution, peaceful negotiation, and win-win solution approaches.”

Khin Ma Ma Myo was able to come back to Myanmar in 2013 after struggling with different processes for about a year. She became the founder and Executive Director of the Myanmar Institute of Peace and Security Studies (MIPSS), which she created in 2013, to help facilitate peace and reconciliation process in Myanmar. She is also the founder of two other institutes, the Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) and the Myanmar Institute of Politics and Policy (MIPP). She is facilitating the Myanmar Peace Process as a technical advisor to the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), an advisor of security sector working group of Union Peace Dialogue Joint

Committee (UPDJC) and a technical support person for the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in Peace Process (AGIPP).

Outside her work, Khin Ma Ma Myo has worked as a researcher for the Conflict and Security Studies Program, University of Aberdeen, and a project consultant to the Conflict Sensitive Media Monitoring Project, PEN Myanmar, Renaissance Institute in Yangon, the Parliament Support Group, and the Gender Equality Network (GEN). She is also an experienced trainer and facilitator in the areas of Women, Peace and Security, human rights, gender equality, civil education, democracy and electoral processes. This includes training and facilitation provided to over 160 national and international Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) across Myanmar, as well as in Thailand.

The View of Feminist Leadership

Khin Ma Ma Myo stated that women leadership for peacebuilding is important. The failure to root out bigotry against women is one of the major barriers to peace and development process in Myanmar. In feminist leadership principle, governments should be oriented a different arrangement of the human order because just adding women participation in peace process is not sufficient. Rather, re-distribution of power and re-distribution of responsibilities in different sectors are key.

Possible Ways for Women Leadership in Peacebuilding

Khin Ma Ma Myo mentioned that, “There is no security without peace. There is no peace without security.” She also believed that, “There will be a meeting point between peace transaction from below and peace transaction from above.” When she started working for peace, everyone was amazed and could not understand what she was doing. She even got warned by the government, but she never stopped what she believed in and explained that she was working for peace. She also highlighted that “women’s voice is important for peace”.

Women leadership for peacebuilding is important. Although there is no discrimination in peace process because of gender in Myanmar, women must have sufficient knowledge and skills for peace negotiation to become women leaders in

peace negotiation. On the other hand, the government should identify, implement, and monitor the need for women participation according to UN Resolution 1325 and other related resolutions. With the agreement of international legal instrument, women organizations need to advocate Myanmar government to include women in peace process because women have the right to be involved in it. Consistent with the Security Council Resolution, which already stated “CSOs, including women’s organizations, must be involved in peace process,” the government should consider it as a serious matter. The failure to root out prejudice against girls and women is one of the major barriers to progress and prosperity. Then again, the urge to increase 30% of women participation in peace process is never enough. Women organizations should have the same voices and detailed suggestions to negotiate “equality principle” of women in the fields of federal, business, lands and resources, social and identity, and security.

1.3. Cheery Zahau

Driving Forces to Work for Peace

Cheery Zahau was born in a remote Chin village called Min Hla in Kalay, Sagaing Region, Myanmar with two younger siblings. She is an ethnic Chin, a predominantly Christian group that has been historically marginalized by the Myanmar government and is now one of the poorest ethnic groups in the country. Her father was a school teacher, who originated from Falam, Chin State and met with her mother in Kalay because of her father’s work. Growing up during the period of the country’s political crisis, her political point of view was shaped by the day-to-day situation that she faced in her childhood because her grandfather always had to deal with army’s taxes, porters, and other issues as a village head to protect his villagers. During the nationwide pro-democracy protest of the “8888” period, her father fled to India to find a job. Her mother and younger sister followed after a few years. At that time, she was in the school-age and had to live with her grandparents until she finished 4th grade. Later, she moved from her village to one of the Kalay Christian hostels for better education until she passed the matriculation exam. As a curious student, she asked her teachers why she had to learn only Burma and Buddhism while ignoring the histories of other ethnic groups and religions. Her teachers often remarked that she was at the

doorway of a life in prison because of her political interest.

After she finished high school, she wanted to join mining engineering but she did not have the chance because of the accepted grading-gap between male and female students' admission. It became her first ever life changing experience of gender discrimination. She fled to the India-Burma border in 1999 at the age of 17 and volunteered at the Chin Women's Organization (CWO) that started her democratic movement. She also taught Chin refugee children about their homeland, worked as a news editor for a quarterly bulletin focusing on women's issues, and collected and chronicled articles written by ordinary Chin women, who did not have opportunities to contribute to male-dominated publication outlets. At the same time, she continued her studies in India.

On July 19, 2003, an individual described by local authorities as a Chin migrant raped a 9-year-old Mizo school girl although the victim's description of the rapist was of no match of the physical appearance of the one apprehended by the police. The incident generated mob violence across the Mizoram's capital city and 5,000 Chin refugees were taken refuge. Cheery and her colleagues looked for shelter for refugees and asked for help by approaching local high-profile politicians. They got permission to hide Chin refugees at that politician's car workshop located outside the city. While her senior documented the situation, Cheery was busy with contacting Chin people around the world to fundraise those refugees for their living for about four months. Cheery did not even have time to take care of herself, owning only a pair of jeans and a skirt for four months.

After the situation has calmed down a bit, she decided to devote her time to human rights activism at the age of 22. She trained about human rights in Bangkok which forced her to become more aware of human rights and human rights violation issues around Myanmar. In effect, she founded the Women's League of Chinland by bringing all of the Chin tribal groups to work together for the advancement of Chin women. Her team trained hundreds of women to become active in social and political processes in their respective communities. Later on, she became a prominent voice in advocating for gender equality for Chin-India border communities. Throughout her human rights work, she was involved at the grassroots level by helping community

development projects such as building schools and bridges, supporting mobile clinic and education, improving access to water, and fundraising for communities. Furthermore, she has trained thousands of women and men about human rights, gender equality and political awareness in her own Chin community and other communities across Myanmar.

Cheery co-authored “Unsafe State,” a report on 36 cases of sexual violence committed against Chin women by soldiers of the union government’s armed forces in 2007. It was a very challenging task because the reporter needed to meet with the victims and didn’t allow to use recorder or writing on paper. The report received international attention and all of the reporters were inspected by the military government. Since it was unsafe for her and her interviewees, she decided to leave the organization and moved to Chiang Mai for human rights and humanitarian works. In 2011, she started working as a consultant and researcher for human rights related issues until now.

Success and Struggles

Women leaders of different ethnic groups in Myanmar are messengers, who are able to spread the true picture of the military government internationally under the military regime and Cheery is one of them. But, on the other hand, she was included in China newspapers because of her report in UN, got warrant from the military government, and her relatives and friends suffered in the Chin State. That was her most difficult struggle during her time as an activist. As a member of the Chin Progressive Party (CPP), she participated in the framework drafting process for the national political dialogue when she contributed on human rights issues. She participated in the Union Peace Conference by providing technical assistance to the delegates of numerous political parties. She also sat as a board member on several important organizations and shared her knowledge on political, social and economic issues that guided those organizations in achieving their objectives. The Chin people named her “Chin Person of the Year 2011,” and The Irrawaddy magazine listed her as one of “Burma’s Newsmakers 2011.”

The View of Feminist Leadership

Feminist leadership is a process, a goal, and a means. Feminist leadership can be both direct and indirect approaches of power sharing, gender equality, and feminist structures, which is available in public and private sectors. Leadership from a feminist standpoint is acknowledged by the feminist lens, which can identify injustices and oppression and can lead to facilitate the development of more inclusive and holistic activities within an organization. Feminist leadership shares power, authority, and decision-making in common pursuit of social, legal, political, economic and cultural equality.

Possible Ways for Women Leadership in Peacebuilding

The country has changed dramatically during the previous years and the political situation is also changing. The country was led to democratic system where the leaders did not wear army uniforms. The new parliamentary system and the regional government led to new institutional structures. But women participation was zero to less than one percent in institutions and only a few in civil society organizations (CSOs), political parties, and Media. In Myanmar situation, the military, government, and ethnic armed groups are the key actors for peace process and they make the final decision for federalism or continuance of fighting. Therefore, women leaders should try to get involved in those three parties. Civil society also needs to support women leaders, advocate fellow citizens, and enforce the government to legalize their systems.

Conclusion

Understanding what creates sustainable peace cannot just be found in the study of violence. Peace is the attitude, the institutions and the structures which create and sustain peaceful societies. These same factors also lead to many other positive outcomes that support the optimal environment for human potential to flourish. Peace is transformational because it is a cross-cutting enabler of advancement, constructing easier for individuals to produce, businesses to sell, entrepreneurs and scientists to innovate and governments to effectively regulate. By understanding the social and economic drivers of violence, policymakers and business leaders can better understand

the costs and benefits of particular social and economic investment programs. In addition, by managing resources towards addressing the root causes of violence, society can begin to make long-term investment in the creation of a virtuous cycle of peace and economic prosperity.

It is obvious that competence reflecting the knowledge, attitudes, and skills are necessary women leaders to become peacebuilders. It is undeniable that most women must have sufficient knowledge and skills for peace negotiation to become women leaders in peacebuilding. This research highlighted that the absence of professional background in peace studies becomes a critical issue for women in Myanmar when talking about women leadership in peacebuilding. Although women and girls played active role on the front lines as combatants and peace activists, being knowledgeable in peace studies and having a solid sense of politics and society is vital to becoming a woman leader in peacebuilding process. Currently, formal peace negotiations are dominated by men, but since there are very little discernment of gender discrimination in peace process, there is a chance that women can be part of it. Women leadership for peacebuilding is important and it must address essential gender-sensitive peacebuilding in a formal setting. Women also need to prove that they can be leveled with other male counterparts in terms of knowledge and skills in peacebuilding. Even though working separately for peace might be often necessary, it is about time for men to take the compulsion of feminists seriously for gender-sensitive peace movements. Additionally, negotiating with finesse is one of the key success factors for women leaders. Women should know the right timing to discuss issues and it should be logical. Furthermore, keep learning and keep trying hard to succeed and build communication skills. The aforementioned could be the most basic fundamental factors to becoming feminist leaders for effective and sustainable peacebuilding processes in the country.

Conferring with the respondents, feminist leadership is beyond women leadership because the leader always keeps in mind feminism and social justice throughout her work. Feminist leadership is a process, a goal, and a means. Feminist leadership emphasizes power sharing, authority, and decision-making in common pursuit of social, legal, political, economic and cultural equality. Therefore, people of all genders can be feminist leaders as long as they promote and practice the power of visibility,

democracy, legitimacy, and accountability at all levels and different sectors. Leadership from a feminist standpoint is acknowledged by the feminist lens, which can identify injustices and oppression and lead her to facilitate the development of inclusiveness and holism within an organization.

According to the respondents, first and foremost, having purpose to oppose social discrimination towards women and girls is significant; they begin at home and within the organization movement, which attempts to change the larger community. Secondly, they try to reach leadership position in mainstream organizations because they need power and authority to reinforce the existing structures to emphasize social changes for peace. Thirdly, their successful feminist leadership comes from principles and value practices such as inclusive, collaborative, nurturing, empowering, value and respect for others, and growth and development for all. When they are in the leadership positions, they individually and collectively transform their touched communities using their resources and skills for equality and realization of human rights. They believe that strengthening feminist leadership for peacebuilding is important because failure to root out bigotry against women is one of the major barriers to peace and development process in Myanmar.

Moreover, having institutionalized and structuralized the mainstream is also important. The government should identify, implement, and monitor the need for women participation according to UN Resolution 1325 and other related resolutions. With the agreement of international legal instrument, women organizations need to advocate the Myanmar government to include women in peace process because women have the right to get involved in it. Consistent with the Security Council Resolution, which already stated “CSOs, including women’s organizations” must be involved in peace process, the government should consider it as a serious matter. The failure to root out prejudice against girls and women is one of the major barriers to progress and prosperity. Then again, the urge to increase 30% of women participation in peace process is never enough. Women organizations should have the same voices and detailed suggestions to negotiate “equality principle” of women in fields of federal, business, lands and resources, social and identity, and security.

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Appendix 1

Strengthening Feminist Leadership for Effective and Sustainable Peace Building Process in Myanmar

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a small research that focuses on the issue of importance of women leadership in peacebuilding and I would like to find out the ways by which women lead in peacebuilding in different levels.

The research is being conducted as part of an independent study designed by myself and encouraged by the Korea-ASEAN Cooperation Project (KACP) on Education and Exchange Program for Young Scholars in Women Studies. It will take about one hour to answer. Your name, status, and answers will be published only after receiving your final approval. In addition, your support and insights will be vital to the success of this survey research.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview.

Ms. Mai Aye AyeAung

1. Your biography in details.
2. Why are you interested to work for peace? What are the driving forces?
3. What are the success stories and barrier/struggles (in general and as a peacebuilder)?
4. What the possible ways to go for peace (in general and as a woman peacebuilder)?

Thank you for participating in this life story research.

Seeing the Land as a Woman: The Role of Kinship and Conjugal Relationship in Access to Land and Forest in Kala Tongu Village, Central Highlands of Vietnam

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Abstract

This paper seeks to address the voices of women in relation to land access, taking Kala Tongu village in Central Highlands of Vietnam as a case study. In particular, it focuses on various mechanisms of women of this matrilineal community to derive benefit from land, including wet rice fields and coffee land. Through the perspectives of three women from different ages, marital statuses and social backgrounds, the paper uncovers the way kinship and conjugal relationship are played out in shaping women's access to land within the complex power relations on lands and forests. Theoretically, by using a conceptual framework built upon feminist political ecology (Rocheleau et al. 1996) and the intertwined concept of access and governance, the paper highlights the interactions between gender and other social differentiations in access and governance of natural resources. Data for this paper was collected by mostly qualitative methods such as in-depth interview, participant observation, and life histories.

Keywords: gender, land and forest access, feminist political ecology

Introduction

Literature on gendered land rights points out that there are various mechanisms that condition men and women's access to land such as kinship, marriage and local authorities (Jackson 2003). Specifically crucial is the debate between Agarwal (2003) and Jackson (2003) on gendered land rights and gender relations in access to land. The debate, which was followed by a series of papers on the *Journal of Agrarian Change* in 2003, calls for a more careful consideration of intra and inter-household negotiations in access to land. Elmhirst (2011b) takes on this call by exploring the role of conjugal

partnership in the means, processes and relations by which actors (migrant men and women) are able to gain, control, and maintain access to resources. In the context of resettlement areas, Elmhirst (2011b) argues that these intra-household negotiations among husbands, wives, and other family members necessitate access to resources (of the household) in a secured fashion.

This paper examines the varied strategies to gain and maintain access to land and forest of women in Kala Tongu village, a matrilineal community in Central Highlands known for its active participation in many forestry projects including REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation).¹ By presenting the life stories of three women from different social backgrounds, the paper aims to address how women of ethnic minorities develop mechanisms to extend their access over natural resources at the household and community level. These strategies, on the one hand, show their close connection with the land, the forest and their surrounding environments. On the other hand, they illustrate how kinship and conjugal relationship contribute to shaping women's access to resources within complex power relations. The paper concludes with some theoretical reflections on how empirical findings from this research could potentially feed into Feminist Political Ecology and the theory of access and governance.

Conceptual framework

In this research, I develop my conceptual framework from Feminist Political Ecology (Rocheleau et. al. 1996) and the intertwined concepts of access and governance. In the groundbreaking work of FPE, Rocheleau et. al. (1996) states that feminist political ecology.

Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) and Intersectionality

“treats gender as a critical variable in shaping resource access and control, interacting with class, caste, race, culture and ethnicity to shape processes of ecological change, the struggle of men and women to sustain ecologically viable livelihood and the prospects of any community for sustainable development” (p.4).

¹ For more details on REDD+, please refer to <http://thereddesk.org/what-redd>.

It is evident that from the beginning, FPE has specifically emphasised the interaction among gender and class, caste, race, culture and ethnicity, which is known as the “intersectionality approach.” This reflects on three principles suggested by Elmhirst (2011a) and other proponents of new FPE (Elmhirst 2011b, Ge et. al. 2011, Nightingale 2011 and Truelove 2011) to sharpen the methodology of FPE. Of the three principles, the emphasis on intersectionality and the interconnections of scales in studying access and governance is specifically crucial.

Historically, intersectionality is a useful concept to understand race, gender, class and ethnicity as interdependent rather than exclusive social categories (Crenshaw 1989). Applying an intersectional approach helps to enhance complexity and inclusiveness in research on gender, (in)equality and (in)justice, which I find relevant to such feminist political ecology-based studies as mine.

Feminist Political Ecology and Access

I refer to access and governance as an integrated package. Access and governance can be mediated by social identity or membership in a community or group, including groupings by age, gender, ethnicity, religion, status, profession, place of birth, common education, or other attributes that constitute social identity (Ribot and Peluso, 2003: 170). This corresponds to the central approach of feminist political ecology (Rocheleau et al. 1996) in which gender is one of the main factors to determine forest access and governance.

Theory of access and governance is complemented by the three themes that structured FPE (Rocheleau et al 1996). For the first, gendered environmental rights and responsibilities theme in FPE refer to the division rights-based and structural and relational-based access of theory of access. I find both approaches useful in problematizing gender in forest access.

For the second, FPE also pays attention to gender and forest governance through gendered environmental politics and activism theme. In the context of Vietnam, I propose that it might be more insightful to focus on everyday forms of resistances and the micro-politics of forest access on the ground rather than forest-related activism.

Last but not least, the gendered environmental knowledge theme of FPE is

expected to bring together the three key dimensions of this research: gender, forest access, and forest governance. I argue that “knowledge” in this research should be understood as not only experiences, practices and behaviours but also meanings of environment, forest in particular, to human beings. “Knowledge,” accordingly, is seen from a holistic perspective which goes beyond the “know-how” in dealing with forest to address the politico-economic, social, cultural and spiritual connections and implications of forest to each individual in the community. It is therefore crucial to capture the way “knowledge” is gendered and how this process influences men’s and women’s access to forest and governance of forest.

Overall my conceptual framework allows me to go beyond a materiality-oriented perspective in studying men’s and women’s struggles over forest to redress the cultural and emotional meanings of access and governance. An emphasis on intersectionality also helps to inform us of potential factors that might influence one’s relationship to the environment, gender being one of them.

Research methodology

The main data of this paper was collected through in-depth interview, life histories and field observation in Kala Tongu Village, Lam Dong Province, Central Highlands of Vietnam.

From May 2015 to January 2016, I arranged four fieldtrips to Kala Tongu village. During these trips, I selected fourteen villagers to record their life histories. As a qualitative method, personal life stories are believed to encapsulate the key events of one’s life and furthermore, reflect certain dimensions of actual cultural or historical themes in specific time and space. Life histories also serve as a useful lens for researchers to approach such sensitive topics as forest conflicts and disputes, social differentiation, local politics and women’s rights to land.

I also conducted in-depth interviews with other local authorities and local-based forest project officers. These interviews provided me with basic information about the village such as history of settlement and resettlement, inter-ethnic relations, traditional forms of land and forest access, as well as dynamics of forest development projects on the ground. However, I noticed that since these local authorities were or have been

in powerful positions, their perception was likely to reflect the view from the top. Data from life stories with ordinary villagers, therefore, helped to bring out the voices of marginalised groups and unfolded the politics of everyday lives regarding forest access and governance.

I employed participant observation to deepen insights into the existing gender relations, mechanisms of gendered negotiations and their attitudes and perception towards gender equity in forest development schemes. These issues were difficult to investigate so it was done only through discussion or face-to-face interviews.

Research context

In this section, I will introduce the research context of this paper. I will start with a brief overview of the geographical location, demography and social structures of the village. I then move on to explore the existing forest tenure in the village, as well as its involvement in different forestry projects.

Geographical location

The community I chose to do research is called Kala Tongu village, Bao Thuan Commune, Di Linh district. The village's name Kala Tongu contains two elements: Kala is the name of the biggest sub-group/clan of K'ho people (the indigenous population in Bao Thuan Commune and Lam Dong Province in general). One possible explanation is that Kala, in local language, means bamboo in general.² Tongu, meanwhile, refers to the "tree trunk" or the leftover part of a tree after being cut down. According to the old men in the village, it stems from the fact that when they first moved here, they had to clear a big area of forest so as they could have space to build their houses.

The current Kala Tongu village was basically formed from three different old villages: Kala Soko, part of Kala Tokreng, and a few households from Lo Yaoh clan, who used to live isolated in the forest. Although each household might have their own trajectories of resettlement, most of them moved house at least once. Some of them

² Retrieved from <http://www.giaoxugiaohovietnam.com/DaLat/01-Giao-Phan-DaLat-KaLa.htm>.

moved from their original villages in the forests and/or near the hills to Kala Tokreng village while others moved further to the admin areas belonging to Bao Tuan village presently. During 1982-1983, all of them were resettled again to Kala Tongu village through an official “lucky draw.” Those who had to move to Kala Tongu were allocated a 20-meter-wide slot of land to build houses.

Demography and social structures

The ethnicity composition of Kala Tongu is quite homogenous. Out of 217 households (in 2015), there are only 7 Kinh households, the rest are K’ho people. K’ho is in fact the biggest ethnic minority group in Lam Dong Province, under which there are several sub-groups such as Lat, Noup, Cil, Dala, Sre and sometimes Ma. The word K’ho was said to come from ‘Kahow’ which was used by Cham people to address indigenous people speaking Mon-Khmer language and living in the forest, similar to Montagnard in French or M’oi in Vietnamese.³ Local people in Kala Tongu belong to Sre sub-group which literally means people working with wet rice field. They are organized under different matrilineal clans/kin (or Kon in K’ho language).

Similar to K’ho groups in other provinces, K’ho people in Kala Tongu still follow matrilineal systems. Accordingly, groom prices and wedding expenses are the responsibilities of women and their natal families. Women are in control of wet rice field and the couples move in to live and work with women’s natal families. My empirical findings suggest that women in Kala Tongu village also feel more secure to be with their natal families and female siblings since they could get better access to their wet rice field and coffee land (especially when they are given coffee land within their home gardens), enjoy the support from them in child rearing, and in certain cases, avoid domestic violence.

Forest Tenure in Kala Tongu village and its involvement in forestry projects

There are different forms of forest tenure currently existing in Kala Tongu village. Most of forested areas in Di Linh District are legally owned by a state forest

³ See Lạc quan trên miền Thượng retrieved from <http://www.simonhoadalat.com/diaphan/truyengiao/lacquanmienthuong/Phan2Chuong1.htm>.

company (Bao Thuan Forest Company). This forest company signed contracts with individual households in Kala Tongu village to protect the forest. Although in the contracts the forest is allocated to individual households, these households do not own any forest. They are paid by the forest company (representing state) and therefore work for the state. These households involved in forest protection schemes are organized into small teams to patrol the forest on rotating basis. To manage these teams at village level, a village-based forest management board was formed including the village head, all the team leaders, representatives from grassroots organizations and Forest Protection Department at district level. Since 2011, Kala Tongu community was allocated 500 hectares of protection forest (out of 19,270 hectares of forest owned by Bao Thuan Forest Company) to manage by themselves. This new “community forest” brought another form of forest tenure for Kala Tongu village, namely community-owned forest.

The actual geographical location of Kala Tongu, according to the village head, was the reason why UN-REDD Vietnam chose this village to be a site-based REDD+ project. Kala Tongu naturally serves as a gateway from the main town to both the grown and old forests. Therefore, in cases of illegal logging or forest fire, Kala Tongu villagers could respond quickly to them. Moreover, as the vice-director of Bao Thuan Forest Company explained, since Kala Tongu villagers have been managing their 500 hectares of community forest well, they became the good model for other communities in Di Linh District. Therefore, when UN-REDD Program came to Lam Dong Province to look for a local community to pilot their REDD+ readiness project, local authorities in Lam Dong Provincial and Di Linh District People’s Committee agreed to nominate Kala Tongu village. From 2011 to 2015 (when I conducted my field research), UN-REDD Program has implemented two phases of REDD+ readiness project in Kala Tongu village aiming at raising awareness about REDD+ and climate change and designing action plans for REDD+ at community level.

Overall, Kala Tongu villagers are active in three main forest protection schemes: (1) for projects led by Bao Thuan forest company, several households have been sub-contracted by the forest company to protect both the grown and natural forests under the forest company’s management; (2) for community forest, the whole village has been managing 500 ha of natural forest since 2011 and receiving payment from

FPES funding through provincial government and (3) on top of the previous community forestry schemes, the whole village has received extra technical and financial support thanks to their involvement in the project of UN-REDD Phase II (RECOFTC 2014).

Findings from the case studies

Here I will focus on the life stories of three women who were selected from fourteen respondents with whom I explored life stories. I chose these case studies because I managed to spend more time interviewing and observing them when I was in the field. I also talked to their siblings, relatives and neighbors to develop the story line about them. Methodologically, I selected three women with different marital status, age and social status to address the intersection between gender and other social differentiations in shaping women's access to land. For each case, I will briefly discuss how they built access to land and forest, how they developed their own strategies to maintain access to land and forest and finally how they perceived of their gendered roles in relation to land and forest. I will also discuss various forms of conflicts they faced in getting and maintaining access to agricultural lands and forest lands.

Case 1: Divorced (husband from a different village)/old generation/government employee

Ka Đ. was my third host in the village. She worked for the Women's Union, a sub-department within Communal People's Committee for several years. As a divorcee with four children aged from 18 to 32 years old, she shared the house with her youngest son and her eldest daughter's family since last year. She was the head of household who made most of the important decisions related to finance and properties. Her eldest daughter, son in law and youngest son worked together on their own land and shared a pool household income. Her daughters were given wet rice field and coffee land after marriage, and her sons were also given coffee land, including the youngest son even though he still lived with her. She kept a piece of land for herself and this piece of land would belong to the eldest daughter after she passes away.

She spent most of her time talking about her hard time after separating with the

husband and then subsequently getting a divorce. According to her, when they got marriage, they worked on her wet rice field (given to her by her mother) because the husband did not bring any land with him. They found a plot of coffee land together (around 0,8 ha) and started planting coffee. This land became the shared property between husband and wife together with the house she and her youngest son were living in. After they split up, she gave her husband some money to buy over the house and divide the plot of coffee land into half so he could take his share with him. As part of their traditional customs, she kept all her children and raised them up by herself. When they were small, she used to own a small provisional shop in the village where she sold everything that helped generate good income from beverage to food and coffee bean. From a temporary shack on her sister's land, she borrowed money to build a concrete house and put her three children through college. Although she received monthly salary after she started working at the Communal People's Committee, her main household income came from her children's coffee plantation. For now, she and her children were still paying back the debts since those difficult days when she had to fend for herself and her children.

Unlike other women in the village who normally got their wet rice field passed down from their mother and coffee land through their husband's family, Ka Đ. did not get access to coffee land through her husband. Instead, thanks to her personal networks and her powerful position in Communal People's Committee, she managed to buy over some coffee land from her acquaintances. Using "forging kinship" or "sentiments" to get access to land is seen as usual strategies of migrants to Central Highlands (see Hardy 2000 and Hoang&Nguyen 2013). For a local villager like Ka Đ., it also helped her build up her (also her children's) access to both wet rice field and coffee land.

In exchange for the land, Ka Đ. gave her friend a lump sum of money and more importantly, she continued to take care of her friend and his family members after she got the land and "sealed" the deal. She once told me about this transaction:

For the wet rice field, I only paid 10 million VND (approximately 500 USD), because I bought it from one of my acquaintances. I gave him 10 million VND, but I also took care of his children for him and when he's sick, I also gave him injection for free. We were really close, but he passed away.

Ka Đ. also actively searched for forest land in nearby villages to buy and then convert to coffee plantation through her personal networks. Interestingly, she claimed that this coffee land was not officially registered as it's classified as forest land. On the one hand, she knew that this forest land was controlled by the state and converting them to coffee plantation was not allowed. If it was to be confiscated by the state, there would be no compensation for the land and the coffee trees. On the other hand, she took the risk to buy it because it was originally encroached by someone else she knew (and presumably trusted). It was also more affordable for her to buy this land. She emphasized that when she first bought them, the area was still forested and her children had to clear the trees and plant coffee on the land. From her perspective, this kind of coffee land transaction was acceptable as long as the state or local authorities did not know or question her about it. When I was about to leave the village, I heard from her that her daughter managed to re-sell this coffee land to another villager as they had no labor to work on it any more. Although she did not mention her own strategies to "legalize" the forest land/coffee land and put them back to the market of productive resources, I assume that her personal networks with other powerful local authorities did contribute to rendering these processes possible.

For wet rice field, although it customarily belonged to her, it was officially registered under her husband's name as the head of household and her name as the joint owner in the Land Use Certificate (or the "red book") when they got married. When she decided to leave her husband, she was left in a paradoxical situation. If she wanted to retrieve the land and register it under her name as the sole owner she would first have to settle the divorce with him in court. Having her name as the sole owner on the red book would make it easier for her to use it for bank loan or allocate the land to her children by herself but she decided not to go through the divorce at court as she did not want to face her husband again. In the end, she chose to keep both her husband's and her names in the red book as the wet rice field was always hers and no one was going to debate over her customary rights of land. Her own experiences with marriage breakdown and her position at the women's union got her to rethink the current practice of land titling in the village. According to her:

If the land laws are to be changed, the wet rice field should be registered under the woman's name because it belongs to her. The wet rice field can't be registered under the man's name. Only the land that both husband and wife clear together [after marriage] can be registered under the couple's names.

Apparently, there is a potential land conflict between those who customarily own the wet rice fields and those who are registered as official owners of this typical agrarian land on the land use certificate. This land conflict ultimately emerges within the intimate context of household. Although in Ka Đ.'s case and in Kala Tongu village generally, customary rights over wet rice field for women are still widely respected, the mismatch between customary laws and legal laws should be more properly addressed in the national land laws to avoid land conflicts at household level.

She also had a strong view about women's role in forest protection schemes in Kala Tongu village. As I noticed, she still remained that women were not involved as much as men were in the existing forest protection schemes in the village. This is mostly due to the nature of these assignments. For the first, these activities normally require physical strength to go into the remote old forests and to undertake long shift for up to one week in the forests. According to her, men are more suitable for this kind of assignment. For the second, she also noted that women were willing to perform the task in certain circumstances but they would prefer not to. This is due to the fact that they had to fulfill their gender roles (i.e. taking care of children and doing housework). Even in a matrilineal society, women are still expected to be the home makers. As she explained below:

We women are not very strong, and can't go too far in the forest, but we have to go sometimes, like if there are only mother and child in the house, and the child is still young. However, women actually rarely go [to the forest], people [the project officers] often say that women can also stay in the hut and prepare food for men when men go patrol the forest, but surely women can't go too far into the forest.

On the other hand, she pointed out that women were more involved in collecting non-timber forest products such as tree barks, mushrooms, orchids, wild vegetables. In

the past, she used to go to the nearby forests and the old forest (which is now known as ‘community forest’) to collect these products, sell them in the market and buy food and rice for her children. Presently, with the nearby forest being put under protection and therefore become less extractable, as she observed, women were losing their traditional role in collecting non-timber forest products. Also, since they would have to go further into the forests to search for wild vegetables, women could only collect them with support from their husbands. Accordingly, the forest protection schemes have been benefiting men more than women in terms of giving them more access to forest (through payments for forest patrolling) and non-timber forest products (as women could no longer get access to remote forests).

As Ka Đ. worked for the Communal People’s Committee, perceptions and attitudes towards land and forest access might have been more top-down. Particularly, she tended to talk more about the achievements in forest protection gained at the village level. Also, as she was more well-connected and well-informed than other villagers thanks to her work position, she might not have the same struggles in terms of land and forest access especially in land transactions. Therefore, for the next cases, I purposely looked for lay people who could not access to as much capital (socially and politically speaking) as Ka Đ. This hopefully would help diversify the women’s voices as they engaged in their own struggles for land and forest.

Case 2: Married (husband from the same village)/middle-aged/poor household

Ka E, a middle-aged woman with two daughters, drew my attention as she openly talked about her poverty since the first time we met. For her, poverty means having little wet rice field as it might result in them having no food security. As in her case, she only received 0.003 ha of wet rice field from her mother when she got married.

When I visited her the second time, I learnt that due to her “poor” situation, she was given a sum of money to build the current house plus a low-interest loan which would be paid back within 8 years. She claimed that everyone in the village knew that her mother had little wet rice field and already divided that tiny plot of field to her and her female siblings. However, some of them also said that she was not destitute

because she and her husband could access to the wet rice field from her husband's family. There were other issues to take into account if she and her husband wanted to tap on this source of land, since it did not follow the tradition of land inheritance here in Kala Tongu Village. As she explained:

If we were to grow rice on my parents-in-law's field, my husband's relatives would talk bad about him. They would say that my husband got married already so he should have relied merely on me and my family's wet rice field.

Although it was not easy to tolerate the gossips from her husband's relatives, she and her husband finally approached her parents-in-law to ask for help with land shortage. They could do that partially because her parents-in-law had no daughters to pass on the wet rice field. The wet rice field then became the shared property between her husband and his other male sibling. Meanwhile, her husband's only brother also got married in another village and has lived there since then. His wife's family did not have many children so they could access to the wet rice field of the wife's family. In that case, her husband would be the only heir in the family.

It should be noted that nowadays in Kala Tongu village, the sons can inherit the wet rice field as well. For Ka E., having access to the wet rice field from her husband's family would not only help her reduce their stress for food security for now but it can also build up a saving fund for her children in the near future. She shared with me that she had two daughters and that she was always worried about having no wet rice field to pass on to them. Her anxiety over land shortage and food security for her children might have been the strongest motivation for her to take the wet rice field from her husband's family despite the rumors from her husband's relatives and the financial burden associated with a wet rice field heir. When she and her husband were given the wet rice field, they would have to shoulder the responsibility of taking care of her parents-in-law (in a family with daughter(s) this responsibility will fall upon one of these daughters). Especially when her parents-in-law pass away, they will have to pay for the costs of the funeral which might cost up to 100 million VND (about 4700 USD). She had no way but to borrow money from the money lenders and pay back once they sell their coffee bean. If she could not cover these expenses, the

relatives would take back the land (i.e. the wet rice field they were working on). She therefore expressed her ambivalent feelings about it. On the one hand, she felt fortunate as she could access her husband's land. On the other hand, she also saw it as "the last choice" or "the back-up plan."

To a certain extent, Ka E shared the same situation with Ka Đ. as she would have to deal with the potential land conflict with her husband's relatives should they fail to fulfill their traditional duties with their aging parents. This land conflict, however, goes beyond her household as it involves other (female) kin members who might be entitled to the wet rice fields of her parent-in-law in K'ho tradition. Although the land conflict is not explicit yet, it does take shape of rumors and gossips which have been spreading out among her husband's family. As such, while kinship plays an important role in shaping women's access to land, it might also create certain conflicts in terms of who should get access to land and which responsibility s/he is expected to shoulder.

Throughout my conversation with Ka E, the issue of wet rice field kept coming back in one way or another. The coffee land, despite being the main productive material in her house, was only mentioned shortly. According to her, she had around 0.8 ha coffee land from her mother and her husband had 0.1 ha coffee land from his family. She could only harvest coffee on several plots of land because she did not have enough capital to buy fertilizers for her coffee plantation. Interestingly, she was not concerned about her coffee land being taken away although she did mention that it was on the hill and technically classified as forest land. They could not register for land use certificate with this land and could not get a loan directly from the bank (as the bank would ask her to deposit the land use certificate as collateral). However, as she admitted, she was lucky because she was given a welfare package for poor households in the village, including money to build the house and low-interest loan. Being classified as a poor household seemed to bring her and her family certain economic benefits and facilitate their participation in forestry projects. As one of the main purposes of forestry projects in Kala Tongu village was to help poor households with sufficient labor to participate in forest patrolling groups and earn extra cash, her husband joined the group for one year during which they managed to get the payments

in three instalments (every three month). Like other villagers, neither she nor her husband was directly involved in the selection process, they were informed by the village head to join and leave the group without knowing the actual criteria. This, however, did not only happen to her. It resulted from the top-down approach in decision making and the fuzziness of project implementations within forestry sector in rural Vietnam. Having said so, my informant was well-informed of all the REDD+ readiness activities and also tried to seek for financial assistance from various sources/projects available in the village. In her case, she managed to mobilize her conjugal relationship and social status to gain access to land and necessary materials to work the land.

Case 3: Married (husband from a different village)/young generation/average household

Unlike Ka Đ. or Ka E., my third informant, Ka H. was a young woman who just moved back to Kala Tongu several years ago. Her husband was from another village, but he moved in to live with her and her family when they got married. They have two young children, both of them are taken care of by herself and her female siblings who live just opposite her house. Previously, they lived near their wet rice field further to the hill with her parents (outside Kala Tongu village), but the basic infrastructures there were so poor that they decided to move to the current place. Since her parents did not have residential land in the village, she had to buy the land to build a house here. They bought a small plot of land from a neighbor who remarried into another village and had some spare land here after dividing to his children. The young couple borrowed 5 million VND (220 USD) from the husband's family to buy this 0.03 ha plot of land. Although they did not have access to residential land, they were given 0.2 ha wet rice field and 0.1 ha coffee land as they moved out to form their own nuclear family by the woman's family. On top of that, the couple also got 0.5 ha coffee land from the man's family and 0.15 ha coffee land of the man himself in other village (Hang Um village). Apparently, the young woman built her access to land through inheritance and through her conjugal relationship with her husband who came from different village. As she shared with me "If I had married to a man from the same

village, I would not have any land to plant coffee because it's too crowded here".

Her family coffee land included both non-registered and registered ones. The registered ones were classified as agriculture land because they were located near the wet rice field and flat enough to be used for agricultural development. While the coffee land given to her by the mother-in-law was registered under her parents-in-law's names, the rest was classified as forestland and was not officially registered. From my interview with her, it seemed to me that it took lots of courage, energy and time for both of them to secure their access to coffee land as this land has been the contesting site between the couple and the forest officers.

Ka H. spent a good time sharing with me the long procedures from occupying the forest, cutting down the trees and converting them into coffee plantation. Since they worked the land by themselves, the usual gender division of labor was blurring. She helped her husband in most of physical work, except for carrying and removing the rocks. According to her:

But it's very tiring to work that land. There was not much soil, only big rocks. We had to dig at least 40 cm to remove the rocks and then, we could see the soil and managed to plant coffee tree... At first we planted 100 coffee trees per year, we dare not plant too many because they [the forest officers] threatened us with guns... Last year we planted 30 coffee trees more, but the forest officers cut them down already. This year, maybe we just work half of it, the rest we leave empty because we have no money to buy the coffee trees. The big coffee tree we still keep because I heard that if we planted coffee since 2004, they would not be removed. Those who planted from 2015 up to now got their trees removed.

Her narratives on the other hand illustrated their strategies to access to land and their resistances to the state's forms of governance. Although they were aware that they were planting coffee on the forestland and the forest officers would subsequently remove them, they continued to plant coffee to keep their land. Also, they gradually developed their own coping mechanisms to avoid being caught by the forest officers. For example, after several times their coffee being removed, they started planting another short-term crop together with coffee to divert those forest officers' attention. Alternatively, they chose to leave the land for several years after their coffee being

removed.

These strategies were used when they did not have face-to-face interaction with the forest officers. When they were caught red-handed, the woman, not the man, would normally handle the negotiation because apparently her husband was also aware of the role of women in dealing with land conflicts like this.

From her recollection of unexpected encounters with forest officers, we could see that Ka H. did not have to deal with land conflicts in their household. Rather, she was challenged by forest officers (mostly Kinh people) coming from outside of their community. In return, she employed certain social stereotypes about women of ethnic groups as her coping mechanism to escape from being “punished” for violating the forest laws. As she’s from an ethnic minority group, it might have been more convincing of her to say that she’s illiterate and, therefore, she could not sign the statement. As she’s from an ethnic minority group, it might have been easier for her to say that she was poor and she was in need of land for agricultural development. Underneath her self-portrayed image of a typical ethnic minority woman (i.e. illiterate and poor) was a heart of lion. As she concluded, those who dare to plant coffee here after being removed would subsequently be paid back for their courage and hard work. Her resistance to the state laws of forestland implied that she did nothing wrong and had nothing to fear. We can observe here the clash between the local and the national in the way they look at legality and illegality. What appeared to be illegal by the state, in fact, was seen as legal by the local.

Ka H. also seemed to be well aware that she was not destroying the forest. In other words, she distinguished between the forest that could be cleared for coffee plantation and the old forests where she used to collect non-timber forest products. Although she had to go into the old forests sometimes, she was not comfortable or willing to do so. She recalled one of her tiring trips to the old forest to search for wild vegetables:

Previously I just followed my aunt to collect wild vegetables...Going to the forest is very tiring, I do not have enough strength to go there regularly because the road is very steep, it’s so sunny and hot, sometimes I cannot even breathe. I only go to the forest during the weekends, if I am alone, I dare not go into the forest,

because it's so densely forested, I dare not.

Ka H., in this case, shared the same view with Ka Đ. when it came to women's role and position in forest protection projects, including REDD+. Probably thanks to the stable income from coffee bean, Ka H. and husband did not rely much on forestry projects except for the REDD+ readiness project where everyone in the village participated in. Moreover, the more profitable plots of coffee land of the young couple were located in other village rather than Kala Tongu and, therefore, they did not have to worry too much about REDD+ intervention to take back the coffee lands and reforest them.

Discussion and conclusion

Life stories and women's voices in understanding land access and land conflicts

This paper aims to raise the voices of ethnic women in their everyday struggles to derive benefit from land and forest in an upland village. The life stories of three women reveal their differentiating priorities in terms of land and forest access. This is specially so in matrilineal societies where women traditionally have greater control over land, properties, and children. For divorcee women like Ka Đ., since she could not rely conjugal relationships to get access to land and labor, she had to search for alternative ways of building access to land, including fictive kinship. For married women like Ka E. and Ka H., they sought to utilize the available support from their husbands' families and extend their access to land. As the treasurer of their households, these women also tended to discuss more on financial issues and their children's well-being, especially their daughters.

Following their everyday struggles to access to land, we could also trace how land conflicts scale up from the intra household, inter household to community level. In the case of Ka Đ and Ka E. the land conflicts potentially resulted from the disagreement between husband and wife or between husband/wife with other kin members regarding access to wet rice field. Traditionally, the wet rice field is reserved to women so as it could remain within the matrilineal clan. This tradition of land inheritance, on the one hand, led to the land conflict between son(s) and other female

kin members of the clan when son(s) also claim their rights over wet rice field in the absence of daughter(s)/female siblings in their family, as in Ka E's case. On the other hand, this tradition is further complicated with the arrival of official land titling and the household land use certificate which recognize both husband and wife's rights over the wet rice field. Ka Đ.'s story showed that while K'ho traditional systems of land inheritance are to protect women's claims over wet rice field in case of marriage breakdown, the state institutions (i.e land use certificate) do not necessarily take this into consideration, which then contributes to land conflicts between husband and wife within the household. Ka H. and her stories of "taming" the hills and converting them into coffee plantation reveal another set of land conflicts at community level between local people and forest officers who are in charge of managing and protecting forest and forestland in the region.

As such, these stories, as it turns out, are not personal. The different forms of land conflicts also reflect the socio-cultural and political contexts of the village where they took place. Except for Ka E., the two other women paid a great deal of attention to building and maintaining access to coffee land. In the wake of coffee boom in Central Highlands since 1990s, coffee land has been considered as the most valuable production material. In Kala Tongu village, coffee plantation could be converted from their home gardens or pieces of fields for hill rice in the past. Nowadays, most of their coffee land were previously (and still are) forestland and were not officially registered. These coffee land, however, were brought and sold informally without papers among uplanders for the last decade. It might start with one family member occupying the hill and mobilize his/her siblings and relatives to subsequently work on it and convert it into coffee plantation. Or it might start with two parties buying over a piece of forest, clear the trees and establish their customary ownership on it.

As the state control over forestland in Central Highlands is strong, local villagers are competing among themselves to get access to limited productive resources (especially coffee land). The competition for productive resources is even more severe in Kala Tongu village after the government took away certain areas of wet rice fields and coffee plantation of villagers to build the big hydro dam and reservoir during the period of 2007-2008. It eventually led to the land protest of Kala Tongu villagers in

early 2000 when the forest company started to remove lots of coffee trees on land classified as forestland and Kala Tongu villagers gathered in front of Di Linh District People's Committee to lodge their complaint. This only collective action, however, was not highly gendered as it attracted both men and women and they represented their households rather than their own during the land protest. The arrival of REDD+ to Central Highlands (and other provinces where REDD+ has been piloted) was expected to push forward the "good" practice of forest protection (from the perspective of the state),⁴ yet it would not be able to resolve the conflicts between customary ways of access to land in the village and imposing laws from the state.

Reflection on Feminist Political Ecology

Feminist political ecology, historically, was mostly built up from case studies in Africa and South Asia. In this research, I seek to bring in the case studies from Vietnam, which I believe would potentially enrich the literature of feminist political ecology.

As the women were telling me about their everyday activities, they also articulated their perception of gendered environmental rights and responsibilities, one of the main themes of feminist political ecology. Both Ka Đ. and Ka H. engaged in collecting non-timber forest products at various locations. In the past, local women like Ka Đ. could go into the nearby forests as these forest products were still abundant by then. Nowadays, however, due to the expansion of coffee plantation, the nearby forests were not extractable for local people as most of non-timber forest products no longer existed. For the young generation like Ka H., due to the exploitative collection activities by the community in the past and stricter forest protection regulations at present, they had to go further to remote forests to search for available forest products. However, they were aware of their gendered responsibilities in relation to the forest. As Ka Đ. and Ka H. explained to me, these gendered responsibilities are based on their differences in physical strength with women being "the weak" and therefore not able

⁴ By good practice of forest protection, I refer to the current forest management of Vietnam in which local people are paid to keep all the trees alive, prevent illegal loggers to cut down the trees and put up forest fire if it happens.

to “go into the old and remote forests” to do patrolling and to search for non-timber forest products.

The meaning of forest, from the women’s perspective, is significantly different from men’s. This is then linked to the second theme of feminist political ecology, namely gendered knowledge of forest. Women in Kala Tongu village knew more of edible and profitable plants and vegetables and only navigated within areas of forest where they could find these plants and vegetables. The densely forested areas where men search for forest products and forest officers often patrol to protect the forest were alienated to them. The emotional connections with forest and plants for women were limited to their usual and familiar “wild” gardens (in contrast to their “home” gardens). Going into the forest for Kala Tongu women was more like shopping for groceries or harvesting their crops. Forest patrolling, as a result, was not appealing to them.

The last theme of feminist political ecology, gendered environmental activism, was not visible. Due to the political regime in Vietnam, it is difficult to observe and follow up with environment-related NGOs and activities even at national level. Gender environmental activism, therefore, was seldom examined. I will, however, argue that instead of focusing on the official activism and advocacy campaigns led by NGOs, feminist political ecology would benefit greatly from looking at the more grounded ways of resistances initiated by women of ethnic groups, especially in the case of Ka H. In contrast to the preconceived image of helpless and destitute ethnic women, Ka H. showed how she intelligently dealt with the state and its *de jure* environmental rules and regulations. On the one hand, she appeared to be strong as she was fighting for her rights to occupy the land. Her intention was to keep her coffee plantation as it was no matter what kind of punishment the officers could impose on her. On the other hand, she attempted to call for sympathy from these forest officers as she portrayed herself as a young, poor and dutiful wife/daughter-in-law. These were feminized strategies that stemmed from women’s intimate relation with the land and the forest on which their family relied for livelihood.

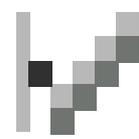
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Theme

3

**Ethnicity, Religion,
and Sexuality**

Ethnicity, Religion, and Sexuality

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The ASEAN region is made up of nations of diverse ethnicities and in which religions play key roles in the ordering of society. In many cases religion is officially used to establish and regulate different levels of human relationships, define boundaries of acceptable behaviour and underline state-and-citizens' interaction. Ethnicity in society produces cultural contexts of that society. An important element of culture is religion although culture and religion are often treated as separate categories (Raday, 2003). Diversity of ethnicity in the composition of citizens means that certain religions become the dominant or normative influence on the development of a nation's social structure. Culture and religion are sources of the gender construct and in many societies, are often used as defences against claims for gender equality (Raday, 2003).

Gender constructs in relation to women are often very closely related to views about women's body and sexuality. The areas of personal, sexual and reproductive life functions feature centrally in most cultures [and religions] and they form dominant themes in cultural practices and rules (Okin, 1999). Many cultures and religions prescribe what is seen as the appropriate way for women to dress and act (less so for men), either all the time in public or in certain religious or cultural circumstances. The morality of women in terms of sexual relationship is often more severely judged by religion and culture compare to that of men. Women's positions and their ability to move fluidly between the private and public spheres of life may be dependent on how the society sees their performance or how the presentation of their body is made.

In the context of Asia, particularly within the ASEAN region, it is important

to visit and revisit women's ability to achieve gender justice within their multicultural contexts by interrogating their positions and negotiations vis a vis ethnic and religious norms and practices that may hinder their enjoyment of rights and liberties on the same basis as other [male] citizens. The context of sexuality, which can be broadly seen to include the reproductive role, is a significant element for analyses and appears to permeate more prominently as a contested element in women's claims to equal spaces in their lives. This research team discusses how ethnicity, religion and sexuality intersect in women's lives in the ASEAN region to give an outcome that may be contrary to gender justice. The papers that follow look at different spheres of women's lives: the public sphere of political participation, the experiences of marriage in the circumstances of women pursuing higher education and the narratives of women on the issue of femininity.

Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi from Indonesia explores how four Javanese Muslim women negotiate to be in the public space of local political leadership by performing to the idea of piety and moral behaviour. Both piety and morality have common focus on the body and sexuality of women. Dewi follows four Javanese Muslim female politicians in their pursuit of becoming and performing the role of political leaders in Indonesia.

Preeya Keawpimon from Thailand investigates the circumstances and situations leading to Muslim female students deciding to marry while still pursuing higher education. She also explores the women's experiences and wellbeing in the marriage to connect it to how marriage may or may not have facilitated women's pursuits of higher education. The narratives of six Muslim female students she interviewed indicate their wish for society's approval of their choices to enter into marriage in deference to religious teaching. The female students, on the other hand, feel that they need support from family and friends in coping with their married lives. This may be related to the issue of gender division of labour where women assume much of the domestic responsibilities.

Premalatha Karupiah from Malaysia explores Malay (and Muslim) women's definition and identification with the idea of femininity. She interviewed 12 highly

qualified Malay Muslim women in Malaysia and asked them about their idea of a woman in the context of being Malay and Muslim. She finds that the participants tend to have an essentialist view of femininity. They believe in the importance of women being gentle, patient and tolerant or *lemah lembut* (which defines the physical movement, behaviour and intangible characteristics of women). The women also subscribe to the idea that the Malay, Muslim women must be concerned with their appearance and must fulfill their gender roles by being motherly and by claiming the kitchen in the home as a female space. They also feel that contemporary feminine identity includes attributes associated with men, such as being financially independent and having high mobility in the society.

Although the studies cover quite a wide spectrum of women's lives in Southeast Asia, a few common conclusions may be made about their findings. Firstly, women's gender roles and expectations are highly ordered by cultural contexts or spaces produced by religious and ethnic influences. Women have continuously negotiated with the patriarchal elements of their cultural spaces to gain increased and fluid movement between the private and public spaces of their lives. Women's negotiations often revolve around society's expectations in relation to their sexuality and reproductive roles. The veiling of the body is a theme that permeates throughout the three studies. Although the studies may be limited in a way that they only focus on the context of Islam, they present diverse ethnic and cultural situations, show some similarities as to the society's interpretation of Islam, and illustrate how Islam interacts with ethnic and local cultures to form some variation on how gender constructions are produced.

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Beyond 'Moral Capital': Competing Idea of Piety and Sexuality in Public Sphere Behind the Story of Indonesian Women's Path to Politics

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Abstract

This paper explores the stories of four female Javanese Muslim political leaders in playing the idea of piety and sexuality in their private life and political strategy beyond the existing notion of moral capital. This research reveals that the idea of Islamic piety, such as donning the veil to show modesty within the increasing engagement of Indonesian society in Islamisation in post-Suharto Indonesia, has been prominent. Donning the veil does not only signify their Islamic modernity, but, more importantly, it also provides comfortable spaces to manoeuvring in the public sphere. This research shows that the discourses and practices of sexuality centralising on heterosexuality norms have predominantly shaped society's expectation and are used in political campaigns. Rather than challenging the gender normative standard positioning males or husbands as the family head, all of them choose to manoeuvre or negotiate with the existing formal and informal structures of patriarchy for wider participation in the public sphere. The Western notion of the public sphere is not accurate to view the situation of Indonesian Muslim women.

Keywords: Muslim women, Javanese, politics, piety, sexuality, Islam

Introduction

After Suharto stepped down in May 1998, Indonesia began entering the democratization era. Democratization delivers substantial changes in local politics, where the Law No. 32/2004 concerning direct local elections to elect local government heads (governor/regent/mayor) was introduced in 2005. Currently, the Law No. 32/2004 has been amended by the Law No. 10/2016. Interestingly, direct local

elections deliver positive impacts on women participation as the number of female leaders elected increased significantly from 2005 to 2105.

There were only two female leaders ever elected under the Law No. 5/1974 (1974–98) in which local government heads were elected by the Regional People's Representative Council (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*, DPRD) with strong intervention from the president. The number of female leaders has increased significantly since the introduction of direct local elections in 2005. From 2005-2015, there were a total of 26 female local leaders elected (18 in Java, and 8 outside Java) during the first period (2005-2010) and the second period (2010-2015) of the direct elections (Dewi, 2015, p. 52). Moreover, during the concurrent direct local election held on 9 December 2015, a total of 24 female leaders were also elected as local government heads (Perludem, 2015). This number clearly showed that the introduction of direct local election has increased participation of women in local politics. However, this interesting development has not received enough attention from scholars.

There have been copious studies on direct local elections since 2005, such as the practice of money politics (Masaaki & Hamid, 2008); (Hamid 2014), illegal campaign financing (Mietzner 2011), strengthening of local identity (Nordholt & van Klinken, 2007), collusion (Hidayat, 2009), economic growth, public services, and natural resources (Hill, 2014). Only a few have been devoted to understand the rising of female leaders in the elections such as those conducted by LSI (2007), Ratnawati (2009), Satriyo (2010), University of Airlangga (2011), Perludem (2015), and SATUNAMA foundation (2015). There is only one book, i.e. the one arranged by Dewi (2015), that comprehensively observes deeply the agencies of the three female Javanese Muslim leaders and highlights the role of Islam, gender, and networks.

So far, there are no comprehensive study analyses of the competing idea of Islamic piety and sexuality behind the rise of the victory of these female leaders in local politics. This topic is important given that 95 per cent of the female leaders elected in direct local elections is Muslim and Javanese (stay in Java and are culturally Javanese) and to understand the new phenomenon of Indonesian community's growing engagement in Islamic principles after 1998. Brenner (2011) shows the phenomenon of Islamic new visibilities in post-Suharto Indonesia: where liberal and conservative

Islam in Indonesia contested to build a new moral order to gain the symbolic control on various issues such as gender, sexuality, public morality (donning Islamic clothing, implementing *sha'riah*-based law), and contesting boundaries of the private and public spheres, where women's body often becomes the key battleground.

Having said the bigger picture, it is interesting to analyze the competing idea and practice of Islamic piety through the experiences of these female political leaders' political careers. By doing so, this paper fills the gap by exploring female (Javanese) Muslim political leaders' experiences and stories, focusing on the competing idea and practice of Islamic piety and sexuality in their path to power in direct local elections.

This paper seeks to answer several questions, namely: (i) what are the existing socio-cultural and religious contexts affecting women's lives in Indonesia, (ii) what are the general narratives on sexuality and piety in Indonesia, especially in the Javanese context, (iii) how have women negotiated with the existing narratives on piety and sexuality within the formal and informal structures in order to rise in local politics, (iv) what are the current discourses of public *versus* private distinctions, and (v) what are the narratives of public *versus* private distinctions according to these women.

This paper does not merely discuss women's experience *per se*. In fact, this paper has been written based on women's perspectives because women's original voices have been given special spaces to be presented. The materials presented in this paper were drawn primarily from the in-depth interviews with four female leaders, all of them are Javanese Muslims because they have been raised and have lived amidst the Javanese culture (Central Java and East Java), namely: BD, the Regent of GK (2011-2015 and 2015-2020); SSW, the Regent of BT (2010-2015); SM, the vice regent of KL (2016-2021); and YS, the vice regent of SL (2010-2015). I also interviewed five other persons who were members of their winning teams and women activists. All of these interviews were conducted using a one-to-one interview method, followed by informal discussion in their respective office or home from 25 - 31 July 2016 in Yogyakarta Province.

Context: The Third Wave of Islamisation in Post-Suharto Indonesia

The trend of an increasing number of Indonesia women pursuing political careers

in local politics has developed along with the growing engagement of Muslims in Islamic principles and norms from the first to the third wave of Islamisation in post-Suharto Indonesia.

The first wave of Islamisation of Indonesia occurred in the thirteenth century. Dewi (2012) shows that the penetration of Islam in Southeast Asia, including in Java, which began in the thirteenth century has been highlighted by the transition from the ancient East Javanese Hindu-Buddhist regimes to the Islamic Kingdom, which delivers significant changes in the Javanese's livelihood, affecting everyone including the women since the late fifteenth century.

The second wave of Islamisation in Indonesia as a modern nation state occurred in the 1980s period. Suharto's authoritarian leadership during the New Order (1966-1998) constrained political Islam and women's role in politics. Indonesian women were forced to surrender any political autonomy under the gender ideology which Suryakusuma refers as "state *ibuism*" (1996, p.96), which expects the total devotion of Indonesian women to their husbands as wives and mothers. On the other hand, Suharto's severe stance on political Islam provoked the revival of Islam, a socio-religious movement encouraging the internalization of Islamic principles within society since the 1980s. It had been inspired by the spirit of Islamic revival in the 1970s across Muslim worlds, including Malaysia and Indonesia (Feener, 2007); (Hamayotsu 2002). One of the vivid consequences of the 1980s Islamisation was the gradual adoption of veils among young Muslim women (Brenner 1996); (Feillard 1999); (Alatas & Desliyanti, 2002); (Ida, 2008). The vibrant role of Islamic organizations in bringing Islamisation to Indonesia resulted in a more plural form of Islam, one of which is to welcome ideas about Islamic feminism in the early 1990s.

Now, we are entering the third wave of Islamisation in post-Suharto Indonesia. It is generally understood that contemporary Indonesian Islam in post-Suharto era shows a decline in political Islam (which is indicated by the weakening of Islamic political parties), while "social Islamisation" is deepening to borrow the words from Masaaki, Atsushi, Suaedy (2012, p. 3-5). Copious studies have been devoted to explore the impact of the growing engagement of Indonesian society in Islamic norms in post-Suharto Indonesia such as Bamualim, Scoot, van der Meij, Abubakar (2006),

Fealy and White (2008), Hilmy (2010), and van Bruinessen (2002). This period is also indicated by the rising of liberal Islam. Interestingly, Menchik (2016) notes that Indonesia's mainstream mass Islamic organizations (*NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis*) are tolerant with the country's religious diversity, but they do not want liberalism to exist in Indonesia. Scholars also pay attention to the changes in the life and role of Muslim women either individually or collectively such as Adamson (2004), Syamsiyatun (2007), Nurmila (2007), van Wachelin (2010), and Blackburn, Smith and Syamsiyatun (2008). Under this important context and phenomenon in which Islam has gradually moved into the centre of Indonesian society and shaped the Indonesian public sphere, this paper investigates the competing idea of Islamic piety and sexuality behind the rise of the four female Javanese Muslim leaders.

Conceptual Framework

Women's Leadership: Beyond the Moral Capital

This paper positions the trend of the rising number of Indonesian female political leaders into the wider picture of Asian women's political experiences. It is generally understood that Southeast Asian women hold a relatively high position in society and enjoy equal economic privileges to men in society that is highlighted by the complementary nature of male and female duties (Ward, 1963) (Reid, 1988) (Errington, 1990).

The central role of women in Southeast Asia can also be seen from the leadership position. Scholars have tried to uncover the factors behind the rise of female leaders in Asia, which can be simplified into two academic positions. The majority of the scholars identify the "familial ties" factor. Jahan (1987), who analyzed the cases of prominent female political leaders in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, offers an interesting explanation that their strong connections with male relatives (husbands or fathers) called "family connections" are prominent. Similarly, Norr (1976) argues that in India, kinship shapes either cohesion or conflicts in everyday lives and even more so in politics. Echoing familial ties, Richter (1990-1991) concludes that familial ties to prominent male politicians (husbands or fathers) are a vital factor which contributes to the rise of female political leaders in South and Southeast Asia.

Thompson (2002-2003), who assessed the political histories of popular female national leaders in Asia, uses the term “political dynasties” as a key variable for them in assuming political leadership.

In terms of the strategy to win a particular political position, Derichs, Fleschenberg, and Hustebeck (2006) pose another interesting feature. By using the term “moral capital” proposed by Kane (2001), Derichs, Fleschenberg, and Hustebeck (2006, p. 250-251), it explored the case of Aung San Suu Kyi in the authoritarian, isolated Burma, where her moral capital has transformed into moral authority in her resistance to military dictatorship perceived as deeply immoral; moral campaigns in a semi-authoritarian setting of Wan Azizah in Malaysia with her National Justice Party in which her personality symbolizes inner strength and embodies moral etiquette and Islamic values. Derichs, Fleschenberg, and Hustebeck (2006, p. 252-253) also explored the cases of Park Geun-hye chairing the Grand National Party (GNP), who used her political office to rehabilitate the bad reputation of her father’s party and conform to the traditional gender image of women in Korea as the role model of a “loyal daughter.” Similarly, Tanaka Makiko, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and a Foreign Minister from 2001 to 2002, encouraged radical political reforms and conformity to the traditional gender image of women in Korea as the role model of a “good housewife.”

Positioned within the body of literature on women’s leadership in Asia, this paper would like to go beyond these two existing pieces of literature. This paper explores an interesting aspect beyond the “familial ties” and “moral capital” notion, namely the competing idea of piety and sexuality behind the stories of the four female Javanese Muslim leaders’ paths to local politics. By doing so, this paper opens up a new frontier of research that has not been explored before.

Islamic Piety as Javanese Muslim Women

According to Tong and Turner (2008, p. 43), the acts of piety usually involve self-control and bodily practices concerning diet, attitudes, clothing, and bodily discipline. The acts of piety have been important aspects in Islamic religious movements and Islamisation projects across Muslim countries. Many scholars have

studied various features of piety (Bayat, 2007) (Mahmood, 2001, 2005). Some of them studied Muslim women's acts of piety across different places including in South and Southeast Asia, including Malaysia (Tong & Turner, 2008, p. 41-59) and Indonesia (Rinaldo, 2008, p. 23-39).

This paper emphasizes that the rise and victory of female Muslim political leaders in local politics have developed along with the growing engagement of Muslims in Islamic principles and norms in the democratic atmosphere after 1998, which I called the third wave of Islamisation. Under this growing engagement in Islam, vibrant practices and discourses associated with the acts of Islamic piety are flourishing. The new form of visibility of Islam in public venues, according to Gole (200, p. 173), has occurred over the last two decades in Muslim and European societies in which the penetration of Islam into the national public sphere can be seen from the transformation of the secular public sphere into its own new style of Islamic dressing as well as languages, rituals and spatial practices associated with Islam. The new form of Islamic visibility also occurred in Southeast Asia. Schroter (2013) presents the current intersection between Islam and gender through the experiences of Muslim women in relation to the issues of gender, marriage, and social and political leadership.

Having understood this global and regional development, this paper presents the way they go about embracing or playing with the ideas or practices associated with Islamic piety such as dressing or veiling. I intend to assess their ability as subjects in engaging in the dominant cultural concepts of gender and Islam in their quest for power and give them space to define the meaning of public and private narratives in contemporary Indonesia.

The Idea and Practices of Sexuality in Politics

Another important theoretical notion that should be explained is sexuality. The history of sexuality as an independent field of inquiry has arisen since 1970s and 1980s, and it is often associated with anthropological curiosity (Nye, 2004, p. 11). The discussion about sexuality is always closely related to gender. The gender arrangement of the majority of society promotes the binary male/female orders that have reproduced themselves as a system of male dominance within heterosexual sexual-relationship

(Nye, 2004, p. 12). The history and development of sexuality are highly related to the expansion of state power (Western, Chinese, Ottoman), which is strongly coloured by family patriarch which controlled women and children from 16th to 17th centuries (Nye, 2004, p. 15).

In turn, the modern birth control method which has been discovered since the 19th century changes the meaning of sexuality from a procreation activity into a procreative orientation (Nye, 2004, p. 16). Thus, with the existence of the modern birth control method, women have rights to their body. It also brings significant consequences to the traditional family values which previously saw marriage as the acceptable norm for sexual intercourse to get pregnant and have children as the ideal aim of sexuality, whereas the discovery of the modern birth control method offers another dimension of sexuality, i.e. to have intercourse without marriage, for the sake of pleasure and without any intention to get pregnant, meaning that women have full control over their body and sexuality.

The discourses and practices of sexuality become even more dynamic in the globalisation context. According to Giddens (2000; Revises Sociology, 2016), globalisation brings several consequences such as offering new ideas on marriage and sexual orientation, which are not consistent with the heterosexual norm as the new generation lives in a cosmopolitanism world, with more freedom to express their desire.

How about in Indonesia? The Indonesian Government under the reign of President Suharto regulated the unification of law on marriage. The Marriage Law of 1974 incorporated the Islamic *Syariah* (Blackburn, 2004, p. 75-80). Then, the Law of 1974 was manifested in the Compilation of Islamic Law (*Kompilasi Hukum Islam*, KHI), which has been used in civil and religious courts since 1991 (Robinson, 2001, p. 28-9). Based on Connell's statement (2008, p. 3-6) that gender as a "social structure" comprises "*gender arrangement*," the 1974 Law and the KHI, in my view, can be seen as the manifestation of the state "*gender arrangement*" whose ideas and norms of the "*gender-appropriate behaviour*" for men and women are continuously socialised and promoted.

Surrounded by the third wave of Islamisation and globalisation, the Law has been criticized by some Muslim activists (JIL, 2003). However, so far the 1974 Law and

KHI remain applicable. They set out the ideal marriage within the heterosexual norm, i.e. marriage between a couple of the same religion, which positions men as the breadwinner, while women as mother and wives, promotes sexuality for procreation, where the Law permits the husband to take a second wife in case his first wife is ill or cannot give him a child. It is policing the boundary of sexually permissible. How about the practice? What are the acceptable norms of sexuality for women and men in the Javanese family context?

Research Findings and Analysis

Negotiation with the Existing Narratives on Piety and Sexuality

The four female Muslim politicians observed in this paper live within the Javanese community and culture. The idea of romantic sexuality within the heterosexual norm is strongly promoted in the Javanese culture. In the Javanese culture, men are perceived as the core of the Javanese family, while women come second. For the sake of her husband's dignity, a Javanese woman is expected to undertake *cancuttaliwanda* (taking the initiative to do everything necessary, particularly when her family is facing troubles) and protect as well as provide a foundation for her husband's accomplishments (Handayani & Novianto, 2008, p. 139). A true woman (*wanita sejati*) is one who can serve well at home both as a mother and a wife, both in the kitchen and in bed, and plays no public role because a public role or position might undermine her husband's dignity (Handayani & Novianto, 2008, p. 143). This normative expectation is further reinforced by Islam, which colours the everyday life of Javanese Muslim women since the enforcement of the 1974 Law mentioned earlier. Here, it is clear that in the Javanese culture, men are perceived as the family head and the breadwinner, while women are expected to be good wives and mothers. It does not only show the ideal family based on the romantic relationship between a man and a woman, where each has a different position and role, but also emphasizes the idea of sexuality as procreation because good women are those who can give their husbands a child or become mothers. How is the reality of this gender norm in contemporary Indonesia observed among the four female Javanese Muslim leaders? The following section presents the research findings.

First, SSW (aged 65 in 2016) was a Regent of BT (2010-2015). I interviewed SSW in her home in Yogyakarta on Sunday, 31 July 2016. SSW is the wife of IS, a Regent of BTL who ruled the area since 2000 to 2010. IS is a wealthy businessman, the owner of the biggest newspaper agency in Yogyakarta, and a prominent cadre of PDIP. SSW comes from an ordinary non-political family with low education background (a senior high school graduate) who married IS. SSW said that she never wished or dreamed of becoming a female regent.

SSW's involvement in politics happened naturally because she often accompanied her husband, IS, during his official trips to meet people during ten years of serving. At that time, she served as the PKK head (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, Family Welfare Guidance, PKK), i.e. an official state organization for mothers and wives across districts and villages, as well as other social positions. According to SSW, it was due to her long and intensive encounter with the community that she gained wider support from the community (men and women) to run as a regent candidate. SSW decided to run as a regent candidate in the 2010 direct regent election in BT. Interestingly, SSW said that she merely continued her husband's successful programs rather than come up with distinct or innovative programs of her own.

Talking about the issue of sexuality, SSW said that she did not face any difficulties to be a good wife and mother according to the traditional gender role. She respected her husband as the family head, served him, such as making a cup of milk everyday whenever she could, took care of her children, and cooked sometimes. After appointed as regent, she sometimes could not do such things. In such conditions, domestic helpers will help her and her husband can accept it. Here we can see that the actual meaning of becoming a good mother and wife in the heterosexual norm which applies in the contemporary Javanese culture now becomes so elastic. With the help of other parties which can be easily accessed nowadays, especially from the middle-class family, husbands and wives have a greater room to maneuver their role and position as long as both parties feel comfortable.

The idea of romantic sexuality also appeared in SSW's case. During the campaigns, SSW was accompanied by her husband whenever he could, and sometimes she only came with her winning team. SSW's information was confirmed by AY, the

leader of SSW's winning team and the head of PDIP of BT Regency Branch who added that sometimes SSW's husband, IS, became her political orator (an interview with AY in PDIP office in BT on Wednesday, 27 July 2016). Interestingly, SSW believed that because of her current popularity, her husband, IS, no longer served as a determining factor in her campaign. In relation to the idea of piety and sexuality in politics, SSW always wears veils (an Islamic hijab which covers women's head, hair, shoulder and chest) every day. She said that before going on a pilgrimage, she sometimes wore a veil when attending some occasions which made her feel comfortable and confident when interacting with people. Then after the pilgrimage in 2000, she consistently wears the veil.

The second female leader is BD (aged 67 in 2016), a Regent of GK for the periods of 2011 to 2015 and 2015 to 2020. I interviewed BD in her office in GK on Tuesday, 26 July 2016. BD comes from a wealthy family. Her parents own a successful furniture business called Candi Putra. Candi Putra furniture is very famous and most people in GK know BD's parents and all of their children. Not finishing her college majoring in economics, BD tried to transfer to the faculty of political science. BD has learnt trading and business from her parents since she was a child. She has a strong entrepreneurship spirit, which she believes to contribute positively to her political career. BD married WSD, a prominent politician who was also the chief of Golkar for GK Branch. Unfortunately, WSD died in 2002. BD began to get used to the political activities as she often accompanied her husband who was a prominent politician. BD took part actively in various organizations, including the religious propagation group *pengajian* with thousand members. Her vast networks contributed significantly to her political career, especially in political strategies and marketing. BD owns all the necessary things to be elected as a regent, namely the material capital, the political capital, and the social capital. Interestingly, BD said that she did not want to get involved in politics. BD initially was a vice regent of GK. She said that it was the strong demand from various parties which made her change her mind and run as a regent candidate in 2015.

The idea of piety and sexuality in politics is rather different in BD's case. BD's husband passed away in 2002 and she became a widow since then. In Javanese culture,

a widow carries a negative stereotype which may endanger the community's harmony. BD is aware of her status and situation. Conversely, society will not question the sexuality of female political leaders whose husband has not died or who are not divorced. As a widow, BD is highly vulnerable to negative perceptions due to her sexuality. For example, in 2010 when she ran as a vice regent candidate paired with SP as the regent candidate, who is also divorced, she had to deal with the rumor or black campaign stating that BD and SP have conducted unfaithful acts and that both of them were married. Furthermore, when she was carrying out a campaign in Gedang Sari, BD was asked in front of the public to answer whether the rumor was true or not.

To prevent negative perceptions during her political campaigns or rallies, BD was always accompanied by her children even though she sometimes attended those meetings alone. She believed that GK community really trusted her because she came from GK and she also lived and was raised in GK, where the community has known and trusted her family well. Here, we can see that BD's strong material and social capital became the strategic point of BD's indirect bargaining position to the community. Even though in the perspective of the Javanese culture a widow carries a negative connotation, BD survived in the political competition and gained positive support because the community focused on her material capital and social capital, i.e. the community trust, which she has developed for many years rather than her mere sexuality status as a widow. BD's piety became even more affirmed by the fact that she always wore a veil in her daily and political activities.

The third female leader is SM (aged 39 in 2016), a vice regent of KL (2016-2021). I interviewed SM in her office on Thursday, 28 July 2016 in KL. Originally SM was an ordinary housewife of the KL regent SN, who served as the KL regent for two periods (2000-2015). SN is also the chief of PDIP for KL Branch. SM, a mother of four children, attended vocational high school and runs some businesses. As the wife of a regent serving for ten years, SM was appointed as chief of PKK, early childhood education schools, and NGOs on prevention of violence against women. These activities contributed to her popularity. SM, who has not become a political cadre, never thought to participate in politics before. It was her husband who

asked her to prepare for a political position because the party PDIP asked SM's willingness to be a regent or vice regent candidate. As she did not have any political experience, SM was happy to be a vice regent candidate which gave her enough time to learn running the government and practice politics. SM was then elected as the vice regent of KL, together with SH as the regent of KL for the period of 2015-2020; they became the first pair consisting of two female candidates ever elected as the local government heads in Indonesian history.

Talking about the issues of sexuality and politics, SM said that she did not face any difficulties to be a good wife or mother according to the traditional gender role. She respects her husband as the family head whom she has to obey. SM tried to position herself proportionally: she is a regent in the office and an ordinary mother and wife at home who has to serve her husband, take care of her children, and cook. Her husband understands her new position and daily routine. However, SM said that she has to provide extra special time after work for her husband to talk about important things. Clearly, SM did not face any internal difficulty to run as a female leader.

More interestingly, her status as a wife and mother gave her an advantage and she used it in her political campaigns. The narrative created during her political campaign was that SM was a mature women having children and a husband supporting her. SM's husband always accompanied her in her campaign and it was her husband, who was a former regent of KL, who introduced SM in each of her campaigns. SM said that her husband's presence was crucial to ensure the society's trust in her candidacy and to prevent any negative rumors against her political run. Here we can see that the idea of romantic sexuality centralizing on the harmonious relationship of a husband and a wife was strategically played in BD's political campaign. SM has also worn a veil long before she run as a vice regent of KL. SM focused on female voters, especially networks of housewives in PKK and ordinary women in many traditional markets. SM claimed that she gained strong support and endorsement from female-based voters who were pleased with her new position as a vice regent of KL.

Finally, the fourth female leader is YS (aged 48 in 2016), a vice regent of SL (2010-2015). I interviewed SL on Monday, 25 July 2016 in Yogyakarta. YS' father is a military personnel while her mother is a prominent Golkar politician. YS is a

businesswoman, activist and mother of two. YS's husband is a businessman from Palembang and a PDIP cadre, though he does not have an official political position. YS an excellent individual capital of obtaining a PhD from a university in Malaysia. Her initial engagement in social issues and activities began since she was an undergraduate student at Gajah Mada University (UGM). Soon after graduation, she continued her social activities through the NGO *Cut Nyak Dien*, which focused on the rights of lower-class women.

It was her husband who asked her to compete as a vice regent in the 2010 election in SL. Before running as a vice regent of SL in 2010, YS competed in the 2009 legislative election, but she failed. Nevertheless, her political debut in the 2009 legislative election has made her popular among society, which gave her benefits her in the 2010 election. YS was successfully elected as the vice regent of SL together with SP as the regent for the period of 2010-2015. The PDIP central board recommended her to run as a regent candidate in the 2015 direct election after her victory as a vice regent.

Talking about the issues of sexuality and politics, YS said that she respected her husband as the family head and both of them tried to be a good couple. Interestingly, YS said that she is not the typical conventional woman who always serves her husband perfectly with food or by cooking as she is assisted with a house help. Her husband also does not mind it. So here we can see that the actual practice of the norm of becoming a good mother and wife in contemporary Java among middle-class families is changing and no longer rigid. The relatively loose relationship in private life has certain consequences in the campaign method. The idea of romantic sexuality was not played in YS' political campaign. YS had never been accompanied by her husband during her campaigns, instead it was her winning team that accompanied her.

The norm of Islamic piety also played. Although she does not wear a veil in her everyday life, but during the 2010 and 2015 elections, YS wore a loose veil. She said that although she often colored her hair, but due to the election, she had to stop it because it would be perceived negatively by the majority of Muslim voters. Then she had to wear a loose veil not only because she has been supported by the majority of Islamic political parties, but because it was also part of the strategy to show her piety

towards Muslim voters. Despite her success in adapting to the Islamic norms of wearing a veil, she could not hide her masculine characters such as wearing pants when attending official ceremonies or going to the office which was not consistent with the ideal norm of female leaders who should wear a skirt. In addition, YS could not comply with the Javanese norm of what makes a good woman. The head of YS's winning team, BS, said that YS's style of talking and gesture do not suit Javanese norms ('*njawani*'); YS talks and laughs loudly, which does not adopt the Javanese manner when addressing people and does not master the Javanese polite language when talking to people. YS simply does not have '*katuranggan*' or the Javanese characteristics or manners accepted normally among Javanese people such as speaking politely, showing hospitality, and having a good sense of social relationships (an interview with BS, the head of YS's winning team on 25 July 2016 in Yogyakarta). In Javanese culture, as mentioned in literature, women have received special attention on how to understand women's characters through their body, appearance, and gesture called '*candrakaturanggan*' (Sukri & Sofwan, 2001, p. 119). Based on BS's evaluation, one of the great weaknesses of YS that contributed significantly to her defeat was that her '*katuranggan*' did not adapt to the Javanese culture, which resulted in mass voters perceiving her as not understanding the Javanese norms and manners and as a non-Javanese person, resulting in her failure to get people's sympathy.

The Discourse and Narrative of the Public Sphere versus the Private Sphere

In the discussion about the public sphere versus the private sphere, the four female Javanese Muslim leaders show an interesting feature which differs from the Western conceptual understanding of the public sphere versus the private sphere. The original Western concept of the public sphere is the bourgeois public sphere where the sphere of private people came together as a public and claimed the public sphere (Habermas, 1991, p. 27). In the conception, the line between the state and its society divided the public sphere from the private realm: the public sphere was coextensive with public authority, while the private sphere comprised of civil society in the narrower sense (Habermas, 1991, p. 30). The basic features of the Western concept of the public sphere are universal access, individualism, equality, and openness (Gole,

2002, p. 174). What are contemporary practices of public and private spheres according to the four female Javanese Muslim leaders? The explanation is presented below.

SSW as the Regent of BT (2010-2015) said that she had never thought rigidly of the sexual division of labor between men in the public sphere and women in the private sphere. She said that she did not face any difficulties to participate in the public sphere.

BD as the Regent of GK for the periods of 2011-2015 and 2015-2020 said that her parents and family have never made any distinctions between the public sphere as the domain of men and the private sphere in the family as the domain of women. She said that she had been given freedom to participate in social organizations and deal with public matters while taking care of the children. She got used to the routines. To put simply, she said that as a Javanese woman, she did not face a serious obstacle on her political career.

SM as the vice regent of KL (2016-2021) said that she enjoyed her role as a mother and wife and that she had to play her role smart and position vis-a-vis her husband. She said about “balancing” the role and position as a public official and a mother and wife and always maintaining good communication with her husband as the key. She also said that she had never faced any serious challenges in her political career.

YS as the vice regent of SL (2010-2015) said that she was confused why in the literature, including the one she read, there is a separation between the public sphere which belongs to men and the private sphere which belongs to women. She said that according to her experiences such a distinction does not exist and thus, there should not be any separation between the public sphere and the private sphere because it is no longer relevant now. She said that sometimes she still found some religious leaders emphasizing women’s role as a mother and wife in the family. She also criticized the tendency to question whether their husband support them or not when female political leaders run for politics, but the same question has never been asked to male politicians. This tendency indicates public ambiguity in assessing female politicians’ political careers as always framing and perceiving them in the romantic sexual relationship in politics.

These four female Javanese Muslims clearly show that the Western concept of the separation between the public and private spheres since the 17th century which women were associated with the natural world (in private sphere of giving birth or childrearing) while men were associated with culture who controls nature (public sphere) (Sydie, 1987, p.3) does not apply in the Javanese community.

Conclusion

One of the Islamic ideas of piety which becomes a popular Islamic practice among the majority of Indonesian Muslim women since 1998 is wearing a veil. All of the four female Javanese Muslim leaders are wearing a veil with different reasons and degrees of attachment. There is particularity behind each story of donning the veil, among the general feature of competing discourses and spaces for Islamic public morality in Indonesian electoral politics. Unlike SSW, BD, and SM who wear a veil voluntary in some stages of their life, YS wears a veil only during her political campaigns for the sake of gaining political sympathy and complying with the norms of the Islamic political parties which supported her. Borrowing Schechner's concept (1988, p. 11), "aesthetic ritual" consists of "codified forms" and "ad hoc forms" as one of the three properties of human rituals (the other two are "social ritual" and "religious ritual"). Thus, the way YS wears a veil as the standardized codified norm in Islamic society is an ad hoc action in the political campaign as part of "aesthetic rituals." Deeper than that, SSW's story of donning the veil tells the agency of veiling for her personal reason. SSW noted that before going on a pilgrimage, she sometimes wore a veil when attending some occasions. The veil she wore made her feel comfortable and confident when interacting with people, which in turn develops into social modality. After the pilgrimage, SSW decided to wear a veil continuously and became an icon of her political campaign. The same thing also happened to BD. Here the veil in the case of the four female Javanese Muslim political leaders provides them with stimulation for greater expansion in the public sphere rather than inhibiting them. The story tells us that it is not only these four women's agencies that matter. The veil itself should not be overlooked. The veil, rather than signifying oppression as believed by Western feminists' understanding, becomes a socio-political tool which is part of the

“aesthetic rituals” and is more progressive because it gives them comfortable spaces to manoeuvre and participate in the public sphere which is highly patriarchal within the increasing engagement of Indonesian people in Islamic principles and norms. Wearing a veil, in this case, signifies freedom for Indonesian Muslim women to take an active part in electoral politics, which at the same time expands the boundary of their public sphere, which has never happened before. Of course, their actions have transformed the idea of Islamic piety from a personal act of worshipping God to Islamic public piety in which the idea and norm of Islamic piety becomes instrumental in politics as what I call the “common rule of conduct” for showing progress but also modesty as an ideal female Muslim political leader in an increasingly Islamized society in contemporary Indonesian politics.

In relation to the sexuality issue, the ideal gender norm stipulated by the 1974 Marriage Law and Javanese norms centralized on heterosexuality as the core of family and societal order. Although there are current discourses and debates among cosmopolitan generations challenging the heterosexual norm, the generally wide spreading norms of Indonesian society, including Muslim Javanese, perceive heterosexuality as the acceptable norm. In politics, it reflects in the way society expects the four female Javanese Muslim politicians behave in relation to their spouse (husband) as a good wife and mother. In terms of political campaigns, the idea of romantic relationships where the wife gains support, endorsement, and promotion from her husband is clearly played in political campaigns. This is the case of SM and SSW. BD as a widow has to find ways to prevent negative perceptions against a widow among Javanese society by always having her children accompany her during her political campaigns. YS has a rather different case, in which her husband never attended her campaigns as they have a rather loose relationship. In general, we can see that in Javanese community, in particular, and Indonesia, in general, a harmonious relationship between a wife and her husband is important for gaining community trust which female leader candidates/politicians expect.

The interesting feature on gender relations shows that rather than taking the gender normative standard for granted, the four female Javanese Muslim leaders negotiated it and strategized it in their path to power. All of them positioned their

husband as the family head. They asked for suggestions or permission in doing things, including their participation in politics, from their husband. However, they showed various degrees of expressions and encountered different boundaries when playing their respective role. For example, BD who comes from a wealthy family and who is also a successful businesswoman with strong social capital does not feel disturbed by the tradition which expects a woman to be a good wife or mother. Her family gets used to flexible situations where her role in the household is assisted by a helper. Meanwhile, SSW who previously was an ordinary housewife with a low level of education feels comfortable with her domestic role, even though she is also assisted by a helper. Rather similar with SSW, SM who has a relatively low level of education (a vocational high school graduate) admitted that she should obey her husband as a good wife and mother and never disappoint her husband. In contrast, YS, who holds the highest education degree (a PhD) among them all, shows a more rebellious spirit. YS expressed that she is neither a good wife who prepares meal for her husband nor complies with the other conventional norm as she believed that women do not need to do such tasks and that her husband does not bother it much. Here, we can see clearly that the educational background of each female Javanese Muslim politician affects their respective gender-relation expression or the boundary of each role (the wife and the husband) in the heterosexual norm.

Rather than challenging the gender normative standard that positions males or husbands as the family head, the above-mentioned female leaders preferred manoeuvring or making negotiations with the existing formal and informal structures in order to obtain the desired outcome for their wider participation in the public sphere. This is a situation which Kandiyoti refers to as “patriarchal bargains” (1998, p. 274) where “women strategize within a set of concrete constraints [of patriarchy].” The four female Javanese Muslim political leaders chose to negotiate rather than to resist the patriarchal structure because they had strong interdependency to their husbands. Their political careers had been facilitated by their husband’s initial political career (SSW and BD) or, in a stronger degree, had been plotted or orchestrated by their husbands (SM and YS). They all are a relatively new player in politics, none of them had been a professional politician before their political debut, they were either businesswomen or

ordinary housewives. Therefore, they needed to maintain a harmonious relationship with their husbands and should comply with the patriarchal structure. It will be difficult for them to do so because of their limited capabilities and modalities, not to mention the fact that society tends to develop negative perceptions over Javanese women who cannot maintain a harmonious relationship within their family. Perhaps the story will be different if the female leader has strong individual capital and has a professional political career beforehand.

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Going with the Faith in Islam: Experiences, Challenges and Issues for Female Muslim Students in the Deep South of Thailand Entering into Marriage While Studying in University

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Abstract

Some female students choose to marry while they are in the university. A variety of reasons influence their decisions to marry, but the most important one is to make their faith in Islam completed. The objective of this qualitative research is to describe the experiences, challenges and issues for female Muslim students in the southern provinces of Thailand, who married to legitimize their romantic relationships. Six female Muslim students who married were engaged in in-depth interviews. The findings show that 1) female Muslim students wished for people around them to understand and respect their decisions to enter into married lives, 2) the students experienced differences in their life contexts before and after marriage, especially with regard to their relationships with their husbands and parents and also concerning their life's responsibilities 3) female Muslim students felt the need for emotional support to balance their marriages and students' lives, and 4) to be more inclusive, there is a need to relook at the universities' welfare policies in relation to students' experiences of pregnancy and childcare.

Keywords: female Muslim student, deep south Thailand, marry

Background and Significance

Generally, Thai society promotes higher education and supports young people to marry after graduation. However, people in Deep South Thailand, who are influenced by the Muslim belief, may have different ways of looking at romantic relationships and marriage. Couples living together or having a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship outside of marriage are considered to be against Islamic teaching. This may have led to many

university students in Southern Thailand, who are in romantic relationships, to decide to marry while still studying in the university. Marrying, as a result of cultural expectations, may cause young people, especially women, to face difficulties in regard to adapting to new and more multiple roles while continuing being students. For women, the particular experiences of having to assume certain culturally expected gender-based roles and getting pregnant may be the most challenging change to their lives as students. Within this background, it is important to extend the boundaries of existing knowledge on this issue so that certain policy considerations can be made to offer the appropriate support to the students.

Research Questions

- How have the lives and well-being of Muslim female university students changed since their marriage?
- What specific experiences of marriage, challenges, and issues are they faced with?
- What forms of support do the students require in relation to balancing married and students' lives?
- How do they see their future and how do they think their married lives can be improved to facilitate their future plans?

Expected results

This study is expected to produce crucial information regarding how Muslim female students in southern Thailand who have married while pursuing their studies live their lives, including what kind of support they receive from people around them in conducting their family lives and how they juggle between marriage and studies. The study also aims to review forms of social support universities are providing and can provide for female students living in these situations of being married while pursuing undergraduate studies.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative data collection method by conducting in-depth

interviews with six respondents.

Setting: The university student whose hometown is located in the area of the southern border provinces of Thailand where Muslim are a majority. These included Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

Key informants: A purposive sampling method is used to identify the primary participants for the study. The inclusion criteria for selecting a respondent include 1) female Muslim 2) female university student pursuing undergraduate study 3) married for at least six months prior to the interview or had been married (and currently unmarried) for a time before the interview and 4) voluntarily takes part in the study.

Research process: 1) revise the research title and research questions, 2) review the literature relating to research methodology, feminist theory, religious context of people in deep south Thailand, 3) access the key informants using a snowballing technique, 4) inform participants about the research project and ask them to sign an informed consent form after they have understood and agreed to participate in the research, and 5) conduct in-depth interview and analyze the data.

Protection of human subject

Project was submitted for ethical approval to the ethics committee of Prince of Songkla University. Participants' consent was obtained both verbally and through the signing of informed consent forms.

Results

Demographic data

The participants were six female Muslim students: one was from a private university and four from a public government university. The age of participants was between 20 and 22 years old. Regarding their family background, three participants were living with their parents, one participant was living with her mother and another with her father and yet another with her grandmother. Four participants' families earned wages and two participant's families were self-employed.

Relating to love affair, one participant was arranged for marriage and five

participants had relationships before deciding to get married. Three situations brought female student into Islamic married, personal willingness, pregnancy from unprotected sexual relation, and the awareness of sin from breaking religious rule of having love affair. One participant married in her last year in high school and five participants married while they were at the university. Thus far, the participants have been married for one to seven years. Four participants, who married during their studies at the university, experienced visiting Malaysia and expressed, “Malaysia is a model of a Muslim country.”

Context of study

Setting

Three southernmost provinces of Thailand



Participants' backgrounds

Case 1

The respondent was a third year student from a private university in Hatyai City. However she was originally from the Narathiwat province. Her extended family members include her parents and grandparents. In her family, her father played the role of a family leader and was a key decision maker. She met her husband when she was a second year student while he was a fourth year student. After one year of knowing

each other, they decided to marry. She shares that the reason for her decision to marry was because she feared that she and her boyfriend might commit pre-marital sexual relation. It was a sin (“Sinar”) in the teaching of Islam and she mentioned that,

“...I thought having a boyfriend and having a romantic (sexual) relation is a serious sin so I decided to marry.”

After marriage, she felt comfortable to think openly and felt that the relationship was acceptable by religious teaching. She was happier and experienced the acceptance from people around her. She felt she has the freedom to live together with her husband and no longer had to think about restrictions put by her family about having romantic relationship.

“...After I got married, I felt more relaxed with my relationship [with my husband]. We can now hold hands; my husband is now looking after me instead of my parents. He plans and decides things for me, including giving me economic support. From my side, as a wife, I have a duty to support him, too.”

Regarding the responses of the people around her, the participant found that not everyone understood her decision to marry. As a female Muslim, she wished the society can be more open about giving opportunities to those who wish to marry to follow religious teachings. Marriage is not a barrier to fulfill their studies. She has faith in Allah, as well as being a learner to study worldly knowledge. As she mentioned,

“...I hope that people in this society will become more open-minded...after marriage (Nee Kah) I can continue my study and live a normal life,”

She closed her interview by sharing the plan for her future:

“I wish to have a good future after my graduation. I will be complete when I start my own family with two children. I will not use contraception during my study. In case I become pregnant and have a baby, it will not be considered sinful anymore. I will not continue higher study...”

Case 2

Ill-La was a fourth year student of the Faculty of Management Science. She came from a middle class family. She has been married for one year and worked as an internet idol, model, cosmetic products reviewer etc. She spent her earnings from work on herself and her family, as well as her younger brother whom she supports while studying abroad. As a public figure, she travelled to join campaigns. She found that to be a Muslim working woman was not easy. Many people observed, monitored, and criticized her. People posted her pictures with positive and negative comments. These experiences increased when her works became popular. She thought that she needed to move on with her career so she could fulfill her dream. She met her husband, a man from Yala province who completed his degree from Indonesia. After having a relationship as “brother-and-sister” for seven months, they both agreed to get married.

When the news of their planned marriage spread to the public, the responses were both agreeable and disagreeable. The disagreement came from her friends, teachers in university, both of Muslim and Buddhist backgrounds, and online fan club. On the other hand, her supporters were from those who believe that her action demonstrated that she was a good Muslim follower. She expressed that,

“Many people questioned me about marrying too early. Why didn’t I delay my marriage so that I could enjoy myself or spend more time with my parents? They really don’t know that I have been working and supporting my family for years...some friends and teachers said I was still young to marry...in fact I was nearly twenty-five years old.”

In her opinion, after she got married, she had a higher sense of life’s satisfaction. However, she had to take more responsibilities since being a wife required a lot of adapting and learning. She felt that her husband had played a big role in supporting her work and studies. She accepted that she acted as a leader when they worked together outside. For example, her husband had been working as her assistant and she paid him per assignment based on a project. When they were at home, they had equal share on decision making,

“My husband was very supportive. He drove me to study, work, organize a project, prepare advertisement and carry heavy things. These were the most important

reasons for me to finally decide [to marry him]. I couldn't run everything on my own. I had to travel long distances. I used to drive for work in a neighboring province and come back very late at night alone. I realized that if I had hired a male worker, it couldn't have guaranteed my safety. Then I'd better have a husband of my own and hire him."

For the future life, Ill-La would love to both continue her higher education, as well as run her own business, but the business is her first priority.

Case 3

Nina was a fourth year student of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. When she was young, she lived with her grandmother because her parents moved to Malaysia for work. After her grandmother died, her parents came back to Thailand and she lived with them until she got married. She met her boyfriend via online media. He had already graduated and was three years older than her. They had a relationship as boyfriend-girlfriend for one year and then decided to marry.

After getting married, she continued the last year of her studies and graduated as planned. During her studies, her husband supported her studies and assisted in housework. She planned to delay having a baby in the near future. Both she and her husband dreamt of continuing with their master's degrees and starting a family business. She also wishes to work with the government.

Case 4

Fatima was a third year student of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. She has a boyfriend since her first year in high school. Her father was a Muslim and her mother was a Buddhist. After seven years of having a boyfriend, she decided to marry him during her first year in the university. She felt pressured by her family to marry and she felt that her family had been influenced by the opinions of people in the community around her. She believed that people around her had gossiped about her behavior of going out with her boyfriend and she felt compelled to enter into the marriage.

Fatima was pregnant a few months after her marriage and while she was still

studying. Her study conditions were not suited for pregnant women. For example, to go between classes, she had to walk to a new building, and she had to climb the stairs as the classroom was on the top floor. When her gestational period advanced, her teachers and friends sometimes hurt her feelings with their verbal remarks about her pregnancy. She had to work hard and sleep late to complete group work. Sometimes she missed her antenatal clinic appointment in a public hospital due to class schedules that conflicted with her appointment. This meant she had to visit a private clinic later in the day to have her health and baby checked up. She found that private clinics did not provide educational classes for mothers as compared to government hospitals. Eventually, she experienced pre-term labor at the gestational period of six months. After a month of semester break, she came back to the university to continue her studies.

She shared experience of being a new mother while being a student, which was a stressful time for her. She had symptoms of depression for two months. She kept the plan to complete her studies and her husband continued his plan to set up a family business. Based on her experience, she suggested that universities should provide a special clinic for pregnant students to receive necessary care and that they should increase sensitization programmes for lecturers and university students that will promote good healthcare for pregnant students.

Case 5

Aswanee was a third year student of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. She grew up in a broken family. Her mother divorced her father and remarried. She and her younger brother lived with their father. Her father married his second wife with four children. After the second wife died, he married the third time and moved to work in Malaysia. Aswanee was cared for by her stepgrandmother who convinced her to enter into an arranged marriage.

After getting married, Aswanee felt a strong conflict with her unloved husband. Her sexual relations with him was violent. She felt great suffering and helplessness. The longer the marriage, the greater the conflict she experienced with her husband and his family. With moral support from her father, she kept her studies in the university.

During her second year of study, she gave birth to her first baby. She had to leave her beloved son with her husband's family while she studied in another province. Her husband continued to work in Malaysia. The situation became worse when she discovered her husband's drug using habit and his neglect of religious teachings and values. Eventually, they ended up divorced. She remained in a difficult situation since she couldn't support herself while studying. Most of her allowances came from her father and her divorced husband. However, she still has dreams to find a good job after graduation and take care of her son.

Case 6

Suhai was a fourth year student. Her father died when she was in her last year in high school. She lived with her mother and younger brother. Without her father, her family was in poverty. When she finished high school, her mother convinced her to marry a son of her neighbor whose family had better economic status. She agreed to marry because it was her chance to receive support for pursuing her university degree.

After marriage, the couple moved to the city and stayed together. Staying away from their parents, her husband had more freedom. He entertained himself by drinking, going out at night, and having extra-marital affairs. She and her husband constantly argued and the arguments usually ended with physical abuse. She became ill with backbone disc injury. She kept her problems from her mother until one day, she found her husband with a new girl. They finally ended their husband-wife relations.

After a month, Suhai's ex-husband broke his relationship with his girlfriend because she was seeing another person. He wanted to resume his relationship with Suhai. When she refused, his passion turned to anger and he tried to force himself on her. Her normal life became disturbed and she was in panic and fear. She avoided to meet him and focused her attention on the last semester of her studies. She hoped that when she finishes her studies, she could move to another place and start a new life.

The main themes

Understanding and respect

There were several reasons that motivated the participants to marry. Each participant had her own explanation for marrying and different decision-making ability, i.e. some cases showed strong intention to this pathway, while some were influenced by external forces. Also the responses from surrounding people about the couples' choice to marry and about their married lives were both supportive and unsupportive. Only participants knew the best choices for their lives. As mentioned, many responses of people who had social contacts with the participants showed different understanding about the participants' issues. The study also showed how different people have different sensitivities to the situations of the participants' marriages. They have different degrees of awareness about the challenges and issues faced by the participants.

Life-context influences

From the six cases, it was shown that the context and meaning of each "married life" was different among the participants. However, marriage, as an observance of faith, is a consistent theme in each of the stories. Everyone aspired and attempted to be a good follower of the faith by legitimizing a romantic relationship through marriage. There were many difficulties, but everyone tried their best to reach the goal of practicing their faith.

The socio-economic status was another key word that clearly showed its impact to the lives of participants. It confirmed that there was status or class distinctions in society. The ideal status influenced people to access the belief of a better life. Female students in this study used the attempt for the space to stand. Another context clearly showed the power of being a good girl. Family system created the concept of a good girl. To be a good girl, she needs to fulfill the expectation (of marriage). The family expectations may devalue the daughter's dream for life. The cycle of expectation and control never ends until those who suffer learns and becomes empowered.

Emotional support is important

This theme emerged from the lesson learned that couples in both arranged marriages and voluntary marriages need support. The emotional support is important for every couple, including female Muslim students. The support can strengthen their confidence in the choice of marriage. It also resolves the tension of marital conflict and the multiple roles of being a wife, a student, and a daughter. Emotional support helps them go through barriers and nurture their spiritual growth. However, providing emotional support is not effective if the supporter has bias or prejudice. For example, belief, experience, and knowledge can influence the recipient. The study showed that a grandmother had her own belief and experience that living together for the period of time increases love among couples or having a baby helps reduce conflict between a husband and wife.

Social welfare services need to be revised

The data showed that female students had to move from the hometown for study. When the young couple stays away from their family in a complex society, they need support. Furthermore, some participants have strong conflicts that may risk their lives. They need extra protection from university guardians and some issues need laws that will protect the victims. In addition, there was a case of a pregnant student and mother who needed specific care for her pregnancy and the fetus. These health issues are not available in the normal health service of the university. To revise the health service that support every health dimension of women is important. Every choice that the women chooses needs to be heard by people in the university to promote a friendly policy for women.

In conclusion, case studies of female Muslim students extended my vision relating to female Muslim students. I have more awareness on their choices on marriage, processes of adaptation, barriers to health, and dreams to study. I gained a better understanding of their context. It is a crucial suggestion to public policy.

Researcher's Reflection

I started to research this issue from my personal interest. I was moved to work in the university campus, where Muslims are the majority, for one year. My workplace, the Faculty of Nursing, is the only faculty which offers a healthcare program. As a midwifery nurse and a lecturer, the stories of married and pregnant students during the period of their studies in the university is my concern. My perspectives on marriage and pregnancy are periods of difficulty, and it may become harder when things happen at the same time when one is completing her studies. In addition, to marry with the idea of faith in religious teaching is stay so far from my understanding as a non-Muslim practitioner that I have the eagerness to know how this kind of concept influences the life of young women in the multicultural context in the Deep South Thailand.

Throughout the journey of collecting data, it has broadened my view on the issue. The life picture of these married women was not so much of a mystery nor was it different compared to the general case of married women: happiness and suffering, peace and confliction, control and challenge, loss and win etc. However, the life stories of female Muslim illustrated me the spirit of hope and bravery, and perhaps the most important is the sense of spiritual growth. Listening to their stories, I found that women learn and become empowered when faced with a difficult situation. I found that every woman experienced self-empowering. Some reference papers mentioned that religion is a barrier or an influential factor to women's life, and I agree with it. However, I would like to express further what I learned from this study that is, wise women can go through it with her own intelligence. When the female Muslim students faced difficult life conditions, they turned back to the religious teaching on faith. Then these unexpected experiences were seen as a test for those who trust in God, and it also transformed to a challenge. It seemed like every religious world teaching has a source of hidden treasure. Wise faith is a keyword for those who seek for the truth.

I also have the feeling of appreciation and a sense of value on experiences from the stories in this initial study. It really represented the voice of those who proved their faith on religious teaching, as well as the voice of women who fought for their dreams and sought for space and opportunity for better life. These stories and lessons will be

shared to the public with the aim of educating nursing students on gender justice and women's health, raising social awareness, and revising the policy of providing social welfare for university students. In terms of improving the lives of women, I also suggest the need for the university to provide friendly healthcare service to this group in campus.

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Femininity in Everyday Life: Experiences of Malay Women in Malaysia

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Abstract

The meaning of femininity varies in different societies. This study explores the meaning and understanding of femininity in everyday life. The data for this study were collected using the in-depth interview technique with twelve Malay Muslim women in Malaysia. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique. After the interviews were transcribed, the data was analyzed to identify common themes in the meaning of femininity among these women. Two main themes were identified: essentialist view of femininity and traditional gender roles and spaces. These themes showed that most participants have an essentialist view of femininity. They also expressed empowerment as an important part of femininity in contemporary society. Their understanding and experiences show how emphasized femininity can be articulated as a form of empowered or liberated femininity.

Keywords: emphasized femininity, Malaysia, gendered space

Introduction

Scholars have given various meaning to the term “femininity.” The meaning may vary not only in different societies but also within people who come from different community in a society (Gimlin, 1996). The meaning of femininity depends very much on everyday practices and knowledge (Smith, 1988). Women are defined in relation to men and similarly femininity is defined in relation to masculinity. The characteristics of femininity is seen as the “other” (Michaelson & Aaland, 1976, p. 252)

Femininity can be defined as

...a social organization of relations among women and between women and men which is mediated by texts, that is, materially fixed forms of printed writing and images (Smith, 1988, p. 39).

Femininity can be seen as a public discourse used by people who act as the agents of patriarchy (Smith, 1988). Women however are not passive products of socialization. Even though women may be socialized to use and accept these texts, they also participate actively to reproduce, resist, and reproduce it differently (Smith, 1988). Thus, the discourse of femininity in everyday life is an ongoing and evolving social organization.

Connell (1987) explained that there are multiple femininities in a society and emphasized femininity refer to the most valued form of femininity in a society. Emphasized femininity describes social relations that involve subordination to men, and accommodates their interests and desires. In most societies, a woman is expected to be caring, obedient and self-sacrificing. Women are often less individualised than men and have personalities based on relations and connections (Michaelson & Aaland, 1976). Connell (1987) argued that unlike masculinities in a society, femininities cannot be organized hierarchically because femininity is always constructed in relation to masculinity, hence, no one femininity can take a dominant position. Another scholar, Schippers (2007) used the term “hegemonic femininity” to recognize that femininity can be organized hierarchically (Charlebois, 2011). The type of femininity that has ascendancy over all other types of femininities is called hegemonic femininity. Alternative femininities, on the other hand, are femininities which resist hegemonic gender relations while pariah femininities are femininities which are seen as contaminating the hegemonic gender relations (Schippers, 2007).

Beginning the 1990s, discourses of femininity included a hybrid form which embodied some elements of traditional femininity and a newfound sense of agency. Therefore, women showcase a confident and glamorous femininity where they negotiate around traditional feminine ideals while being empowered to be self-reliant and enjoy personal freedom. With these changes the relationship between traditional femininity and oppression has become more muddled (Budgeon, 2013). These new forms of femininities are able to incorporate some masculine attributes but remain

feminine by not challenging the hegemonic masculinity. These new forms of femininities are symbols of cultural development and social progress. It also shows the success of various equality strategies in a society (MacRobbie, 2009 cited in Budgeon, 2013). With the many advancement and changes in the world, this generation of women experienced many opportunities which were not available for women in the previous generations. They have more access to education and employment. These new forms of femininities are called empowered and individualized femininity (Budgeon, 2013, 2015).

Area of the Study

Malaysia is a multi-cultural and multi-religious country in Southeast Asia. In 2016, the population of Malaysia was estimated at 31.7 million people with 89.7 per cent Malaysian citizens. Among the Malaysian citizens, 68.6 per cent are Bumiputeras¹, 23.4 per cent are Chinese, 7.0 per cent are Indians and 1.0 per cent of people are of other ethnic groups (Department of Statistics, 2016). The population of Malaysia consists of various ethnic groups, who practice various religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism and others. The Malay Muslim community is the majority in Malaysia. The Malaysian Constitution states that Islam is the official religion of Malaysia but other religions can be practiced in Malaysia (Fernando, 2006).

Methods

The data for this study were collected from twelve young adult Malay Muslim women. The average age of the sample was 26.5 years old (SD=2.35). They were highly educated with at least a bachelor's degree. Five participants were pursuing graduate degrees (Masters or Doctorate), four participants were employed, two were

¹ The term *Bumiputera* does not refer to one single ethnic group but is a political coinage. It is a word of Sanskrit origin and means "son of the soil." It is a term used to differentiate people who are native to the Malay Peninsula compared to those who migrated to the peninsular during the colonization people even if they were born in Malaysia (such as people of Indian and Chinese origin). *Bumiputera* consists of Malays, *Orang Aslis*, Malaysian Thais, Portuguese (mostly in Malacca) and natives from Sabah and Sarawak (Mason & Omar, 2003). As defined by the Malaysian Constitution, all Malays are Muslims.

homemakers and one participant was an entrepreneur. Data were collected using the in-depth interview technique. Data were collected by the researcher with a research assistant. Some of the questions asked to the participants were as follows: What are characteristics of a woman? What are characteristics of a Muslim woman? What are the characteristics of a Malay woman? What values are important to a woman in everyday life? What are the challenges they face in everyday life?

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. After transcription, the researcher went through the transcripts for familiarization before coding the data. After a two rounds of coding, the researcher identified themes relevant to the objectives of the study. Two main themes identified in the data analysis are discussed in the following sections.

Essentialist view of femininity

Almost all the participants had a strong belief on the essentialist nature of women. Most participants described some characteristics as inherently women's. They felt that these characteristics are seen in all women and are universal. They talked about how physical appearance is very important to women and also being gentle is an important aspect of femininity.

***Lemah-lembut* (gentle)**

Being *lemah-lembut* has been identified as one of the most important characteristics of a woman by all the participants. Ten of them used the term "*lemah-lembut*" while two others described that women need to be gentle, soft-spoken, and patient.

Mastura, a 27-year-old nurse, explained:

The norm is that a woman must be gentle. That is what the society says... that is what I was told when I was growing up. Even though there are women who are not gentle, being gentle is very common for women.

Nurul shared a similar opinion.

Naturally, a woman is gentle. We are made that way but it is also important for us to be gentle. If we are not gentle, then what are we? Are we still women?

***Lemah lembut tapi...* (Gentle but...)**

Among participants who highlighted the importance of being gentle, some also explained the need to be independent while being gentle. Participant, Yati, (26 years old, married with a child) for example felt that women need to be independent to reduce their husbands' family "burden."

When you say femininity, what comes to my mind is being gentle...She can be gentle but, should not be very dependent on her husband. She is responsible to manage the family so she must have her own money. [My] husband might have other commitments and responsibility...So I can manage the family and to reduce his burden [by being financially independent].

When asked if independence is important to her as a person, Yati added that it is, but as a wife, she needs to obey her husband. Her independence is contingent on how much her husband would allow her to do or be. Her independence is bounded by her need to obey her husband and attend to his needs.

Another participant, Minah, a PhD candidate, had a similar view.

Femininity means you have to be gentle, but at the same time, be independent. Independence is important in today's world. As a mother I need to be able to take my children everywhere, I can't depend on my husband. By doing this, I can reduce his commitment and responsibilities.

Ani, a 25-year-old nutritionist, explained in her interview:

A woman...she has to be gentle...but she cannot be gentle all the time. If there are situations where she has to be strict, she needs to be strict...If there is a need, she can take over some responsibilities. It all depends on the situation, but she has to continue being gentle.

While women understand the importance of empowerment and independence in

their daily life, it only showed some agency on the part of the participants. To them, their independence is important to be a more capable wife and mother to support their husbands.

Physical Appearance

Most participants identified that physical appearance is every important part of being a woman. Ani explained the importance of appearance to a woman.

First and foremost is her appearance. That is very important. I think one must look clean, neat and decent. This is very important because we are judged based on our looks.

Another participant, Noraini, a teacher explained that,

Appearance is of course very important but we have to make sure that we dress modestly. All women want to look attractive but modesty is very important in Islam. People might do this differently...of course it is up to them.

Rosna, a 28 year old human resource executive, explained the importance of being modest and following the teachings of Islam to avoid being stigmatized and criticized by others.

As a woman, we are often judged for our looks. If you wear revealing or very tight fitting clothes, others might judge you for not following the teachings of Islam. At the same time, if we don't wear trendy clothes, others might judge us as being old-fashioned or extremists.

Lina, a 29-year-old entrepreneur explained:

Regardless of whether you like it or not, our appearance is very important especially for someone like me who is an entrepreneur. I meet so many people as part of my work and the first impression is very important in business. If people do not have positive impression on me when we meet, it is hard to do business.

Yati expressed a similar opinion.

Our appearance must be suitable for the occasion. If we do not dress according to the place or occasion, we will be out of place and will lose our confidence. People may talk about it and gossip.

Women not only expressed the importance of their appearance in everyday life, but also that they are constantly being judged based on how they dressed or looked. Most participants expressed the importance of modesty in their dressing.

Traditional Gender Roles and Space

Participants identified many gender roles which conform to the traditional gender roles of women in contemporary society. In addition to this, they identified various spaces in their house which are gendered.

Motherly

Similarly, all participants emphasized the role of a woman as a mother. Most participants highlighted that it is important for a woman to be responsible, caring and patient. In their discussion, participants associated these virtues to being a mother or being motherly. According to Azura,

A woman must be responsible...if she is a wife, she must do her duties as a wife. If she is a mother, she must do her duties as a mother. She must be able to care and love her family.

Similarly, Sheila explained that,

A woman can care and is very loving. That is why she can be a mother. As a mother you need to be able to take care of others.

Some felt that to be an ideal woman, one needs to be motherly and should experience motherhood. They felt that motherhood makes a woman a “woman” and is

seen as important part of being a woman.

Kitchen as a female space

In this study, kitchen is seen as an important space for the presentation of femininity. More than half of the participants explained that being in the kitchen is an important part of being a woman. They do not see this as a space where they are oppressed, but they do show some resentment towards the need to be in the kitchen, often pointing out they were expected to be there regardless of their high qualification. Also highlighting that, this is not expected for a man. Farah, a 29-year-old student, explained that

In [my] religion [Islam], cooking and being in the kitchen is not a woman's work. However, it has become a norm that cooking and doing work in the kitchen is a woman's work. No matter how high your qualifications are, you are expected to be in the kitchen.

Iza, 25 years old, also had a similar view that regardless of a woman's achievement, she is expected to be in the kitchen. She highlighted how this is emphasized in her family and society. Another participant, Yati, also explained that being in the kitchen is important for a woman. She felt that women must be willing to work in the kitchen even if they are not good at cooking.

Other parts of the house were seen as a male space or a neutral space. The living room is seen as a male space by some participants. This is interesting because they acknowledged that both male and female family members spent time in this space for leisure and work but it is still seen as a male space. One participant explained that this may be due to the fact that the living room is often the more "public" space in the house while other spaces such as the bedroom and kitchen are seen as private spaces. The living room is seen as a "public" space because it would be the space that is most often visited by people who do not live in the house. Sometimes, women retreated to other parts of the house, either the bedroom or the kitchen, when there are visitors, particularly male visitors, in the house. This is seen as re-emphasising that living room is a male space.

The meaning of a space is socially constructed by the social actors (Scruton & Watson, 1998). In many contemporary societies, public space is often seen as a space suitable for men and associated with masculinity. A private space, on the other hand, is often associated with femininity even though the overall power relations in society are often reiterated in the private space (Rose, 1990). Home is often seen as a private space but the everyday practices and social relations at home often resonates far beyond the household (Blunt & Varley, 2004). Therefore, understanding gendered space at home is important in understanding the location of women in other spaces. Kitchen has long been seen as not only a feminine space but a space of feminine subjection (Floyd, 2004; Mallett, 2004). It is seen as a space where women toil to satisfy the need of people further up in the social hierarchy (Floyd, 2004). Hence, the need to be in the kitchen is a way of showing the position and the location of women in social hierarchy.

Discussion and Conclusion

Participants' discussions on femininity were based on their views and experiences in everyday life. Most discussions by the participants showed that they believed that women are or need to be gentle, caring, and self-sacrificing. There is much emphasis on domestic and emotional labor done or expected by a woman, i.e. she must care for her husband or baby, must be supportive to her family, and must manage issues in the household. This is very similar to the notion of emphasized femininity in most societies. These characteristics are seen as important for them to play their role as a carer, either as a mother or a wife. Their discussion also showed strong elements of essentialism. Many participants explained that women are naturally "like that" or "that's what women do" particular when talking about the importance of appearance to a woman and her responsibility as a carer.

...essentialism becomes the view that there are properties essential to women, in that any woman must necessarily have those properties to be a woman at all. So defined, essentialism entails a closely related view, universalism: that there are some properties shared by or common to all women - since without those properties they could not be women in the first place (Stone, 2004, p. 18).

In addition to many characteristics associated with emphasized femininity, about one third of the participants also mentioned that a woman should not be “too needy.” She has and need to be independent financially. Mobility is also important to women. To some extent, this showed that they believed that women should be empowered and independent. On the surface, this looked like the participants were challenging the notion of emphasized femininity, i.e. the commonly accepted and most preferred norms of being a woman. However, after discussing the importance of independence, the participants also added that it was important not to be very dependent on the husband to ease the burden carried by their husband mainly in terms of financial burden.² While independence, particularly financial independence, was important to women, these women saw it as a way of “serving” the need of their husbands.³ Therefore, even though the women talked about empowerment and independence, they felt that it was to be done to support the patriarch of the family and they clearly articulated that their role as a wife required them to ease the burden of the man in the house. Here, women’s independence and empowerment helped to accommodate the interests of the man in the family hence it was also a form of emphasized femininity. Similar explanations were given related to mobility of women.

In addition to this, women also clearly articulate various experiences and views which showed how spaces in their houses are gendered. They identified the kitchen as a feminine space and expressed the need to be present in that space. It is interesting that these women do not see the need to be in the kitchen, specifically to cook, but often talk about the need to enter or be in the kitchen. It is a feminine space and

² Yati wanted to be financially independent because she did not want to burden her husband who already has financial commitments. Similarly, Minah explained that women need to be independent so that they can do some of the tasks “outside” home to ease the burden of her husband.

³ I am not arguing that women should be dependent on their husband, but these participants often discuss the need to be more independent to help or serve their husbands and explain this as their main responsibility in marriage. They do not discuss the need for the husband to contribute to tasks which are traditionally seen as “women’s work” such as cooking, cleaning, and caring even though they explained that they are sometimes over-burdened by these responsibilities. Farah, a 29-yearold participant, explained, “...men usually are not serious or responsible when it comes to house work.” Women handle the whole burden of housework. Here, their independence and empowerment are meant to fulfill the needs of the husbands. Therefore, being self-sacrificing for the well-being of the family is seen as an important characteristic of femininity by the participants.

women should be seen there.

Femininity, as expressed and experienced by the participants, shows many elements of emphasized femininity with some elements of empowered or liberated femininity. However, it is important to be cautious when interpreting the elements, which show empowerment, because these elements are not in the truest sense a form of empowerment. Budgeon (2013) in her article on new femininities cautioned that many forms of new femininities may be articulated as a form of liberated or empowered femininity, but in reality, these femininities are just another manifestation of emphasized or hegemonic femininity. This can be clearly seen in the views on independence by the participants. These experiences and the views expressed by the participants give some empirical evidence to Budgeon's (2013) critique.

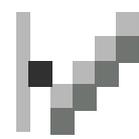
The experiences of the participants clearly show that women's understanding of femininity follows rather closely to the most cherished form of femininity in their society. They are highly qualified and some work as professionals; therefore, they do feel independence and empowerment are important to women. They, however, still see this as a way of serving and supporting the man in their family. This again is a manifestation of emphasized femininity in everyday life.

Significance and Limitations

Scholars have highlighted the lack of study and theorizing related to femininity as compared to masculinity (Budgeon, 2013). Therefore, this study is an effort to explore femininity in an Asian community. It gives some empirical evidence to the various types of femininity discussed by Connell (1987) and Budgeon (2013). One of the limitations of this study is that it used a sample of highly qualified women living in an urban area. Furthermore, it only explored views of women. Future studies need to focus on both men and women. Studies should also explore the socio-economic and cultural differences in Malaysia and how that is associated with the meaning of femininity in everyday life.

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Theme

4

**Gender, Migration,
and Culture**

Gender and Migration: Asian Women on the Move

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Background: A Gendered Migration Regime in Asia

Gender is fluid. As one of the ways humans create and perpetuate social differences, it should be understood as a structure that organizes and signifies power at levels above the individual (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Arguing that gender relations are present in all types of institutions, Connell (1987) develops a concept of a 'gender regime,' referring to 'the historically produced state of play in gender relations in a given institution.' A gender regime is an aggregate of ideological and material practices that act to construct images of masculinity and femininity in a given social context and to sustain forms of gender inequalities persisting through complex institutions.

Previous studies show that there are fundamental differences in the migration of men and women (Lim, 1995; Simon and Brettell, 1986; Tienda and Booth, 1992) and the migration process is gendered and sex-selective (Morokvasic, 1983; Pedraza, 1991). Gender differences arise from the subordinate status of women in familial, societal and cultural structures of both the sending and receiving countries. As Grieco and Boyd (2003:11) argue, 'women's status acts as a "filter," gendering structural forces and influencing the migratory and settlement experiences of men and women differently'. The process of migration is certainly constrained by social structures both in the country of origin and destination. Even though the international migration process and the immigration laws and regulations of states seem gender-neutral on the surface, value judgements based on stereotypical images of men and women and the traditional gender roles in societies are embedded in

administration practices concerning the control of migration flows.

As Westwood and Phizacklea (2000, p. 15) rightly observe, “crossing borders has profound effects upon individuals but also upon the ways in which national affiliations and the nation-state are understood.” Under the gendered migration regime, political considerations and the strategic intervention of the state have prominently influenced the current system of international migration in Asia. More importantly, under these structural determinations, migrants also maneuver strategically to further their interests throughout the migratory process, from the decision of migration to the choice of occupations in the labor market and to settlement in the country of destination. Analyzing the process of migration from a gendered perspective enables us to move between multiple levels of analysis and provide a more interactive account of structure and agency, of the private and the public, and of the local and the global in the international migration system.

Thematic Issues: Structural Vulnerability and Empowerment

Under the system of international migration, allocative and authoritative resources available to individuals are differently distributed and structurally circumscribed. When we consider differing knowledge of the rules and access to resources between women and men in their pre-migration stages, a potential migrant becomes dependent on structurally conditioning factors which differentially distribute the capacity to facilitate outcomes. Therefore, unequal distributions of social knowledge and power as well as the rules and resources between women and men make women opt for the different strategic use of resources.

However, the studies go beyond the mere ‘victim’ approach and question the ways in which migrant women make strategic choices when taking a decision on migration and resist unequal power relations, through the negotiation of their roles and positions. The studies, therefore, view migrant women’s labor or marriage relations as place in which social-spatial practices are constantly (re)constructed by migrant women themselves through negotiations with or resistances to the matrix

of structural constraints rather than as the static space of oppression and sacrifices under the system of global capitalism and international migration.

This research team includes three case studies from Indonesia, the Philippines and Cambodia. The case studies provide gender-sensitive insights on policies and institutions of international migration from the perspectives of countries of origin. First, Elizabeth Dewi examines gender differential patterns and use of remittances of Indonesian domestic workers, focusing on the empowerment and poverty reduction of women returnees and migrant families in Central Java, Indonesia. The case study aims to (1) examine the tremendous impact of migration on the community and local development of Indonesian Female Domestic Workers (FDWs) and (2) explore the ways in which female domestic workers use the money to empower themselves and to get out from the poverty level.

Second, Melanie Reyes scrutinises regulatory governance and women's agency in marriage migration in the Philippines. The case study aims to (1) look at the existing regulatory governance framework that affects the facilitation of marriage migration and (2) critically analyze the issues and challenges in the implementation of these regulations vis-a-vis women's exercise of their agency.

Last, but not least, Davy Top examines current situations and policies of women's labour migration in Cambodia. The case study aims to (1) examine the situation of international labour migration from Cambodia and challenges faced by the Cambodian government and Cambodian women migrant workers and (2) discuss the existing regulations, laws and international agreement governing Cambodian women in international labour migration.

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Gender Differential Patterns and Use of Remittances of Indonesian Female Domestic Workers: Empowerment and Poverty Reduction

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Introduction

Current momentum around women's economic empowerment offers huge scope for bringing about real changes in women's lives. But earning an income or having access to credit cannot be assumed to bring automatic benefits for women. We need to ask critical questions about how increased access to resources can be translated into changes in the strategic choices that women are able to make – at the level of the household and community, as well as at work. What are the terms in which women gain access to resources – are these empowering or exploitative? And what are the impacts of women's greater access to resources on gender relations and norms more broadly?

This case study explores the dominant analysis taking hold around women's economic empowerment and highlights critical issues that remain as yet on the margins of debate and action. It seeks to promote a nuanced understanding of the gendered barriers that prevent some women from benefiting from economic opportunities or from being empowered despite access to these opportunities. It goes on to suggest a practical starting point for overcoming some of these barriers: tackling the “double burden” of paid work and care work that is shouldered by so many women.

Background

Current international migration provides evidence of a growing complexity in perspectives, practices and experiences. The “old” or “traditional” patterns, destinations and problems are substituted by “new” or “contemporary” ones, especially related to diversification, informalization and feminization of migration. As the numbers of

migrants are dominated by women, it is clear enough that female migration is linked to new global economic transformation of labor force globally. In this situation, both young and married women move independently to perform as primary breadwinners for their families. The increasing numbers of this group of women have led to various analysis showing that female migration differ in terms of background, motivation and impact.

Despite the higher number of female migration, attention to the feminization of migration does not lead to a gendered analysis, although it is deeply embedded in social and institutionalized gender structures facilitating or constraining their migration (Sorensen, 2005). In many cases, the feminization of migration maintained the position of men in transnational families, although men may now be the ones left behind, receiving remittances from female partners or mothers working abroad, and having to attain new family or household functions. Depending on cultural values and family configuration, both male and female coping strategies may include anything from altered gender identities to the reassertion of traditional gender roles (Dewi, 2010). As a result, both male and female tend to maintain patriarchal structures within their families and communities. Thus, in relation to the issue of remittances, gender and the position of the migrant within the family and community are important factors influencing the amount, pattern, function, use and beneficiaries of it (Sorensen, 2005).

This case study aims to: (1) examine the tremendous impact of migration on the community and local development of Indonesian Female Domestic Workers (FDWs), and (2) explore the ways in which female domestic workers use the money to empower themselves and to get out of the poverty level.

The fundamental focus of this case study is the validation of women's subjective experiences. This study is dedicated to improving the lives of women and men and it focuses on disempowered women and men in order to give them a voice. As such, it is a qualitative research philosophically and methodologically. Focus group interviews with 10 FDWs, who are in the middle of contract break or have returned from overseas in Central Java, highlight several nonfinancial issues of gender relations, power, and poverty, whether women are empowered and able to benefit from the increased value of their time. This case study also provides interventions conducted by

a women association that aims to increase women's income-earning capabilities to improve the productivity of women and even to reduce the poverty level in a long period of time.

Findings

The focus group interviews found that a number of traditional gender patterns have been shifted by the migration of FDWs. However, the benefits of their migration are still interpreted ambivalently by their husbands, their community and also themselves.

The recipients

Not very surprisingly, the interviews confirm that husbands were the single largest recipients of remittances, as found in other studies (Afsar 2005; Gamburd 2002; Oishi 2005). In these cases, then it can be assumed that FDWs are still practising the traditional gender pattern: that women are subordinate to men and men are the head of the family. As Berman (1998) points out, women's roles, in general, are strongly attached to those of men. Despite their full-time work and level of income, women's roles are wife, mother, homemaker and worker, who only adds to the family income. In many situations, women are not recognized for their own potential as an employee or wage earner, only because their identity is based on their social affiliation to men.

As Utomo (2005) argues, it is very common that many women (and men) believe that if women engage in paid work, they have to settle for lower wages and other disadvantageous conditions. In this situation, the husband is always considered as the primary breadwinner, while the wife is only considered as the financial beneficiary of her husband's income. This traditional gender norm has been portrayed as an Indonesian norm produced through:

- social norms of Indonesian society;
- local and national government policies;
- local and national government programs; and
- local and national education curricula.

For example, FDWs were taught to devote their lives to the well-being of the family by submission, silence and accepting their fate, whatever it may be, especially in regard to their relationship with their husbands. Each FDW is expected, including by her mother, to be a loyal supporter of her husband by accepting (*nrimo*), self-sacrificing (*prihatin*) and accommodating herself to the fate of womanhood (*nasib kaum perempuan*), as well as to the nature of being a woman (*kodrat perempuan*) without question. In other words, “patience is the ultimate weapon of every good wife,” including FDWs.

However, the interviews show that the gender ideologies that considered women as good wives, who help their husbands by supplementing the household budget, has been continuously reinterpreted and mobilised (Ogaya 2006). It demonstrates that the ideal married woman as “mother at home” and “good wife who helps the husband financially” cannot be easily accommodated in the context of the overseas migration of domestic workers because of different reasons and situations:

- a) the wives earned much more than their husbands;
- b) in some cases, the husbands were unemployed;
- c) in some cases, the husbands chose to rely on the money their wives earned abroad to finance their daily needs.

Despite the above reasons, the wives still had to struggle to maintain a good marital relationship with their husbands and agreed to send their money to their husbands in order for the latter to keep their position as the head of their family. Unfortunately, sometimes the husbands were not very keen on thrift or saving and some of the FDWs complained of misuse of the remittance by their husbands (Afsar 2005; Daulay 2001; Oishi 2005; Sukamdi et al. 2001). As a result, the level of trust between the husband and the wife is questioned, as described by Rohana, a mother of five from two marriages who went twice to Saudi Arabia:

I commended to believe 100% in a husband. If possible, it is better and safer to send the money to someone that is trustable, such as your parent.

However, the idealized concept that men should have the dominant profile in the

household or community, is still kept by many FDWs using several different strategies. While a husband was absent through separation, for example, the women chose a male figure, such as a male teacher, through whom to send their money to their family.

The financial decision-making process

The interviews also show that women domestic workers are still trapped in an ideal image of woman as “queen of the household,” who holds a position as the manager of family finances (Rosenberg 2003). They are still expected to make important decisions related to the household and the family, and be able to handle all of the problems including a financial crisis in the family. Some of participants clearly mentioned that they were the ones who decided the budget for their family in the letter that they sent together with the cheque.

It can be seen that FDWs gained confidence and played a more active role in the decision-making process related to the money that they earned overseas. They had more power to make decisions about household financial matters that have important implications for their decision to either continue their migration or not. For instance, they were able to recommend ideas related to the purchasing and selling of land, the construction of a house or additional rooms, buying livestock and furniture, borrowing money and their children’s education. In addition, these women were able to develop a strong sense of responsibility for making ends meet on a daily basis, as well as for sustaining the family in the long term (Oishi 2005).

At the same time, in the daily life back in Indonesia, husbands are the ones who control the household finances. As a consequence, the wives in many cases did not know how much money the household had while they were overseas. Thus, the financial decision-making process was definitely not their sphere. They did not have any power and control over the money that they earned by working long hours in many unpleasant situations overseas for several years.

In this situation, the migration of FDWs did not necessarily initiate a change in their role and status as women, wife and “manager of the household.” The deployment of these wives to labour markets was part of a strategy by their husbands to maintain the status quo of their wives in the household structure by controlling the access to

all or even part of the cash income that their wives earned overseas. In other words, it was designed to sustain the patriarchal structures and unequal status by the husbands, the community, and sometimes by the wives as well (Hugo 2002a). For instance, the wives were really afraid to change this norm since they would be considered “bad wives” and *kualat* (accursed by their husbands).

The breadwinner role in the household

The group interviews affirm the negotiation process of the conventional construction of primary breadwinners in the household among FDWs, as discussed in many different studies conducted mainly in Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (Daulay 2001; Gamburd 2000a, 2000b, 2002; Sobritchea 2007).

There are a series of situations that might affect the gender relations between husband and wife in the marital relationship, which were associated with the issue of breadwinner. On the one hand, both husband and wife had to face the reality that the wife might, for the first time, receive a large amount of money for her work and might expect to have control over what they do with that money. At the same time, the wife has high expectations of the husband to keep his position as head of the household by sending the money regularly to him, and hoping that he would manage the money properly for the present and the future. The wife still considers herself as a supporter of her husband by providing an additional income for the household.

On the other hand, this reality has threatened the masculine role and identity of the husband as the primary breadwinner in the household. Despite part of the fact that the wives went overseas due to the inability of the husbands to make ends meet on their wages as casual labourers, the wives are supposed to consider that their major reason for going overseas was not to try to get their families above the poverty line (Gamburd 2002). In this case, the wives were not encouraged to speak openly about their dissatisfaction with their lives or their husbands back in Indonesia, in a manner regarded as culturally, psychologically, legally and theologically inappropriate (Dzuhayatin 2001). Within this situation, it was very common that the husband became cynical about the money that his wife earned and viewed it as the “wife’s money” or “woman’s money” but relied on that money at the same time.

It is closely related to the norm of masculine breadwinning that remains rooted in Indonesia. As Lan (2006) points out, these domesticated husbands feel inferior because their gender identities are endangered by their wives making much more money than they do. To preserve a masculine image, some husbands use the terms “wife’s money” and “woman’s money” in order to retain a division and refute the assumption that they are financially dependent.

As discussed, remittances have often been associated with complex issues among the FDWs, their families and their communities. Although remittances can selectively relieve the poverty of the recipients and enable households’ and wider communities’ consumption and (perhaps) saving, it does not automatically empower them and/or build their capacity. FDWs have not gained empowerment in the sense of achieving total control of and responsibility for the money that they earn overseas since the recipients of the money in the households (mostly the husbands) tended to use the money in ways which generated a more traditional, patriarchal power structure in the following ways:

- a) it validated the husbands as administrators of the family patrimony;
- b) it provided greater opportunity to use – or invest - the money towards male endeavours; and
- c) it enabled a reclamation of the husbands’ role as the main breadwinner and the wife to return to her traditional domestic role (Garcia & Paiewonsky 2006).

Thus, the study also suggested that despite their sense of empowerment, some returned FDWs made efforts to remain as quietly domesticated as they used to be. This was partly because they were afraid of negative reactions from their household members and neighbours, who had an interest in maintaining the traditional patriarchal hierarchies and the existing social order. Ideally, the remittances would be able to help the returned FDWs to identify the constraints that they experienced in realising their basic rights and finding appropriate vehicles through which to strengthen their ability to overcome the cause of their exclusion and suffering.

It is important to acknowledge the fact that remittances were sent by many FDWs

who experienced different levels and types of maltreatment by their employers and various forms of institutionalized power - both in Indonesia and their destination countries. In this context, many of them had to send the “sweat and blood money” due to the oppression that they faced in their daily lives before, during, and after their work overseas.

The majority of returned FDWs and their families view the remittance as source of goods for daily consumption and reproduction, and not as a source of structural change. This issue becomes more complex when it comes to collective empowerment in relation to their engagement with social, economic and political life in their villages. The study has identified both positive and negative effects of remittances in terms of village development, directly or indirectly.

On the positive side:

- a) the community was advantaged by some returned FDWs who started their trading activities, such as small shops selling goods for daily consumption;
- b) since the majority of returning FDWs either built or renovated their houses, it created employment in construction sites;
- c) by having a rice-field or land, FDWs and their families could employ their neighbours on those fields based on mutual relationships, either by paying a certain amount of salary or dividing the harvest in certain proportions;
- d) the growth in ancillary services that potential FDWs need, has led to the growth of a huge recruitment industry that has arisen to provide information (which can be legitimate or fraudulent) on jobs, documents required, emigration procedures, and some brief training. Migrating workers also increase the demand for transportation, communication and remittance services and they fund consumer purchases (property, durable goods and non-durables) (Pyle 2006b).

On the negative side:

- a) remittances exacerbate income disparities in the region of origin, with remittance-receiving families and communities prospering while less fortunate neighbours do without;
- b) combined with excessive consumerism, they could also lead to remittance

- dependency in which households exceed their standard of living and become dependent on the remittances for a long period of time;
- c) remittances discourage the search for other income-generating activities, both among the female and male members of the communities;
 - d) since most the returned FDWs would like to spend their money on purchasing land or a house, this creates rising costs of land and housing in the community that affects both returned FDWs and non-migrant households.

Thus, combined with the lack of knowledge, education and resources mentioned above, it demonstrated that FDWs not only have little opportunity to manage their finances, but also have to deal with their guilty feelings in this complex situation, especially related to their gender roles as wives. In addition, there are only few formulations of plans and strategies by the community (or government) in support of developing the capacity and skills of its members, especially returning FDWs. From a few, *Paguyuban Peduli Buruh Migran dan Perempuan* or Association Concerning Migrant Workers and Women Seruni in sub-district of Sumbang, regency of Banyumas, is one of the community-based organisations (CBO) that assists potential or existing or returning FDWs in the process to:

- a) realise existing skills and develop potential;
- b) equip returning FDWs with skills and competencies which they would not otherwise have; and
- c) promote their ability to take responsibility for identifying and meeting their own and their families or their communities' needs.

Three women activists from Paguyuban Seruni explained directly and concisely that the protection of Indonesian migrant workers is needed to be initiated from the empowerment of women who are involved in the process. It should be realized that without empowerment, protection effort would be pointless. Narsidah, Lili and Sri are the examples of women individuals, former FDWs, who successfully managed to promote the concept of empowerment through their experiences, family and community.

According to Kabeer (1999) there are three main dimensions that are related to each other that influence the process of empowerment: resources, agency and achievements. In this study, the agency dimension is understood through a discussion about the process. These three dimensions are related to each other and influence the process of social change, which becomes a motivation for empowerment.

Resources

In accordance with Kabeer's (1999) explanation, resources are not an abstract concept but a dynamic concept and could be a movement mediator from a form of power to another form of power. This power is later distributed through several institutions and relations among societies. By looking at that explanation, these three activists from Paguyuban Seruni use their acquired positions to strengthen several decision-making processes, both internally and externally, which are related to the protection of migrant workers in their working environment. By increasing their ability, individually and institutionally, they can influence the authorities to find priority in policy-making at the grassroots level, sub-district, and even the higher level like regency.

Process

These women conducted several activities, such as negotiation, workshop, discussion and training, both individually and collectively, showing their commitment towards the protection of the migrant workers in their work environment. They stated that their life choices are to be directly involved in a series of power achievement which is called as power within. They learn to do a series of negotiation process, bargaining process and even protests to reach more beneficial position for the community that they represent and the migrant workers in several processes of decision making about their life. In accordance with the explanation from Kabeer (1999), the process that they are going through are based on the means, motivation and the purpose that they have in their daily life as part of the community or *paguyuban*. Through the explanations from the three activists from Seruni, we can see that the process is usually influenced by several conditions that hamper the institution or the community or

paguyuban, such as the issue of regeneration, lack of commitment, and lack of capacity to develop themselves and member of communities.

Achievement

Explanations on resources possessed and process experienced by the three activists from Paguyuban Seruni showed their abilities and potentials that contributed to their condition as it is today. They have enough awareness to state what they have achieved and what they still want to do, both individually and together with the community. Narsidah, Lili and Sri are women who have willingness and ability to free themselves and become more independent so they do not need to depend on other people to continue living their lives.

From these three women, we could see a relation between resources, process and achievement in a very active form. Actively and continually, they increase their own capacity, as in resources, to be able to increase their life process as individual and as a part of community. Through several activities, they question and re-evaluate their role and responsibility to be able to make changes in protecting the Indonesian migrant workers, which relate to the current condition and situation.

Kabeer (1999) explains that the three above mentioned dimensions: resources, process and achievement, have to be seen as a flow that influences one another. A change in one dimension will influence the other dimension. Instances in the achievement dimension could influence the other dimensions in the future. Among these three women activists, we can see their achievements, which are based on their awareness to get access to higher education as an effort to empower themselves and to be able to protect other migrant workers.

Educational access

These three activists from Paguyuban Seruni have proven that the access to education will lead to women empowerment. Narsidah and Lili are already committed with all their heart to obtain a bachelor's degree in the Faculty of Law to be able to assist migrant workers in the aspect of law at various levels. Moreover, Narsidah is in the process of becoming a legal advocate that will enable her to solve more difficult

legal problems at higher levels. Moreover, Sri, amidst her packed activities as an activist and a mother to two children, has committed to work in the sector of early childhood education to fulfil her dream, which is to create better generation in the future.

In accordance with the argument put forward by Kabeer (1999), there are several changes that are caused by the study that has been experienced by the three activists from Paguyuban Seruni, which are:

1. Education has influenced the way of thinking and the behaviour of these three activists. They, who come from marginalized communities and who are former migrant workers from small and poor villages, managed to improve their life process to gain power in doing a number of efforts to protect other migrant workers who come from similar communities.
2. Education has widened the opportunity for them to get access to knowledge, information and new ideas. Through wider contacts with the outer world, outside their family and community, they have more ability to use those abilities effectively in the process of assisting and protecting migrant workers, especially migrant worker candidates who are younger in terms of age and experience.
3. Education has increased their life quality both individually and through the community in accordance with the choices that they took.
4. Education has brought impacts that are related to the power that they have inside and outside of their own lives. In this case, education has allowed these women more important roles in the decision making process. Furthermore, education has enabled these women to redefine men domination in their household and their community. In short, these women were able to have a higher bargaining position. Up to this moment, Lili still chooses to be single, while Narsidah decided to become a single parent for her only child after getting a divorce from her husband. Sri and her husband live together with their two children managing their own business.

Collective Actions

A series of activities conducted by the three women activists from Paguyuban

Seruni and their achievements to push a process of transformation in the protection of migrant workers at various levels is a form of what Kabeer (1999) calls “politic pressure from the bottom.” The women, who have managed to empower themselves by using different processes, represent a marginal group and fight to defend their rights at various levels.

The efforts that they have made together with official institutions at the village, sub-district, and regency/city levels with university students, academics and NGO, are the center where the social transformation occurred, both for them and for Paguyuban Seruni as part of a bigger community. As a result, a wider opportunity is opened for them to get involved in a wider public region, which may lead them, directly or indirectly, in a long-term to the next challenge of facing patriarchal power in different institutions. Paguyuban Seruni was not created to be involved politically, but in a form that requires them to work hard for the protection of migrant workers, which is very much related to the process of achieving equality, democratization, empowerment, development and enhancement of the identity of the villagers, especially for the migrant workers and migrant worker candidates. This condition is expected to create a significant push to other women to participate in the development process and the enhancement of welfare in their daily life as part of the community.

Policy implications/recommendations

This study has explored that remittances generate three long distance ties between FDWs and their families, especially their husbands: (a) social ties of solidarity, reciprocity and obligation; (b) emotional ties; and (c) ties of reciprocal dependency and power. As with poverty and inequality, the impact of remittances on investment and economic growth in migrant-sending communities tends to change over time and it is unrealistic to expect otherwise. The extent to which money is remitted, and how and where remittances are spent, fundamentally depends on the migrant’s subjectivity, family decision-making, and community values as well as on the economic conditions in Indonesia.

Remittances impact so differently on different communities. For example, in the village in Central Java, remittances have enabled migrants to invest in housing and

land. In general, expenditure on education that could enhance people's well-being and ability to lead the lives they have reason to value has not been considered as developmental or seen as an investment in human capital, except for women activists in a CBO-Paguyuban Seruni. Through a series of long and uneasy process, they managed to do actions together, supported by the education that does not only empower themselves, but also the migrant workers who they assist. Their existence at the grassroots level with their experience and background as migrant workers strengthen their familiarity with the root cause and the process of empowerment for the migrant workers they are assisting.

Due to the fact that there has been little concern among the policy-makers, at the national and local levels, to encourage the productive utilization of the remittances, this study could still be developed by deepening the research question by asking follow up questions that come up from the analyses to acquire more in-depth answers. Thus, the results can be applied to encourage local government to include the remittances in their economic or development planning, by providing an official statistic or report of the remittances. Furthermore, it can be used to influence the government strategies in which remittances are used in order to maximise the potential for community capacity building rather than private consumption. Finally, the government will be able to provide a capable mechanism for harnessing the potential of remittances to promote longer-term growth.

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Regulatory Governance in Marriage Migration: What Love Got to Do with it?

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Introduction

The Philippines' culture of migration was built and developed over decades with the steady and continuing deployment of Filipinos worldwide to seek employment, resettle and, in some cases, to do both. As of 2014, the number of registered Filipino emigrants residing abroad is at 2 million, 60% of whom are females and is projected to increase due to the recovering global economy, which will open up new employment opportunities abroad (CFO, 2016; Uy, 2015).

During the 1970's, the Philippines witnessed a significant spike in Filipinos migrating abroad. This was brought on by a number of factors, including the precarious political climes, low employment rates and wages, and the rapid growth in population (Estrada, 2015). The outflow of Filipinos outside of the Philippines has grown since then and has doubled in the last decade greatly bolstered by the "institutionalization of migration" in which the State facilitates the deployment of Filipinos through its agencies (i.e. POEA) and imposes and monitors regulatory measures on other recruitment agencies (Asis, 2006). Moreover, while the country has recently experienced rapid economic growth beginning in 2012, it has not been enough to make a full recovery on the lag and lacklustre growth the Philippine economy has experienced over the last three decades. With that being said, Filipinos continue to seek sources of income and livelihood outside the country.

Seeking employment however, is only one of the numerous reasons why Filipinos emigrate abroad; Filipinos emigrating to marry foreign nationals is also a chief cause for migration. Marriage migration occurs when "someone marries from another country and settle outside of their own home country" (Maclean, 2013:12). The issue of

marriage migration is an important aspect of the Philippines' culture of migration that receives considerably minimal discourse due to studies focusing on other aspects of migration such as the fortifying policies protecting migrants abroad and ensuring the competitiveness and marketability of Filipinos for overseas employment. However, it can be said that the issue of marriage migration merits attention from government and non-government actors given the significant number of Filipinos involved in international marriages. According to the International Organization for Migration, the Philippines "has emerged not only as a major source country of workers but also of brides" (IOM, 2013). The Commission on Filipinos Overseas estimates that there currently 477,834 Filipinos who are spouses and partners of foreign nationals, 436,854 (91.42%) of which are females (CFO, 2016).

Although large scale migration of Filipinos became prominent starting in the 1970's, numerous facets of Philippine history and society long before this decade has contributed and led to the substantial number of Filipinos migrating for marriage. The Philippines' protracted history of having undergone colonial rule, military, and economic relations with foreign countries such as the United States and Japan has eventually contributed to the phenomenon of mail order brides in the 1980's. (Goh, 2014). The presence of foreign nationals in the country has paved the way for the surge of the Filipino sex industry, especially in areas with foreign military bases. These bar-girls and entertainers are believed to be the pre-cursors to mail order brides. During the 1980's, Filipino mail order brides became rampant and in demand especially amongst countries of United States and Japan; it can be said that mail order brides have been bolstered through the Philippine government passing regulations which allowed agencies to recruit Filipino women as spouses of foreign men (Chorev, 2014).

During the 1990s, intermarriages between Filipinos and foreign nationals became mainstream due to increase in number of Filipino women marrying foreign nationals from developed nations such as Taiwan, Republic of Korea, and Japan. (IOM, 2013). The data provided by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) indicates an increasingly upward trend in the number of marriages starting from the year 1989 to 2014. Marriage migration of Filipinos continues to thrive due to several reasons. One of which being that marrying a foreign national from a developed country is sometimes

perceived by Filipinos to be “a path out of poverty for them and their family” and another one being that there are “marriage deficits” or lack of marriages between foreign nationals and native spouses, particularly women in the countries Filipinos, mostly women, migrate to (West, 2014)

The feminization of Philippine migration has also contributed significantly to the occurrence of marriage migration. The role and significance of migrants in the sustaining economies has not gone unnoticed and, in fact, has been used as a tool and strategy for development. Remittances sent by migrant workers have proven vital in keeping struggling economies afloat and has been a major source of currency reserves and the Philippines is renowned worldwide for its migrant workers, most of which are female. The deployment of female workers overseas grew rapidly during the 1980’s when the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) organized and administered the deployment of female workers (nurses, domestic helpers etc.) to the United States, Japan, and Middle Eastern countries. (West, 2014). Female migrant workers in countries such as Japan and Korea have experienced difficulties in procuring work visas and permits that will allow them to work legally in the aforementioned countries for a longer period of time. These women are driven to seek means by which they can continue to provide for their families back home and oftentimes marrying a national of a country they were working in provided them with that opportunity.

As of 2014, more than half a million Filipinos are registered as spouses or partners of foreign nationals, 91.42% of which are females. Data further indicates that majority of those marrying foreign nationals are females, most of whom fall under the age bracket of 20-29 years of age and have finished tertiary education. The United States of America accounts for most with 42% of the marriages being between Filipinos and American citizens. This is followed by Japan and Australia which accounts for 24% and 7.95%, respectively (CFO, 2016).

Objectives, Area Focus and Methodology

Understanding the discourse on marriage migration needs to focus on a new frame of mind that will look into the critical linkages of globalization, citizenship, human rights, democracy and culture. To understand the interconnectedness of the

concepts, it is likewise important to focus on the following research objectives: (1) look at the existing regulatory governance framework that affects the facilitation of marriage migration, (2) understand the factors that influence a woman's decision to migrate, and (3) analyse the issues and challenges in the implementation of these regulations vis-a-vis women's exercise of their agency, including the gender role dynamics in marriage and power relations.

This paper focuses on marriage migration of Filipino women married to South Korean nationals. South Korea is the third largest recipient countries of marriage migrants coming from the Philippines. The country has been experiencing an increase in cross-border marriages beginning in the 1990s; the reason for which has been attributed to several socio-structural factors such as "imbalanced sex composition of the marriage-eligible population" (Wen-Shan & Chia-Wen, 2010). Another vital factor in increasing the number of international marriages in Korea was the country's significantly declining fertility rate and the increasing disproportion between the number of men and women at a marrying age. (Wen-Shan & Chia-Wen, 2010).

Studies have shown that Korea's economic development and industrialization has played a significant role in changing's Korean women's participation in family and society; there has been an increase in women's participation in the labour industry, delay in willingness to marry, low fertility rates and high divorce rates. One of the indirect results of such a change is the opening the attitudes of Korean men towards marrying foreign nationals. From 1990 to 2005, marriages between a local and a foreigner have increased by tenfold. Korea's Ministry of Public Administration and Security reports that as of 2011, Filipinos comprise the third largest nationality of foreign national spouses. (Kim, 2013). According to Dr. Nam-Kook Kim, Filipina marriages with Korean nationals are achieved through the following mediums: mediation by marriage brokers, meeting through mutual acquaintances, matchmaking through the Unification Church of Moon Sun Myung, and through dating Korean men who have visited the Philippines for business or academics.

In this paper, the researcher interviewed two Filipino women married to Korean nationals. Both were in their 20s when they got married and migrated to Korea. Unlike most cases of marriage migrants, the couples were not products of marriage brokers

but rather met in circumstances of what others called “love.” Hence, this paper will look into how this thing called “love” affect women’s exercise of their agency and negotiate their gender roles in a country bound by different culture and norms.

Philippine Regulatory Framework Relevant to Marriage Migration

The numerous issues brought forth by marriage has sprung the Philippine government to take action through passage of laws and other concrete measures to protect the lives of marriage migrants abroad. Below are some of the regulatory frameworks of the Philippine Government to address the various issues associated with marriage migration.

Republic Act (RA) 6955 or the Anti-Mail Order Bride Law of 1990 which prohibits “*the unlawful practice of matching Filipino women for marriage to foreign nationals on a mail order basis and other similar practices indulging the advertisement, publication, printing, or distribution of brochures, fliers and other propaganda materials*” (R.A. No 6955). The law intends to punish mail bride brokers and promoters and not the patrons or clients “purchasing” the brides. However, it does not stipulate the government agency or actors responsible in monitoring and implementing the provisions of the law. Hence, despite the passage of the law, mail-order brides continue to exist with the continuing of deployment of Filipino women as brides for foreign nationals yearly with numbers going as high as 300,000-500,000 (Senate of the Philippines, 2007).

RA 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 is another law that can be used to protecting marriage migrants. A considerable number of marriage migrants often go abroad for the purpose of employment. However, due to restrictions imposed by the foreign country regarding work visas and residency, these migrants, majority of which are women, are often forced to seek means through which they could reside or work abroad and this vulnerability is often exploited by recruiters and their spouses. In a report prepared by the Commission on Filipino Overseas (CFO), 29 Filipino women were rescued from five people illegally supplying brides to Korea (CFO, 2013). Section 4.(b) and (c) of R.A. 9208 stipulates the following: “(b) *To introduce or match for money, profit, or material, economic or other consideration, any person or, as*

provided for under Republic Act No. 6955, any Filipino woman to a foreign national, for marriage for the purpose of acquiring, buying, offering, selling or trading him/her to engage in prostitution, pornography, sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, involuntary servitude or debt bondage; (c) To offer or contract marriage, real or simulated, for the purpose of acquiring, buying, offering, selling, or trading them to engage in prostitution, pornography, sexual exploitation, forced labor or slavery, involuntary servitude or debt bondage” (RA 9208). The law also requires the implementation of a pre-marriage, on-site and pre-departure counselling program on intermarriages.

Guidance and Counselling Program for Fiancées, Spouses of Foreign Nationals (GCP) was also launched by the Commission on Filipino Overseas in 2012 as part of a pre-departure requirement for aspiring marriage migrants. The GCP consists of one-on-one and group guidance and counselling facilitated by a trained counsellor; the program aims to provide marriage migrants with knowledge and advice on “realities of cross-cultural marriage and family, the marriage migrants’ rights and obligations, available support network for women migrants in distress, among others,” contextualizing the session depending on the country of destination (UNESCAP, 2013). All applicants need to participate in the GCP in order to obtain Guidance and Counselling Certificate from CFO that will be needed for passport application and renewal. The said certificate is also required to be presented to an immigration officer on the date of departure (CFO, 2012).

Narratives of Filipino Women Married to South Korean Nationals

The commodification of marriage is a concern which has surrounded unions between Filipinos and foreign nationals for the longest time, popularised to be as “mail order bride.” Spouses have been dubbed as “consumers” and saviours of subservient brides from the clutches of poverty (Sico, 2013). However, the women interviewed in this paper are not those married through the usual “marriage broker” or “matchmaking agency” but married through love and courtship. There might be some differences in terms of how these women deal with their situation when they migrated with their husbands especially that these women are indeed professionals and highly educated, but

there are also some similarities in terms of issues and challenges that they face in the country of their spouses.

Friends or Lovers?: The Story of Teresa

Teresa, not her real name, first met her Korean husband 12 years ago. She was then a trainee in one of the community organizing NGOs in the Philippine and was taking her MA in Community Development in a prestigious state university. The NGO, where she was working, had exchange programs with a Korean NGO and it was during one of their organizations' engagements when she met her Korean husband, Paolo, not his real name. According to Teresa, she did not notice him when they first met, but her Paolo confessed that it was "love at first sight" for him. He fell in love with her when he saw her walking down the stairs as if she saw an angel. Then, there were several events that came where they bumped into each other. The first few meetings were purely work related talks. But at the latter part, Teresa noticed that the Korean guy started to text her consistently and they became text mates for two months. After which, Teresa was often invited for dinner by Paolo.

Teresa admitted that there was no courting stage that really happened because they usually went out if there's an organizational event that was why she was surprised when Paolo told her that he likes her. In Korean culture, "I like you" is often said than "I love you." So at first, she was hesitant to respond because she was analyzing why it was not "love" but she was just surprised to say the words "I like you, too."

Teresa had not been in a relationship for quite some time but she fell in love with the Paolo immediately simply because he was a gentleman, soft spoken, intelligent, and most especially, he was an environmental advocate so they both knew the language and the world of NGOs. She could not recall a time when they had a serious fight. In most cases, it was just a simple "*tampuhan*" (simple fight) like being late during their dates. This was also because in NGO work, meetings were often extended so even if they had a set schedule, Teresa often came late.

They were in a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship for seven months. After which, Paolo had to go back to Korea. Teresa did not believe in long distance relationship so she decided to end their relationship as she didn't want to hope for nothing. She

was also quite disappointed when the guy told her that he did not believe in marriage. She finally decided that she will end everything the next morning. When they met at the chapel the following morning, she was surprised to hear Paulo asking her to marry him while giving her a white long stem rose. She could not respond immediately as she cried. She felt that it was an answered prayer because she was a devotee of St. Therese, who sends white rose as a sign for a granted prayer.

Teresa's mother passed away years ago. Her father approved of their marriage but it took some time before her relatives, who were the siblings of her mom, accepted it. They were against her decision to get married because they thought that she was just lonely missing her mom. But since Paulo lived in the Philippines for quite some time, he became accustomed to the Filipino culture. He proved that he was deserving of Teresa.

They were married thrice. Their first wedding (civil) was in the Philippines back in November 2004 and their Korean wedding in January 2005. The day after their Korean wedding, Teresa went back to the Philippines because she had work and school to finish. Paulo then went back to the Philippines in April 2005 for their church wedding. Their simple church wedding was simply to attend to the request of Teresa's relatives. In terms of expenses, Paulo shouldered everything, but when it came to planning, it was Teresa who managed every single detail of the wedding that was why she got sick days before their wedding and was hospitalized after the wedding itself. Paulo returned to Korea after their wedding. They were separated for one year but once in a while Teresa went to visit him in Korea.

After a year of separation, Teresa decided to live in Korea starting in 2012. Her first child was born in Korea but her second child was born in the Philippines. According to her, her in-laws were nice but of course there were certain Korean practices that they expected her to follow. But from the very start, Teresa already informed her husband that she may not completely follow everything. She informed her husband if she doesn't want to do certain task such as preparing breakfast and serving the in-laws, especially that she also had a part-time job.

The adjustment period was difficult because from a very busy woman, she felt that she had nothing to do so she was always emotional and depressed. The hardest

part was expressing oneself. They didn't have any serious marital issue. Her husband was very kind and understanding and he just allowed her to cry during those times. What Paolo did to calm her was to take her on a date every so often so she won't feel lonely.

Since they were living with their in-laws, it was better financially because they shared resources. For instance, her in-laws paid for the apartment's monthly rental, electricity and management of the house. While Teresa and Paulo did the grocery and cooked dinner. It was also difficult for her because as she was not used to having someone around telling her what to do. As the eldest in the family and ever since her mom died and her father was an overseas worker, she used to be the sole decision-maker in the household.

Last year, Teresa started attending her graduate program (MA in Inter-Asia NGO Studies) through a scholarship program. That became her personal time and space away from her in laws, but she was very thankful to them because throughout her busy schedule, they were the ones who attended to her children.

Teresa just recently finished her MA and is hoping to work with an international NGO in Korea. She did not want to depend financially on her husband. She was fortunate that her husband allowed her to do whatever she wanted, unlike the others who would like their wives to just stay at home. Though it was a struggle to be a working mom especially if you don't have any support system from your family whom you could trust to take care of the children. Her husband has been assigned to another city; therefore, they will be moving out from her in-laws. She is excited and challenged at the same time because although she can have a free hand in terms of managing the house, she may have difficulty in working outside the house because no one will take care of the children.

A Whirlwind Love Affair: The Story of Maria

Maria, not her real name, first met her Korean husband when she was teaching English at a tutorial center in the Philippines. Her Korean husband, Jose, not his real name, was a student during that time; he enrolled under the class of Maria. At first, Jose just gave her snacks during class. Then a few days later, he asked her out to a

movie. After four days of courtship, they became a couple. Maria did not really imagine that they will end up being married because she just graduated from college and has just started to enjoy her life.

They became a couple for three months but Jose had to move back to Korea. They had a two-year long distance relationship until the communication stopped. One of Maria's Korean friends offered her help to look for him. They found out that he already had a new girlfriend. So Maria was convinced then that it was really the end of their relationship. Until one day, Jose called to catch up with her. Maria was suspicious at first, especially that Jose denied having a new girlfriend. They formally took a break from each other after that call. They were in an on and off relationship for four years. Unexpectedly, Jose came back to the Philippines and apologized to her and asked her back. Jose took efforts in talking to Maria's parents and informed them of their plan of getting married after a year - just the right time when Maria finished her MA.

They got married in July 2009 for the Philippine church wedding. They worked with limited budget, which came from the spouse but all the preparations were done by Maria. After which, they were in a long distance relationship again, but they talked on the phone everyday. Then on May 2010, they had their Korean wedding.

When they were still in a girlfriend-boyfriend relationship, Maria felt that she was not that serious, but when the wedding plans were haunting her, she was more determined as ever. She used to recall his past relationships where she was the only one loving and then she often ended up being hurt. So with a serious matter like marriage, Maria felt that Jose really loved her and he will be there for her for a lifetime.

There was no question asked about where they will stay because Jose's parents were old and it was Jose who took care of them. So Maria had to go to Korea and live with her in-laws.

Unlike ordinary couples, Jose was the one managing the day-to-day household while Maria worked outside to earn money. As for the expenses, the grocery and electricity bills were shouldered by Jose's parents, but Jose executed everything in the house. Since the husband was the one left at home to do the household chores, this

often led to an argument. Not that the husband minded doing the chores, but Maria always wanted to do everything all at once; hence, she tried to help her husband in doing the chores. But Maria's husband did not like this gesture and often exploded out of rage. Jose felt that if Maria also did the household chores, there was nothing left for him to do and, thus, felt useless.

With regard to the in-laws, Maria said that she never really had a real argument with her in-laws, but she feels that her mother-in-law could not just express her frustration to Maria, especially that she was the one who was always out. Maria's husband tried to explain the situation to his mother to avoid any argument. The father-in-law did not talk much so there was no issue.

She did her personal time and space at work where she splurged on lunch or did window shopping. That was her alone time.

Analyzing the Process and Challenges in Exercising Women's Agency and Negotiating Their Identities Within a Transnational Marriage

This paper highlights the different angle of marriage migration in such a way that instead of dwelling on the negative sides of marriage migration, the two Filipino women in this study were able to show how they exercised their agency and negotiated their identities within their relationships with their Korean husbands. Their agency pertained to their ability to decide on their own given the existing structures and cultures they had to live with.

Language is still one of the biggest barriers

Language is the number one barrier. It is very difficult to express yourself and your inner thoughts if you cannot speak their language. Both Teresa and Maria tried to learn Korean but even if they can speak their language, it was still difficult for them to fully articulate what they wanted to express. This was especially true when they are in front of their in-laws. They could not just simply argue because it may end up in a huge fight. They would rather keep quiet and just talk with their husbands about the issue and let their husbands do the explaining with their parents.

Relationship with in-laws can either destroy or make the marriage work

As mentioned by Maria, there were various norms and culture that they had to follow and that, in most cases, Korean in-laws have strong decision-making in the family. But since the marriage of Teresa and Maria did not originate from marriage brokers, the in-laws somehow have a sense of respect for them. There were no real arguments or debates that ever transpired between them, but rather issues were resolved through peaceful negotiations. Both Teresa and Maria also respected and appreciated what their in-laws did for their family. For Teresa, her in-laws were very instrumental in taking care of her children where she could freely work and study at the same time. For Maria, her mother-in-law always surprised her with a gift and told her stories which she learned a lot from.

Respect for each other's culture is a must

One of the common arguments of intercultural marriage is the observation and/or practice of different culture and norms. Hence, showing respect for cultural differences is a must for the relationship to work. For instance, the sending of money to their relatives of Filipina wives may be a source of argument with their Korean husbands, but for Teresa's case, her husband understood the context because he lived in the Philippines for a long period of time. Lack of understanding of one's culture can really lead to tension and conflict; therefore, educating oneself about one's culture can help deal with the disparities.

Issues and challenges of those married through marriage broker are also similar with the problems face by those married through love

Those who married because of love and those who met at marriage agency/broker usually experience or face similar problem in terms of culture. The only difference was that those who fell in love can communicate well and expressed themselves with their husbands. This was very apparent in Teresa and Maria's case. According to Teresa, those who came from the broker suffer discrimination from their in-laws. She also cited one common issue that couples argue about which is sending of money or support to the Philippines. Most Korean husbands do not understand why their Filipino wives

need to send money to their families back home either for the parents, brothers or other relatives.

Moreover, Maria narrated the frightening situation of most marriage migrants which is when their Korean husbands become violent when they get angry. This anger often resulted to violence. Maria's husband was no exception, but unlike others who beat their wives, Maria's husband usually hurt himself when he was mad. According to Maria, this also had to do with a number of norms that they have to comply with so when something triggers them, they have a tendency for deviant behavior. When things get this complicated, Maria just hides together with her son.

Education is a crucial key in exercising one's agency

It was a key factor that both Teresa and Maria were highly educated women which made it easier for them to negotiate and exercise their own agency. This also provided them opportunities to get fulfilling and satisfying work as well as relate with their husbands, in-laws, relatives and friends. This was not to say that they were free from discrimination because as what Teresa said, discrimination, especially in the provinces, still prevails. You can be discriminated because of your skin color, you are being judged by the colour of your skin no matter what your profession or educational background is, though it has been gradually changing compared to the 1990s and early 2000s.

Services by the Philippine Government to Filipino marriage migrants are existing but not adequate

According to Teresa, the Philippine Embassy offers good services for Filipino migrants, especially that they offer program for multi-cultural families, but these were mostly confined within the city (Seoul) where the Embassy is located. Teresa felt that more services are needed to cater to the needs of those Filipinos living in the rural areas. The forum that the Embassy organizes is usually attended by the same people, those within Seoul or those who are professionals like them. She said that the Embassy provides counselling once in a while in the provinces but it is important that there are representatives located within the vicinity where Filipinos can easily access in cases

of emergency. Right now, most migrants rely on the assistance from the churches or from the Filipino community themselves. One biggest gap in terms of the services provided is that it is a one-way target, meaning the one who should adjust will always be the foreign spouse. But it would be beneficial if both of the spouses would always be present in the counselling program or services given both by the Korean government and the Philippine Embassy.

But in terms of addressing violence against women, Maria said that she does not know any program of the embassy that caters to marriage migrants, who experienced abused by their Korean husbands. When she personally went there to seek advice, the newly arrived social welfare attaché from the Philippine Embassy was very accommodating, but Maria did not find anything useful from what the attaché told her since she doesn't know the context of Korean marriage. But Maria was able to release her emotions/frustrations which somehow made her at ease. With that experience, Maria was hoping that there could be a kind of marriage encounter service from the Philippine Embassy. It would also be useful if the counselling will have a Korean perspective. It would also be advisable to have simultaneous sessions in Filipino and Korean for both parties to understand.

Pre-departure orientation for marriage migrants are only focused on marriage through brokers

The application for a spouse visa seemed to be difficult because of the paper requirements that had to be submitted but since both Korean husbands accomplished and submitted all the required papers, the application went smoothly. The interview was also short and they did not have any difficulty because their encounter with their Korean husbands came naturally unlike for most cases facilitated through marriage agency.

Since it was a love relationship, both Teresa and Maria were frustrated and felt uncomfortable with the pre-departure seminars because it only highlighted the negative consequences of marriage migration. They felt that it only targeted those who came from the brokers but the content of the talk was not appropriate for their case.

Love is not measured by length but a decision that involves two concerned parties

The cases of Teresa and Maria showed that love cannot be measured by time or length but rather involved a serious decision of involved parties to take the journey towards the transformation that couples aspire for. It was not just a feeling but a product of multiple deciding factors to make one decide whether to continue the relationship or not. For Teresa and Maria, this went without saying that as long as they can breathe freely and have control of their “agencies,” they can give their share in making their relationships work.

When asked whether she was happy, Maria said “*I am finding myself to be happy.*” She admitted that there were some difficulties during the first few years because she really felt burdened by the marriage. But then she realized that she owed her personal development to her marriage, having finished her MA and now currently finishing her doctoral degree in Korea.

Moving Forward: Some Recommendations

Filipina marriage migrants to Korea are observed to be well-educated and proficient in English, which allows them to find skilled work such as teaching English. It is also worthy to note that in April 2012, a Filipina marriage migrant won a seat on the proportional representation list, thereby allowing her to be a part of the electoral constituency in Korea. (Kim, 2013). These developments are encouraging and are a significant breakthrough to keep the situation of Filipino women in Korea moving forward; however, it is also important not to neglect the persistent issues still present in a number of Korean-Filipino unions. Particularly being at risk of domestic violence and human trafficking, the Gender Equality and Family Ministry takes into account language and cultural barriers as major reasons for domestic disputes which sometimes even lead to violence and killings (Iglauer, 2015). The Korean government has not been idle in responding to the issue. In 2007, the South Korea Multicultural Families Support Act was established and aimed to support migrant families into proper integration into society by providing classes on Korean language learning, “culture-understanding education,” and “bi-lingual environment promotion project.”

There were, however, some critics of the Act, saying it was aimed at assimilation rather than the protection and prevention of domestic violence against migrant women. Another venue of abuse stems from the issuance of marriage visas and its reservations. Korea issues an F6 marriage visa, which must be renewed every 2 years depending on the sponsorship of the Korean spouse. Such conditions “makes many marriage migrants dependent on their husbands for their visa status, which can lead abuse both physically and also emotionally, through isolation and seclusion” (Iglauer, 2015).

In 2012, the Philippine State through the Commission on Filipino Overseas and Korea’s Ministry of Gender, Equality and the Family (MOGEF) made a formal agreement to cooperate in ensuring Filipino marriage migrants with resettlement, adjustment and assimilation issues, and to promote their empowerment of thorough post-arrival programs such as language lessons. Currently, 200 multicultural are placed throughout Korea to serve as a support network for marriage migrants and their families (UNESCAP, 2013).

Though these programs seem to be promising, the sharing of the two marriage migrants, who are actually highly educated and already have direct link with the Philippine Embassy in Seoul, still find the programs insufficient and lacking in some ways. Among the critical issues that they believe must be rethought and/or developed further by the Philippine Government in cooperation with the Korean Government are the following:

Review of the pre-departure orientation seminars (PDOs) of the Commission on Filipino Overseas to make it more culture-bound and context-wise. This means that the PDOs should not just be a generic one but should be customized according to the status or situation of the applicants. In this case, those marriages through love as compared to those marriages through brokers.

Provision of services [counselling or legal] of the Philippine Embassy for Filipino wives who are victims of violence against women (VAW). The social welfare attaché, who will be assigned in the Philippine Embassy, must also know the marriage culture in Korea and should also be in coordination with the appropriate Korean Government agency for the provision of counselling services not just for the Filipino but also for the Korean husbands.

Extension of programs and services to other areas/provinces in Korea to make them accessible to more Filipino marriage migrants. The concentration of most of the Philippine Embassy's programs and services is only in Seoul and nearby cities; hence, those who live outside of Seoul have difficulties in accessing these services. They mostly rely on church-based organization or NGOs.

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Asian Women on the Move: Women's Labor Migration from Cambodia

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Introduction

International labor migration is defined in this paper as the movement of people from one country to another for the purpose of employment (Maureen Hickey, 2013). In 2015, 244 million people of world population living abroad aim to have better economic and social opportunities (UNFPA, 2015, 21 June, 2016). Among this number include many Cambodian people who were on the move because of the boom in the population number attributable to young people, the disparities in opportunities of employment between urban and rural areas, the limited job opportunities, and the high wages available abroad. A need to support their families and improve their quality of life also prompted Cambodians to move not just within their own country, but also to foreign countries (Gleeson, 2012, p. xvii).

This paper will focus firstly on the current context of labor migration, including the number of Cambodian international migrants, wages in the major destination countries, and policy and legal framework covering migrants. The challenges faced by migrant workers, policy options, and best practices will also be provided in this paper.

Background/Case Study

Nowadays, there are “between 650,000 and 700,000 legal and illegal Cambodian laborers working abroad, and they have sent home more than 1 billion U.S. dollars a year” (Sovannara, 2016 June, 2016). Since 2007, there were 86,499 legal women laborers. Destination countries are Thailand (111,306 laborers), South Korea (44,330 laborers), Malaysia (38,633 laborers), Japan (2,288 laborers), and Singapore (401 laborers) (Sovannara, 2016). Migration to these other countries is likely higher among

women because they find work as domestic and manufacturing workers.

Moreover, table 1 below shows that illegal migrant workers from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia commonly work in Thailand.

Table 1. The number of illegal immigrants in Thailand, 2001-2010

Year	Employer/ business	Total Num. of the CLM	Nationality			Occupation	
			Myanmar	Lao	Cambodia	Labour	Domestic work
2001	157,718	568,249	451,335	59,358	57,556		
2002	120,717	409,339	340,029	32,492	36,818		
2003	89,409	288,780	247,791	21,314	19,675		
2004	205,738	849,552	633,692	105,259	110,601		
2005	205,562	705,293	539,416	90,073	75,804		
2006	185,876	668,576	568,878	51,336	48,362	583,580	84,996
2007	158,268	546,272	498,091	22,085	26,096	484,723	61,549
2008	154,304	501,570	476,676	12,800	12,094	447,637	53,933
2009	311,654	1,314,382	1,078,767	110,854	124,761	1,184,592	129,790
2010	216,695	932,255	812,984	62,792	56,479	844,329	87,926

Source: The Office of Foreign Worker Administration of Thailand retrieved from: <http://www.siamintelligence.com/thai-labor-migration-status/> (in Thai)

Cambodian female migrant workers have migrated to work as regular and irregular migrant workers in Thailand and Malaysia as domestic helpers, factory workers, laborers, entertainers and food processing workers. In between 1998 and 2008, 80 percent of the total migrant workers deployed to Malaysia were women working as domestic helpers, and between 2006 and 2008, of the total migrant workers in Thailand, 47 per cent were women (MLVT, 2010, p. 14). Labor out-migration enables women to play significant roles in their families through income they earn and skill they bring back (MLVT, 2010, p.14). Being able to earn an income to support both themselves and their families can make women economically self-sufficient (UNIFEM). Remittances sent by women enable them to earn the respect of their families and

society through their important roles in supporting families. Moreover, women also get a chance to see new places, make new friends, and learn new things. These can be very empowering experiences. In other words, international migration can facilitate the empowerment of Cambodian women migrants (UNIFEM).

However, lack of clear legal framework and migration policy remains. Difficulties in access to public services and high administration fee are commonly reported as reasons for illegal migration. For example, to have a new passport, migrants may have to pay around USD400 for special services rather than a regular fee of USD120.

Findings

Interviews were conducted with 10 migrant women who experienced work abroad. Another 10 migrant women who are working in abroad. The youngest women workers interviewed for this paper were 17 years old and the oldest were 45 years old. The majority were 20 to 31 years old. All of the women interviewed said that they decided to migrate because of their family situation and lack of employment opportunities in Cambodia.

Through the interviews, it was found that most of the workers, who migrated to other countries, were from Battambang, SvayRieng, Prey Veng, Kampong Speu, Kampong Cham and Banteay Meanchey provinces. Interviewees stated that their reasons for migration to other countries included self-survival, family, economic condition in the country, and to get a new experience of freedom. All respondents said economic situation in the country was not really good that they could earn enough money to support their families; as daughters and mothers, they saw it as their obligation to find jobs abroad.

Poverty is a significant factor in pushing thousands of Cambodian people out of rural areas to major cities and neighboring countries for better opportunities. Statistically, every year, approximately 300,000 young Cambodians enter the labor market, but often their skills do not meet the needs of this market (UNDP, 2014). In order to survive and have better lives, they can easily be forced directly or indirectly into sex work or choose to enter the sex industry on their own to receive higher pay (WorldVision). Traffickers may employ several tactics to lure people into the sex trade

such as offering good jobs, sexual intercourse in exchange for good jobs, false marriages, false promise with girls' parents and so on.

Four women were interviewed from Kompong Thom province. The youngest age was 17 years old with only one woman having the ability to read and write Khmer and understand a little bit of English. In their case, the broker promised to take them to work at Viet Nam as domestic worker by paying their passport fees. However, when they arrived in Viet Nam, that broker sent them to Myanmar, which aimed to sell them to China for marriage with Chinese guys.

In the words of a woman who migrated from Battam Bang province in Cambodia to Bang Kok in Thailand: Va Samady is 21 years old and has two brothers and one sister. Her parents divorced since she was 17 years old. Her family lived in very poor conditions with debt from a local micro finance after their divorce. As the eldest in the family, she first decided to drop out of school and migrate to Phnom Penh to work as cleaner at restaurant to support her every family's expenses and her brother and sister's school fees. She worked for a year but as the salary was too low for her, she decided to go back home. After staying home for a while without any income, she decided to follow her neighbor to migrate to Bang Kok as domestic worker.

Meung Kong Kea, 25 years old, said she had never heard of labour exploitation before she left. But rather than getting the high salary she was promised by a broker to work in a farm in Thailand, she received only 80\$ instead. Worse, she became ill from chemicals on the farm. She told her boss that she was sick and can't work, but her boss still forced her to do it. One year later, she decided to go back home because the work was so hard and she got paid less.

In addition, the primary factors contributing to migration of women are:

- Economic factors: Issues such as poverty, underdevelopment and lack of equal opportunities, unemployment and lack of job opportunities, which cause people to migrate to other countries and areas to seek better living conditions;
- Social exclusion: Discrimination towards a group or community based on gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status prevents these people from access to information, health care, education, and legal protection. Specifically, trafficked victims and women migrant workers can encounter many problems once they

- Social and cultural practices: This factor refers to cultural practices such as forced marriages, arranged marriages or temporary marriages that make women vulnerable to migrate and become victims of trafficking.

Policies and Legal Framework in Respect to Cambodian Migrant Workers

National Policies

In June 2010, the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MoLVT) launched its first policy for 2010-2015 with three main objectives. The first objective was better governance of labor migration. The second objective was protection and empowerment of migrant worker. The third was harnessing the potential of labor migration for development. Then, in 2014, there was an assessment of the implementation of the 2010-2015 policy to provide inputs in developing the policy for a further three years from 2015-2018. Among the stakeholders, the MoLVT covered most of the 79 activities of the action plan of which 21.5 percent were on target, 43 percent were progressing, and 35.5 percent were not on target (see figure 1 below). Most activities that met the target and were progressing had received support from international organizations, NGOs, donor community, and civil society.

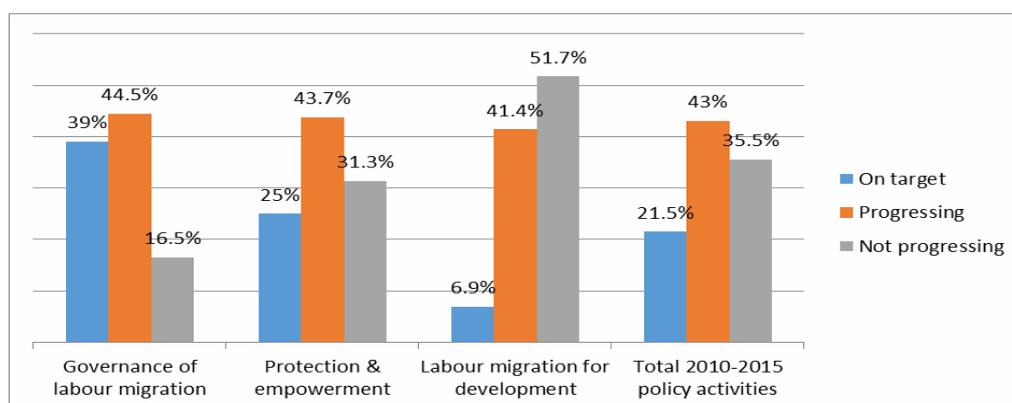


Figure 1. The Progress of Activities in Cambodian Migration Policy (2010-2015)

Source: Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, Policy on Labor Migration

Although more progress had been made in respect of the first and second objectives, the third – to harness labor migration for development – lagged behind. Therefore, the three-year policy from 2015-2018 intend to focus more on this, acknowledging that increased cooperation between government and development partners is needed for this to be successful (MoLVT, 2014, pp. 30-31).

Legal Framework

The government of Cambodia adopted Sub-decree No. 190 on “the Management of Sending Cambodian Workers Abroad Through Private Recruitment” in August 2011. After that, in 2013, it adopted eight more Prakas to clarify the Sub-decree No. 190 with support from the ILO, social partners, and civil society organizations.

To control recruitment agencies, in 2008, the Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies (ACRA) was created. Sub-decree No. 205 on “the Provision of Ordinary Passport” was passed under the management of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) after the mass expulsion of Cambodian migrant workers by the Thai authorities in June 2014. This sub-decree stated that the government pays for passports for migrant workers and they need pay only USD 4 for the passport photo. Furthermore, through the inter-ministerial Prakas No. 2574, Khmer workers can obtain their passports at the Passport Office in Phnom Penh and from another office at Battambang province, which was created in July 2014.

The other Cambodian domestic laws that relate to migrant workers are the Cambodian Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, the Penal Code, the civil code and sub-decree no. 38 that pertains to contract and other liabilities. It should be noted that Cambodian labor law deals only with work in Cambodia, not abroad (MoLVT, 2014, pp. 20-23).

In addition to the Cambodian domestic laws, Cambodian migrant workers are also covered by international laws, the ASEAN legal framework, the domestic laws of receiving countries and bilateral agreements between Cambodia and receiving countries (Gleeson, 2012, p. 68). Cambodia signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Right of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families 1990 in 2004 (UNTC, 1990). In 2005, Cambodia ratified the United Nations Protocol Against the

Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (Migration Smuggling Protocol; UN). Besides, Cambodia also ratified all eight fundamental ILO conventions, while the receiving countries like Thailand, the Republic of Korea, and Malaysia have ratified only some of these conventions (ILO, 1996-2012).

Issues and Challenges

Widespread migration problems can be partly attributed to lack of coherent labor migration policies. The sub-region has poor legal procedures, which do little to attract legal migration. This, therefore, acts as a major contributor to irregular migration. As Cambodia is a latecomer to the formal management administration of labor emigration, its regulatory and institutional frameworks are seen as weak and inefficient. Legal procedures relating to labor migration for both men and women remain costly, time consuming and bureaucratic. At the same time, labor migration policies do not respond to dynamic and fast-changing migration trends. Furthermore, the Cambodian Government has pointed out that labor migration of men and women is another vital contribution for boosting employment and reducing poverty through remittances, which provide benefits at both the individual and national levels (Policy on Labour Migration for Cambodia, 2010, p. 24). Nevertheless, some challenges and issues still remain:

1. Recruitment

Lack of information and public awareness of labor migration discourages people to approach recruitment agencies. Sometimes, the information received by migrant workers is distorted and not reliable, leading to a wrong decision to migrate abroad. Also, some agencies may tend not to strictly screen the qualifications of the applicants but rather try to recruit the highest number of applicants possible. Irregularities in the recruitment process can lead to problems such as recruits abandoning the jobs they have been recruited for. For example, studies of migrants in Thailand have shown that when workers could not adapt to the workplace or if the salary was not high enough, they returned home (CDRI, 2009, p. 55).

Another major issue that has been raised in connection with Great Mekong Sub-region migration is related to recruitment processes. Even when agreements and

MoUs have been signed and regulations and resolutions exist to protect migrant nationals, recruitment agencies seldom obey the correct procedures. For instance, even though the MoLVT has granted 47 recruitment agencies the authority to support migrants to work in Thailand by offering all necessary documents for a flat fee of USD 49, there was still a report that one of the selected recruitment agencies is now charging would-be migrants USD 600 to find jobs in Thailand (Say. S & Pin. M, eds. 2014, p.74). The number of recruitment agencies has been increasing from 47 agencies to 69 agencies in 2016 (S. Ngy, personal communication, September 2016). Furthermore, it is commonplace for standard procedures to be circumvented and for the recruitment process to be carried out through illegal activities. Unlicensed recruitment agencies and brokers are part of the migration landscape as well, making it difficult and dangerous for would-be migrants to find employment abroad. Additionally, migrant workers often end up with a job that is different from the one they expected or, alternatively, in circumstances which closely resemble exploitation and they are unaware of their rights and obligations in their destination country (ADB, 2013).

2. Cost of Sending Migrant Worker

Cambodian migrant workers are mostly from poor families who are seeking to get out of poverty through migration. However, the recruitment fee is expensive and migrant workers often have to take a loan from banks, micro-finance institutions or their relatives to pay such fees. For instance, the total cost for sending a migrant worker to Malaysia is approximately USD\$1000 while their average monthly salary is approximately USD\$200. This means that the migrant worker has to spend an equivalent of five months' salary to pay off the recruitment fees. In Thailand, the total cost to send a migrant worker is USD\$700, which is equal to 3.5 months average salary of a migrant worker, which is approximately USD\$200 per month (CDRI, 2009, p. 55).

Difficulties in access to public services and high administration fees are commonly reported as reasons for illegal migration. For example, to have a new passport, migrants may have to pay around USD400 for special services rather than a regular fee of USD120. In addition, the process requires complex procedures and is

time consuming (S.Va, K. Hok, & S. Hok, personal communications, July 14, 2016).

Lack of Standardized Contracts

The employment contract is the principle document to be obtained, reviewed and signed before the departure of migrant workers to their destination country. While abroad, a migrant worker's living and working conditions are determined by the terms and conditions set out in the employment contract. As such, the contract should be clear and enforceable in both the sending and receiving countries. However, the lack of standardized contracts with employers in the destination country remains a problem, and there have been a number of cases where the employment contracts signed in the sending country were later replaced by contracts in the receiving country. For example, although Cambodia has been sending workers to Malaysia for many years, a standard contract has yet to be developed, and studies have shown that the working conditions of migrant workers inside Malaysia are different from those provided for in the contracts signed in Cambodia (CDRI, 2009, p. 56).

Problems with Payment and Deduction of Salary

Problems have arisen in some cases when the promised salary was higher than the actual salary that was received by the workers. Some workers were paid late and, in a few cases, workers were not paid at all during their entire term of employment. Obviously, this is a case where workers were exploited. It is common practice for recruitment agencies or employers to deduct recruitment fees from monthly salaries to pay off these fees at a rate agreed to between the workers and recruitment agencies or employers. However, it has been reported that the amount deducted by the recruitment agencies or employers often surpassed the amount to be paid by the workers as indicated in the contracts (K.K, Meung, personal communication, August 10, 2016; UNIAP, 2011, pp. 39-40).

3. Lack of Standardized Pre-Departure Training

Pre-departure training is critically important in order to prepare migrant workers to better adapt to a new culture and to prepare them for work in the receiving

countries. In Cambodia, pre-departure training on culture, languages, communication, health issues and legal knowledge has been provided by some NGOs and recruitment agencies. Although pre-departure training is mandatory (article 7 of sub decree 190), there is no standardized pre departure training or curriculum packages for such training. Ignorance and lack of attention by migrant workers towards the pre-departure training is also a problem. Too often, migrant workers are naive and assume that the work environment and living conditions in the receiving country are easy to adapt to while the actual situation could be the contrary. As a result, some migrant workers abandon their overseas employment, which could adversely impact the reputation of Cambodia (CDRI, 2009, p. 57).

In addition, there have been reported cases of migrant workers who encountered abusive living conditions and mistreatment in the training facilities during the four-and-a-half-month pre-departure training sessions. Living conditions in some training centers were not acceptable due to poor hygiene and inadequate food and water supply. Some trainees were verbally and physically abused and some were not allowed to go outside the training centers (UNIAP, 2011, pp.30-31). In addition, two women have died in training centers since 2010 and more than 10 women have felt it was necessary to escape from such facilities. In early 2011, in an attempt to escape from a training center, one woman broke both her legs after jumping from a three-storey window (Amy. L, 2011).

Human Trafficking and Smuggling

These are among the varieties of irregular migration in the sub-region. There are cases of trafficking between almost all countries in the region, although the predominant trends that have been observed are from Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos. Human trafficking in the sub-region is closely linked with irregular labor migration of both men and women. There have been cases in which women and children have been trafficked for sexual exploitation and a number of smuggling cases have focused on migration from Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Myanmar, who travelled to another countries searching for jobs or seeking better lives.

About 75 percent of migrants aged 15-29 are international migrants who are

exposed to all kinds of threats such as violence, human trafficking and exploitation, abuse and sexual abuse, especially female migrants (UNODC, 2014, p.19; K.Uy, Ch. Ket, R. Ket, & L. Ne, personal communications, August 5, 2016). These female migrants may be exposed to sexual and reproductive risks such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies. Two women from Prey Veng province, aged 26 and 33, were smuggled through Thailand to Malaysia by private recruitment agency in Cambodia. These women were rescued successfully through the cooperation among ADHOC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Cambodian Embassy in Malaysia (<http://www.adhoc-cambodia.org/two-migrant-workers-fraud-by-agency-sold-in-malaysia-to-recue/>).

4. Possible Actions the Government May Consider Undertaking to Better Protect Women Migrants

In order to deal with irregular migration, the following options could be considered:

- Opening legal migration opportunities by publicizing the information about fees and allowances, streamlining administrative procedures, reducing placement costs and speeding facilitation (HING Vutha, 2011, p. 2);
- Combatting human trafficking by strengthening law enforcement, raising awareness, and intensifying cooperation within the region and with destination countries (HING Vutha, 2011, p. 3).

The number of education and awareness workers should be increased: Most migrants, particularly those who are irregular migrants, are unaware of the legal, practical, social and economic impact of moving to other countries. So the better informed they are, the better protected they will be, and this paper therefore recommends the promotion of education and awareness-raising before departure. Information can be distributed through a combination of the following measures:

- National and provincial migration centers for future migrant workers to register and find information. These centers should be set up as focal points to disseminate information and as places where migrants can call on or visit for counseling. The

information can be disseminated through the media, meetings, workshops, seminars, and so on.

- With a high rate of irregular migration, education campaigns targeting communities need to be reinforced.

Expand support services: Another suggestion is posting labor attachés in all destination countries. Their functions in developing a strong partnership with the host countries on labor issues, observing the treatment of migrant workers, providing legal support against contract violations, abuse or exploitation, counseling on problems involving contracts or employment, and ensuring that irregular migrants are protected and that they receive compensation when this is appropriate should be strengthened and promoted.

Strengthen international cooperation: Migration is linked to multilateral issues that can be addressed only through cooperative efforts. Available options to solve irregular migration should be addressed in bilateral and regional frameworks complementing national policy.

- Strengthen bilateral cooperation: Cooperation between sending and receiving countries is seen to be effective in addressing irregular migration. This paper argues that Cambodia should improve collaboration with destination countries in order to regularize programs and streamline legal recruitment for irregular Cambodian workers.
- Work towards an integrated Greater Mekong Sub-region labor market: Cross-border labor movement across the GMS has been dynamic, but there are still no sub-regional regulatory or institutional frameworks to support it. This paper recommends the integration of labor markets in the GMS. The first step to accomplish this is to add labor migration to the GMS-wide development agenda and create an expert forum to search for practical solutions and to provide recommendations to leaders (HING Vutha, 2011, p. 3).

Recruitment agencies play an important role from the beginning until the end of the migration process, including recruitment, pre-departure training, signing agreements

for employment, grievance handling, conciliation and repatriation. Private recruitment agencies are regulated by Sub-Decree 190, yet malpractice and irregularities during the recruitment process still exist. To address this issue, an implementation mechanism should be in place with ample resources to implement Article 7 of this Sub-Decree, which calls for regular inspections and special inspections of private recruitment agencies followed by penalties applied to agencies that violate stated recruitment standards and guidelines. In addition, the recruitment fees should be reduced and explicitly stipulated in the contracts so that migrant workers will switch from illegal to legal processes.

Conclusion

Women migration issue is not only an issue for Cambodia, but also for the region as a whole. The Government seems to understand the root causes of the issue and has developed a strong policy and proper mechanisms to respond to it and has instructed the appropriate ministries to take action. Despite this, more action is required in terms of law enforcement and stronger provisions in law to effectively deal with women migration that can cause problems of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

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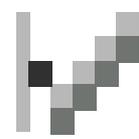
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Theme

5

**Femininity, Pop–Culture,
and the Beauty Industry**

Femininity, Pop Culture, and the Beauty Industry

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Femininity has been focusing on controlling and disciplining of bodies, as well as roles and obligations that various versions of patriarchy have been prescribing. Women's bodies reflect the cultural beliefs and practices in the dichotomous gender system. Femininity has been displayed on and through women's bodies. Body has been a medium of culture and a direct locus of social control, according to Susan Bordo (1997). Human body can be managed and disciplined to suit a particular social order. However, body has also been a site of resistance and struggle of so many women in different context. We can understand the hegemonic femininity in a particular culture at a certain time and how such femininity has been contested.

People are rewarded or punished according to their ability to approximate cultural ideals of femininity and masculinity. Different types of bodies are valued distinctively. The hierarchy of bodies accounted for the higher value and privileged associated with particular types of bodies while some other are stigmatized. The desire to be perceived as beautiful has been arousing continuously by the beauty industry in order to motivate customers to buy products that will improve their physical appearances. The images of 'ideal body' have been presented with the message that the consumers could attain such look, too, if they bought certain cosmetics or fashion. There have been diverse beauty standards for people to choose and shop. The non-Caucasian women do not have to look up to the 'white beauty' since they can choose some other 'Asian' standards, with Korean beauty as the latest vogue.

Beauty and physical attractiveness account for many advantages. Being beautiful can facilitate the accumulation of wealth, fame and power for a person.

Women's worth has been assessed based on their appearance, and some beautiful women used their look to gain access to many forms of social goods. As Catherine Hakim (2011) put it, the benefits of physical and social attractiveness for both men and women affected the way a person was perceived as friends, colleagues, lovers, and so forth. What Hakim labeled as 'erotic capital' can lead to access to so many forms of social goods. Beauty also plays an important role in state politics. It was reported that Donald Trump, while crafting his administration, took the appearance of candidates for various positions into consideration. As a source close to Trump's transition team put it, "He's very aesthetic. You can come with somebody who is very much qualified for the job, but if they don't look the part, they're not going anywhere." Physical appearance was important when Trump selected his cabinet members (Hensch, 2016).

Beauty has been associated with oppression and control. Several structures have been defining the standard of beauty and directing behaviors of people. Patriarchy, capitalism and neoliberal globalization all try to regulate the behavior and lifestyles of people in the dichotomous gender system. Women and many men have to conform to the hegemonic models of femininity and masculinity by displaying their bodies and behaving in certain ways. Capitalism and the global market have been encouraging women and men to buy so many types of products promising to beautify their bodies. However, economic and cultural globalization has been diversifying standards of beauty. The diversification of standards and arenas for interaction allow many people to contest different types of social norms regarding gender and sexuality while they themselves have also been praised and criticized by others. It seems that self-perception and social interaction have been shaped by beauty while people conform, resist and negotiate with the notion of beauty in their social environment.

To understand how beauty was constructed and challenged and how it shaped women's social life, the three papers will illustrate the interplay between gender, sexuality and different power structures in a society and across borders of the nation-states. Norainie Ahmad from Brunei depicts how beauty and femininity of Muslim women was constructed, projected and contested through social media. The notions of beauty, femininity, and religious practices were mixed, interpreted,

displayed and negotiated. Women showed their versions of modest fashion on Instagram while various viewers praised and criticized. The interaction through social media showed how femininity was regulated and negotiated.

Aquarini Priyatna from Indonesia recounts in her work how celebrity women defined and presented the imaged of aging women. Although a major element of beauty is youth, the women mentioned in the paper showed their audience that women could be beautiful as they aged. Older women could still be fashionable and active. The notion of beauty depicted by the celebrity women in this paper involved both the attempt to remain youthful and the extension of beauty to include older women. Meanwhile, Hyun Gyung Kim from Korea explores how the 'Korean standard of beauty' was understood and presented. The popularity of Korean television series in Southeast Asia presented the alternative feminine appearance to the women in the region. The facial characteristics and quality of skin that became fashionable and favorite in the Korean market have been presented to the Southeast Asian consumers who adopted the standard of K-beauty.

The three papers highlight how beauty was interpreted in a specific culture. The feminine look in each society has been constructed and contested through the interaction with other cultural elements, such as religion and class. There are contesting standards of beauty that tried to regulate women's appearance and behavior while some women try to negotiate with the standard as they were projecting their gendered-self through images. The social media emerged as an important arena for women to contest the standard of beauty and regulate others.

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How Modest is Modest Fashion? Exploring Notions of Modesty Within the Context of Muslim Women's Hypervisibility on Instagram

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Abstract

Many contemporary, fashion-forward and veiled Muslim women choose social media to routinely upload and post pictures of their outfits and fashion styles, but not all are necessarily acquiescent to the parameters of modest-wear according to *Syar'ie* (Islamic law). While much has been said about the hijab and the women who choose to wear them (or otherwise), contending perspectives can be difficult to reconcile because they are seldom situated within the context of meanings attached to the Islamic concept and practice of modesty, *al-hayā'*. Additionally, while work on feminist narratives of embodiment and Muslim identity politics have proliferated, the quotidian performativity of #hijabfashion within the hypervisible world of social media like Instagram is still systematically under-researched. This paper discusses the concept of modesty from an Islamic point of view and explores how it is performed, negotiated, and regulated within the context of a popular social media platform. This helps us explore an alternative contextualization of contemporary Muslim life, specifically in today's world of increasing commodification, and at times, ostentatious materialism; and contribute to the discourse and evolving imaginations of "who is a Muslim?" – away from Orientalist views and the dominant gaze of veiling as "exotic," "other," or as destabilizing symbols of terror, subjugation, and subservience

Keywords: *Hijab*; modesty; Muslim women; Instagram; social media

Introduction

When a modest clothing line from Indonesia was included for the first time ever at the New York Fashion Week runway in September 2016, many regarded the event

as a significant moment in the history of fashion and for Muslims worldwide (Figure 1). It bolstered the entry of *hijabs*¹ into the multi-billion dollar mainstream fashion industry, and signaled, for some, the resurgence of modest fashion – one marshaled under the name of a religion that has received a generous dose of polemics, inciting intense debates surrounding what its female followers should or should not wear. Ironically, the proclamation of a *fatwa* against the rising phenomenon of *jilboobs*² – a derogatory term denoting the inappropriateness of contemporary *hijab* wearers who opt for tight-fitting garments, and thus showing the shape of the body – by the Indonesian Ulama Council, illustrated the kind of socially mediated publicness and attention that Muslim modest wear has garnered (Beta, 2016; Husyein, 2015).

Indeed, modest fashion appears to be gaining significant attention of late, partly because of the perceived incompatibility between modesty and fashion, and partly due to a lack of compliance to the parameters of modest wear according to *Syar'ie*. For instance, turbans worn by Muslim women as a fashion statement are largely perceived as just that – not a form of *hijab*, but a sort of innovative interpretation of what should otherwise be *Syar'ie*-compliant modest wear. Underlying the attention towards modest fashion is the fact that it has proven to be a formidable force within a burgeoning “Muslim market” and a growing Islamic digital economy. However, all of this attention raises so many pertinent questions regarding what exactly is modest fashion according to Islam and its followers. Of specific interest to this paper is the puzzling notion of where precisely the line is drawn between what is deemed as modest and “not so modest” fashion, given the broad range of existing styles worn by Muslim women from

¹ The term *hijab* in Arabic literally means “curtain,” to screen, or to cover, but not necessarily in any particular way. Furthermore, it is *not* the Arabic word for veil (Boulanouar, 2006: 144). The term found in the Qur'an does not refer to women's clothing; rather, it was a screen behind which the Muslims were told to address the Prophet's wives (Muslim Women's League, 1997). Alvi (2013) defines it as “the act of covering in a way that identifies a woman as Muslim”. Woodlock (n.d.), on the other hand defines the Muslim veil as “the practice of extra-ordinary covering of a woman's body.”

² The term is a combination of “*jil*” from *jilbab*, which itself is a type of loose-fit garment (Abu Bakr, 2014), and “boobs”, an informal word for breasts. The term emerged from a lifestyle phenomena observed among Indonesia's Muslim women, characterized as simultaneously veiled (i.e. “modest”) yet wearing tight-fitting clothes that accentuates the contours of their chests (Husyein, 2015; Beta, 2016).

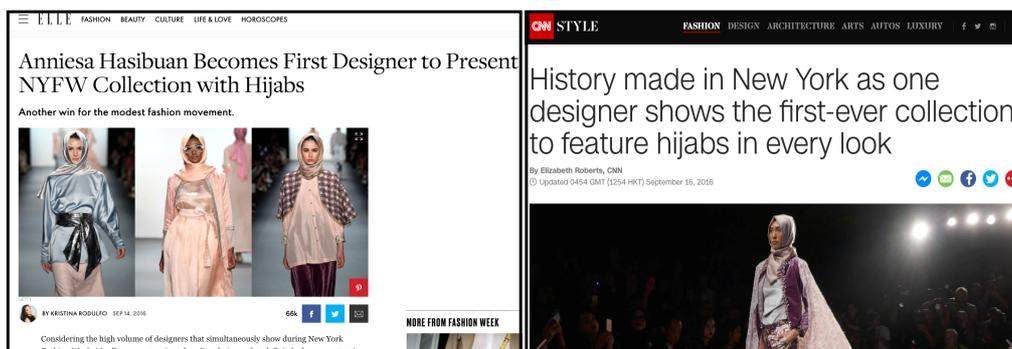


Figure 1. Indonesian fashion line by designer Anniesa Hasibuan gathered much media attention for being the first Muslim fashion collection at the New York Fashion Week, September 2016. Screen grab from www.elle.com and www.cnn.com.

various ethnicities, nationalities, age, and socioeconomic status.

With plenty of variability in modest wear, this study situates contemporary transnational Muslim women's visibility in many aspects of public life: from education to fashion, to high-powered careers traditionally dominated by men, to the hijabi³ sportswomen seen in the last Olympics, and to the many ordinary Muslim women, who experience daily lives feeling liberated and empowered rather than restricted and oppressed by what they wear over their heads.⁴ Life goes on for the veiled Muslim, yet it is this exact item of clothing that renders them stupendously hypervisible and simultaneously chastised for being "traditional and conservative." Hypervisibility here conforms to the definition by Vaccaro and Camba-Kelsay (2016:30) and refers to "experiences where a person's race and/or gender become the sole focus." Furthering this concept, I argue that for Muslim women in particular, their intersectional identities, i.e. often being persons of color, whose clothes become a visual marker of their

³ A term denoting a woman who wears the *hijab*. Other terms such as *hijabista* (*hijab* and *fashionista*) and *hijabelle* have also been known to appear on social media, referring to a more fashionable, beautified *hijabi*.

⁴ In other parts of the world, a hijab-wearing women-only team of pilots and cabin crew from the tiny state of Brunei drew unprecedented global attention when they flew in a commercial airplane into Jeddah in Saudi Arabia - a country where women are still prohibited to drive a car. An even more ironic and incendiary event was when the notorious *Playboy* magazine featured for the first time, a hijab-wearing Muslim woman, eliciting a mix of praise and condemnation from the general public.

religion and religiosity and who may be discriminated against for not just their gender but also age and ability, intensify their experiences of being hypervisible. In her work, Nadia Jeldtoft (2013: 23), describes this hypervisibility as follows:

“We argue that dominant representations of Muslims and Islam in both public and academic discourse take as their primary model certain highly selective forms and shapes of Islam and Muslim life – such as public religious practices, Islamic political activism and institutionalized, public or semiofficial expressions of Islam – even though the implication is that it is Islam and Muslim life in general that are being discussed or studied. These forms are thereby rendered hypervisible. This hypervisibility represents what we term a strategic level of representation; a level which influences how and what we see when talking about and studying Muslims and Islam [...] – and which gives much more visibility to the strategic than tactical dimensions of Islam itself. As such, this level produces a dominant gaze in which everyday forms of Islam and Muslim life which are often less visible and less easily identifiable but which often operate tactically slip into the background, thus escaping both scholarly and public attention.”

In part, this hypervisibility is growing because of advances in telecommunication technologies – the increasing exposure and coverage Muslim women receive, thanks to the quick transmission of uploads and downloads of their images and stories on mainstream (social) media, as well as websites. Here I argue that the dominant narratives of the “hypervisible *hijab*,” in particular, are experiencing a revolution, in which veiled women now have a ubiquitous and pseudo-regulated space to share their private lives and opinions in ways that were not typically captured and understood by the dominant gaze. I argue that the rapidity, coverage, and impact of this mode of sharing and exposure could only have been made possible by the universally enabling environment of social media (and by extension, access to the Internet and smartphones, as well as basic freedom and will to post/upload digital content). This study also acknowledges the fact that it is set within a time in human history when attention towards Muslims in general is escalating. This combination of contexts is powerful in building a highly nuanced and complex picture of “who is a contemporary Muslim” – which is hardly a homogenous group, given first, the segmented nature of the Muslim society (and therefore “Muslim market”), and second, Muslim diasporas and

transnationalism. This paper thus explores how transnational and intersectional Muslim women craft and curate their private lives as performed in the public domain, specifically how their identities and self are presented visually on the social media platform: Instagram. I argue that social media uploads by Muslim women are a singular tour de force in the process of authoring and reclaiming the narratives on Muslim womanhood, beauty and modesty, empowering them to seek, define, and strengthen their identities.

In the last few decades we have seen a growing preoccupation with the hijab – from academic publications of Muslim feminists in more niche and traditional platforms such as peer-reviewed journals and books, to a wave of online contents from the generic news outlet, to websites, blogs, microblogs, and now, social media. The ubiquitous nature of audiovisual representations of reality vis-à-vis the exploding growth of smartphone and data usage, Internet access, and innovative app developments, have enabled users to engage with larger audiences of various socioeconomic backgrounds and creeds. By 2019, it is estimated that the number of mobile phone users worldwide will surpass the five billion mark, and mobile phone penetration is forecasted to continue to grow by 67% (statistica.com). This staggering statistic reflects a tremendous seachange in the way we communicate and do business.

Islamic Digital Economy, Muslim Market & Social Media

E-commerce within the modest fashion sector has been recognized as the most successful Islamic business model, where Muslim consumers account for 5.8% of the total global digital economy (John, 2015). Authors have noted that the use of social media, specifically Instagram, for branding strategies have actually been under-researched, even though this platform enables businesses to generate sales equivalent to proper e-commerce businesses (Abdul Latiff & Safiee, 2015). The benefits of instantaneously reaching thousands of potential customers through Social Networking Sites such as Facebook and Instagram have certainly been reaped by the Fashion & Lifestyle sector. The new reality is that the ascent of digital marketing strategies involves industry players taking advantage of so-called fashion “influencers,” i.e. often already-established fashion bloggers or celebrities with a substantial and loyal



Figure 2. Bloggers and social media influencers of Kuwaiti descent, Dalal Aldoub (L) and Ascia Al Faraj (R), both have amassed over 1.9 million followers each on their Instagram accounts. Screen grab from @ascia_akf.

following, collaborating with these personalities to build not just their brands, but sell products to a larger market. Muslim Instagram celebrities like Dalal Aldoub and Ascia Al Faraj (Figure 2), Both of Kuwaiti descent, each has 1.9 million followers on their accounts, and it is not a surprise that big fashion, beauty, and lifestyle brands have taken notice.⁵ In turn these Instagram personalities receive “media packages”, where they are required to take pictures of them wearing the item of clothing and uploading it on their account. The collaborations often involve a more detailed process of creating videos of them reviewing the items received, often dubbed as an “Unboxing” or “Reveal” video, later uploaded on Youtube and linked on their Instagram account⁶.

⁵ In fact, for the transnational influencer Ascia Al Faraj, who calls her family “The Hybrids” by virtue of the fact that they are “half American, half Kuwaiti,” it is not just fashion and beauty brands (*Sephora*, *Nyx*, *Johnsons*) that have noticed her. Ascia has also represented large retail designer stores, Korean telephone company *Samsung*, *Jewelry Arabia*, and also luxury American-based motoring company, *Cadillac*. Source: @ascia_akf (Instagram).

⁶ A report by the CNN highlighted the “bizarre but lucrative” world of “unboxing” videos, which in itself is a special genre on YouTube. In 2014, there was about 6.5 years worth of YouTube videos with “unboxing” in the title. The report also stated that “unboxers” could earn USD2 to USD4 per 1000 views. Unsurprisingly, the “unboxing” phenomenon is also found on Instagram (although videos are shorter or use time-lapse style footage due to time limitations imposed per video upload). Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/02/13/tech/web/youtube-unboxing-videos/>.

The buzz created from them simply donning the products – whether through comments or mounting hype – results in followers coveting for the same items, often commenting things like “#goals” (a social media vernacular that means something which is desirable), or simply asking “What brand are those? Where can I get them”? In turn, influencers also gain publicity – even spinning off to become minor celebrities in their own right, and often, producing their own line of products, essentially becoming entrepreneurs themselves. They are not just highly visible, but transform into famous trendsetters brandishing coveted consumer items and fashion-wear. In fact, models are nowadays recruited through Instagram, and vice versa – Instagram creates models. A cult of personality is born and thus become inherently part of Instagram, where selfies and OOTDs (Outfit of The Day) are the main vehicles of the creation of one’s public persona and self-brand. A case in point is Malaysian hijab entrepreneur Vivy Yusuf (Instagram handle @vivyyusuf), whose massive following consists mainly of Malay Muslim hijab-wearing Millennials; these followers often proclaim her as their “idol” and “inspiration”, and every item of clothing that she posts often end up getting sold out in minutes, in her own online shop, fashionvalet.com.

The reduced overhead costs of simply utilizing free social media for marketing and advertising purposes, and making do without a physical store or even e-commerce websites, makes this business model extremely effective and lucrative, even for home-grown vendors. This is certainly an emerging way of conducting business in the Muslim modest fashion industry: vendors set up a free Instagram account, upload content (specifically a catalogue with price and other descriptions of the products), and creates a continuous stream of hype – whether by producing “flatlay” images (Figure 3) of their products, which is often combined with expensive designer items in the same picture, thus, creating a sense of luxury and completeness of an outfit or lifestyle; or by uploading “unboxing” or tutorial videos (especially for hijabs), or OOTD pictures sent in (or tagged) by appointed product ambassadors/fashion influencers and/or genuine unpaid customers; or getting “mentions” and “reposts” from other accounts run by famous personalities with a huge following to endorse the product.

Specifically, this paper addresses the burgeoning Islamic economy and rising global market in the Modest Fashion industry. The State of the Global Islamic

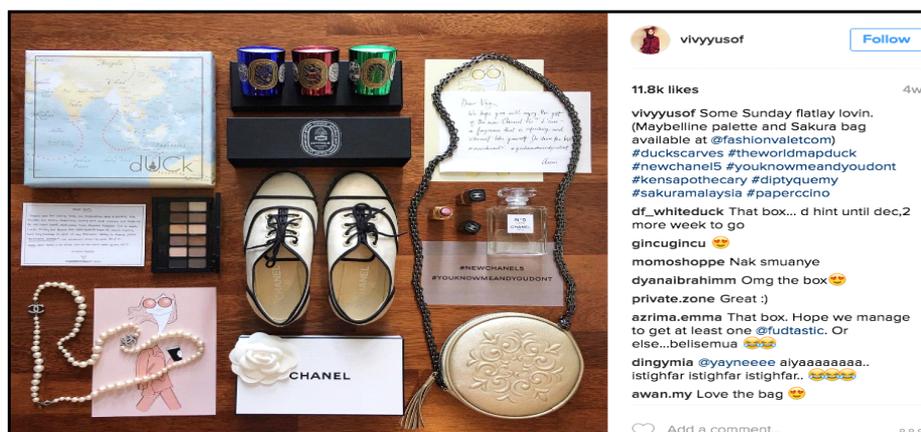


Figure 3. An example of a "flatlay", in this case, owner of hijab brand Duck Scarves, Vivy Yusuf teams up her product with other expensive designer items, evoking a sense of luxury and coveting from followers. Screen grab from @vivyyusuf.

Economy 2014-2015 reported that this industry has been garnering major investments from global fashion brands such as Uniqlo, Mango and Tommy Hilfiger. Not least of all are the leading haute couture fashion houses like Dolce & Gabbana, who have also taken cue of the boom which Fortune magazine calls “the next big untapped fashion market,” referring to Muslim women. The flurry of fashion designers in capitalizing Muslim women’s tastes and fashion sense is a reflection of the increasing global Muslim consumer spending on clothing and footwear, which has increased significantly to reach \$266 billion in 2013 (Thomson Reuters, 2015). This makes the Muslim clothing market to be 11.9% of the global expenditure and is expected to reach \$488 billion by 2019 (ibid.). It is said that if this market were a country, it would be ranked third after the largest two markets in the world, i.e. USA and China (ibid.). However, amidst these current developments, a great debate centered on the concept and practice of the hijab and modest wear has been brewing for decades; it is important to locate our discussion within this context.

The Great Hijab Debate

In recent times, much attention has been directed towards the subject of Muslim women’s modest wear, particularly the hijab, the Islamic tradition of veiling⁷. Case

studies, as well as opinion pieces on both print and digital medium, include explorations on the politicization of the hijab; the meaning of the hijab with respect to identity (re)construction, including embodied intersectionality and transnationalism; the antiveiling/dehijabing “movement”; the policing of the burka and burkini;⁸ the emergence of hybrid alternatives and controversial trends such as the turban and the jilboob; and the increasing acceptance of hijabi “lifestyle” into both mainstream haute couture and high street fashion (for a selection of these topics, see Almila, 2014; Alvi, 2013; Mirza, 2013; Lewis, 2015; Husyein, 2015; Waninger, 2015; Alibhai-Brown, 2015; Hassim & Khalid, 2015; Read & Bartkowski, 2000; Al Wazni, 2015; Sanghani, 2016; Rivoli, 2015; Abu Bakr, 2014; and Furseth, 2016). Online search engines will inevitably retrieve seemingly perennial questions aimed at evoking a sense of an existential hijab debate between coercion and choice, often poetically framed as: “To veil or not to veil?” Among those who are unfamiliar or plainly against the hijab, arguments have often centered on the notion that the Islamic veil and its variants are a conspicuous symbol of Muslim identity synonymous to oppression and subservience. It simultaneously renders the Muslim woman as an invisible, voiceless, and powerless actor written within the cultural scripts of patriarchal society; an attempt at desexualizing and subjugating her; and a rejection towards progressive values (see Alibhai-Brown, 2015; whose polemics cited the works of past Muslim feminists such as Qasim Amin, 1899; Huda Shaarawi, 1986; Fatima Mernissi, 1975; and El Saadawi, 1975). Well-known Muslim feminists like Mernissi (1991; 1992; 1995) dispute the veil as part of Islamic custom because they argue that there is no consensus on women’s covering and as to how exactly this should be achieved (Boulanouar, 2006: 146; Also see note on how this perspective itself is refuted)⁹.

⁷ For the purpose of this article, both *hijab* and *veil* are used interchangeably, in accordance to popular usage amongst Muslims, which describes the head covering worn by Muslim women. Boulanouar (2006) also suggested that in some countries, this term refers to the whole ensemble that conforms to Islamic clothing rules.

⁸ A *burkini* is normally a one-piece swimsuit that offers full coverage for the wearer from head to the ankles, except the face, hands starting from the wrist down, and feet. Some designs include a “mini skirt” for added modesty. *Burkinis* became a heated subject during the summer of 2016, particularly in France where several incidences linked to terrorism had occurred.

⁹ Commentators such as Roald and Woodlock (n.d.) argue that these feminists’ views miss the opportunity to interpret the Qur’an (as word of God) in demonstrating equality and equity. Instead

Additionally, veiling is often interpreted as the physical manifestation of piety and religiosity, an act of worship and submission to the commands of Allah, an articulation of one's faith, and not just a visual marker in the construction of Muslim identity. This is one particular juncture where opinions regarding the visibility of Islam vis-à-vis the hijab in the public domain becomes contentious; for those who insist that religion is private and therefore should only be practiced in the private domain, the notion that hijabs are encroaching the secular (male dominated) public realm is unacceptable and incompatible with the establishment of citizenship and the modern nation-state (for further discussions on this dichotomy in the context of non-Muslim majority countries, see Jeldtoft, 2015: 25-26).¹⁰ Indeed, the well documented incident in Summer of 2016 when French male police officers publicly chastised Muslimah beachgoers to undress – to literally disrobe their burkinis at a beach – was a blatant sign of unease towards the act of covering in public. One could argue that modest-wear appears to be incompatible with the modern, secular West. This is a time when what Muslimahs choose to wear, becomes subjected to irrational fears of Islamic radicalism and “provocation,” what the former French president Sarkozy described as “imprisonment behind fabric.”

Thus, Muslim women are seen to be coerced to wear items of clothing that seek to mystify and hold them captive in such a way that, “the veil is the shroud through which the muffled voices of Muslim women struggle to be heard... Muslim women are homogenized and objectified, losing their individual identities in the process” (Aly & Walker, 2007: 208). In fact, the negative perpetuation towards the hijab can come from Muslim women themselves, who contend that their experiences have been one of oppression. This can be a convincing line of argument, which is exemplified from

the feminists fall back to the Western dichotomy of men versus women, and that women's value need to compete with men's in the public space (see El Guindi, 1999: 81; cited in Boulanouar, 2006: 146). Further, Roald refuted the feminists' view because they do not fulfill the criteria – in terms of Islamic education and proficiency in knowledge – and thus should not be regarded as Islamic scholars (2001: 313).

¹⁰ In contrast, in Muslim majority countries like Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia, such a dichotomy is blurred. Brunei in particular established itself as an Islamic country, and in every day life the pervasiveness of religious practices is evident. For example, there is a compulsory closure to all shops and businesses on Fridays around noon to 2pm, to make way for the Friday prayers. This is enforced to all, regardless of the owners' religion.

the works of Mernissi, who referred to her childhood experiences of being subjugated, and named the practice of veiling as a “tradition of misogyny”; one that presents Islam as a religion fearful of modernity (cited in Rivoli, 2015: 3). However, while there is no denying the validity and rights of individuals to express their lived experiences, particularly those that shape their attitudes and color their ways in seeing the world, by no means is there just one single narrative surrounding the hijab that overarches all Muslim female experience.

In fact, writers like Abu-Lughod (2002: 786) maintain that, “we need to work against the reductive interpretation of veiling as the quintessential sign of women’s unfreedom, even if we object to state imposition of this form”, and that we should not be “reducing the diverse situations and attitudes of millions of Muslim women to a single item of clothing”. Similar counter-arguments stress on the embodiment of the hijab as a “second skin”, which demonstrates Muslim women’s agency, expression of rights, and empowerment that “challenges and transforms hegemonic discourses of race, gender and religion” (Mirza, 2013). The notion of veiling in public, concealing the parts of the female body – the hair, the chest, and contours of her figure – those that arguably attract (unwanted) male gaze, is therefore viewed as an exercise in individual choice making.¹¹ For this school of thought, the practice of veiling should not be seen as a sign of coercion, and that Muslim women do not need “saving.” The various studies on Muslim identity construction such as Alvi’s (2013) “Voguing the Veil,” Hassim & Khalid’s (2015) “Stailo & Sopan” (or “Stylish & Modest”), Waninger’s (2015) “The Veiled Identity,” and Al Wazni’s (2015) study on female Muslim empowerment in America contribute to third-wave feminist theory in that they challenge mainstream representations of what is often seen in the West as fundamentally feminist. These studies provide evidence to the notion that Muslim women are not only actively creating spaces of female identity and representation, but they are also reclaiming and reconfiguring the dominant narratives long imposed on

¹¹ It should once again be emphasized that this is not an overarching view of the lived experiences and realities of all Muslim women in all societies and contexts. Variations in expectations and cultural norms, levels in gender power relations, exercise of agency, political context, and personal status and privilege (including educational background) are but some of the factors that affect choice making and the ability to make those choices.

them, while also curating their collection of fashionable and trendy items through active participation in consumer culture.

An Islamic Perspective on Modesty, *Al-Hayā'*

What are the parameters of modest wear according to *Syar'ie'*?¹² Although we are limited in terms of scope and depth in giving a detailed account of what is said in the Qur'an and Prophetic hadiths on the subject, it is nonetheless important to touch briefly on the underlying mandate for Muslims to preserve modesty. Modesty can be defined as:

“The freedom from vanity and showiness. It is decency and moderation in speech, manner, dress, and total attitude and behaviour towards life. It is shyness, simplicity and humility about our abilities and accomplishments. Muslim's (sic) notion of purity and living a life of modesty, neatness and cleanliness make them regard anything degrading with utmost abhorrence” (Laming, 2015: 257).

Guarding one's modesty is considered an important part of the Islamic faith, which can be observed in the following hadith, narrated by Abu Huraira: “The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Faith (belief) consists of more than sixty branches (i.e. parts). And *al-hayā'* is a part of faith”¹³. *Al-Hayā'* here covers a large number of concepts, which are to be considered and acted upon together, and amongst them are self-respect, modesty, bashfulness, and scruple (sunnah.com). Further, modesty is often described as an inherent character of Islam, and it has been mentioned that the Prophet referred to it as innate to the deen (religion). In reference to the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ character, his *hayā'* (pious shyness from committing religious indiscretions) was known to be far

¹² There are four Schools of Law in Islam, but this paper only focuses on Imam Syafie's School of Jurisprudence, mainly because it is the prevalent one within the Southeast Asian region. At this juncture, however, suffice it is to note that in all of these Schools, each appear to accommodate the prevailing customs of what constitutes as modest-wear according to the social, cultural, historical, and even geographical contexts of the areas in which the Muslim communities exist.

¹³ This is an Arabic symbol, which follows the Prophet Muhammad's name every time it is mentioned. It translates to “peace and blessings be upon him” or PBUH in short.

¹⁴ Sahih Al-Bukhari 9, Book 2: Belief (Al-Iman), Hadith 2.

more than that of a veiled virgin girl¹⁵. Naturally, modesty in practice varies from one person to the next, and indeed this includes modest wear and how a person dresses and acts. Because modesty in Islam is linked to one's level of faith (Iman), it is often associated with the level of piety and religiosity of a person.

Modesty and modest wear is not just confined to women, but also to men. Laming (2015: 256-7) outlined both "inner and outer" modesty of al-hayā', which are just two aspects of a Muslim's spirituality that focuses on worship and obedience to Allah. He further outlined the modes of modesty for both men and women, which include for men: lowering the gaze and avoiding flirtatious speech and conduct, avoiding close physical contact with unrelated members of the opposite sex, observing modest or Islamic dress according to the Al-Qur'an and Al-Sunnah, and not drawing unnecessary attention to oneself. Women are similarly required to observe the above traits and behaviors, and in addition, are further expected to "avoid wearing perfume or cosmetics in front of unrelated men (and related men who are eligible for a woman to marry)," and to "avoid drawing attention to jewelry and other hidden adornments."

It is crucial to emphasize a point made earlier in the paper relating to the variety in how people perceive and practice modesty and modest wear. There is indeed a broad range of interpretations and adoption of "modesty" among Muslims across the world, and this is factored by local customs, cultural heritage, as well as geographical location. In Muslim majority countries in Southeast Asia for instance, such as Brunei and Malaysia, the influence of the Malay "baju kurung" and "baju Melayu" is pervasive in how Muslims dress. The thobe, abaya, or "jubbah," on the other hand, which are normally either black or white long dresses worn by both genders, are mainly an Islamic dress related to the Arabs. As long as the garments are in keeping with the Islamic notion of modesty, Islamic law sanctions varying styles that embrace the uniqueness and dynamism of local cultures and traditions (Thomson Reuters, 2015: 162). Several selected Qur'anic verses that refer specifically to the issue of clothing can be seen below:

¹⁵ Sahih Al-Bukhari 6119, Book 78: Good Manners and Form (Al-Adab), Hadith 146. Narrated by Abu Sa'id.

“And tell the believing women that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts (modesty), and must not expose their adornment, except that which appears thereof, and must wrap their bosoms with their shawls, and must not expose their adornments, except to their husbands or their fathers [...]. And let them not strike/stamp their feet in a way that the adornment they conceal is known” (An-Nur 24:31).

“O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the women of the believers that they should draw down their shawl over them. That will make it more likely that they are recognized, hence not teased. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful” (Al-Ahzab 33:59).

From the above it can be seen that the fundamental component of Islamic clothing is that of modesty and modest behaviour. The believing women of Islam are advised to draw over themselves their jilbab (outer garment) when in public, so they are recognized as decent women and not harassed; and they are also not to draw any attention to their “beauty” and adornments. Interestingly, the Qur’an does not state specifically the exact definition of modest dressing. Interpretations of verses as well as concepts established in hadiths together form the basis of specific Islamic injunctions that determine the rules of women’s modest dress – albeit typically done by males (as feminists would argue). An explanation from the Muslim Women’s League (1997) further illustrates this point:

“The inclusion of a head covering is derived from interpretation of the word khimar. Most translators and commentators agree that this was a loose scarf worn at the time of the Prophet ﷺ, which covered a woman’s head, neck and possibly shoulders, leaving the rest exposed. Women were thus ordered to use the khimar to cover their breasts. Naturally, a woman would continue to cover her neck, head and shoulders and would then also cover her breast. This understanding of the khimar as a head covering explains why Muslims believe that the Qur’an tells us to cover our hair. The injunction, however, regarding covering the hair in addition to everything else is implied, not specified in the Qur’an”.

It is also important to note that the Qur’an does not spell out any punishments (hudud) for non-conformity to dress code. But a hadith narrated by Abu Dawud mentioned that the Prophet ﷺ, said, “if you have no shame, do as you wish.” At the

same time, the Qur'an also says that, "there is no compulsion in faith/religion" (Al-Baqarah 2:256). There is freedom and ability to choose to do good, which is rewarded by Allah. In performing the obligatory prayers, and when in public and in the company of non-mahrams, (i.e. related or non-related but marriageable individuals), there is a requirement for the *aurat* (or intimate parts of the body) to be concealed (Husyein, 2015). A few parameters of modest wear are identified in Laming's (2015: 254) work, which applies to both men and women. For men, these include: wearing loose, flowing, and opaque clothing through which the area between their waist and knees are totally covered; tight pants or translucent clothing are prohibited; wearing long shirts that reach below the thighs; and wearing loose flowing trousers. We take this list, as a proxy to what women's modest wear should look like, in addition to the requirement of lengthening the garments for women, which includes covering the whole of her legs (compared to up to the knees for men), and her arms.

Methods

This is an exploratory study and the results presented here are the preliminary outputs of an initial foray into understanding how modesty is understood, performed, and regulated in the context of increasing religious commodification, vis-à-vis the medium of image-based online social media platform, Instagram. The period of study was between June and September 2016. This paper positions itself within the context of social media representation of Muslim modest fashion and restricts analysis only to a selected few Instagram accounts and predefined hashtags. The method employed is qualitative content analysis of pictures and commentaries that are publicly available on these Instagram accounts. The vastness of the topic of modesty and clothing in Islam, including the various schools of Islamic law and interpretations of Islamic injunctions in different parts of the world, and the cultural diversity of garments worn by Muslims that are often embedded within tradition and geographical location, means that limitations are imposed on to this study for practical reasons. In addition, this study does not seek to offer any form of judgments nor does it aim to criticize the wearers of "modest fashion," rather the objective is to document a socially relevant phenomenon and aim to offer a way in which modesty and modest fashion can be

analyzed online.

This study employed a methodology of mapping and tracking Instagram hashtags similar to that suggested by Highfield & Leaver (2015). Certain keywords (i.e. hashtags) were first identified based on primary observations of the Instagram contents related to modest fashion. It is first necessary to establish familiarity and a working knowledge of the app, Instagram, knowing how and where to navigate through the maze of public and private accounts, as well the gargantuan number of both tagged and not-tagged/untagged pictures. The sheer volume of content – whether pictorial or in words – constitute the different elements contained within the Instagram space. This includes photos, videos, memes, comments, hashtags, locations, time stamps, and a new feature called “stories,” where account users can upload a short-lived series of videos similar to the functions of the SnapChat app.

As such a new Instagram “working account” was created for the purpose of observation, collection of data, as well as qualitative content analysis of the pictures and comments in selected Instagram accounts. An account solely dedicated for all intents and purposes of this study proved to be a useful first step; firstly because a personal account would not be purposeful (although the original incursion into the subject area, conception of ideas, and formulation of research puzzle were initiated via the researcher’s own personal Instagram account). The working account’s handle is @the.modesty.project and has no followers. As this is a preliminary study, having no followers was deemed suitable because the purpose of the Instagram account did not include being participatory or to invoke conversation and discussion. It is used for the sole purpose of collecting data in the form of “reposts” and/or screenshots/screen-grabs from relevant posts and accounts.

Because of the voluminous amount of information, pictures, and comments relevant to the topic of the study, a limit had to be imposed so that the process of analysis does not become too overwhelming and burdensome. Hence, the account was purposeful in following only a selected few other accounts, which include @hijabfashion, @islam._is._peace, @thedivinecompass, @womeninislam, @vivyyusof, @hijabstyleworld, @dinatokio, @fashionwithfaith, @littlemisskhan, and several other accounts owned by fashion bloggers, or what is termed as social media

“influencer”. The accounts have global and transnational following (i.e. people from various different geographical locations, but also followers who are of a particular nationality or identify as a certain ethnicity or race, but residing in a different country, where they can either be a Muslim minority or part of majority). In essence, the accounts were not chosen randomly but neither were they chosen at whim – to the effect of purposeful sampling strategies and snowballing techniques. The latter was also enabled by the organic reach of the more popular and public Instagram accounts, which means that by virtue of popularity of number of following alone, such accounts can appear on the list of “suggested accounts to follow.”

The selected terms or hashtags used for search purposes were #hijabfashion and #hijabstyle brought to light many posts and pictures, and a few rounds of selection were done according to set criteria. This includes:

1. What is understood as “transnational and intersectional Muslim woman”, for example the case of Vivy Yusuf who is half Malay and half Chinese, born in Malaysia but whose blog tells of her identity as a cosmopolitan woman associating herself with life in London and Kuala Lumpur. Similarly, Ascia Al Faraj’s background is as complex – being a “hybrid” citizen of two countries, a turban wearing “hijabi” with a tattoo on her arm. Other accounts were chosen due to the status as influencer with large following;
2. In choosing the accounts, the main language of communication has to be that understood by the researcher (in this case, English and Malay, even though Instagram now has a “See Translation” function at the bottom of the comments section, this function is not necessarily helpful. For example, certain comments can be made in colloquial language, slang, pidgin, or even shortened forms that do not make sense when translated. For this important reason, and for the sake of easing the process of wading through the vast amount of commentaries, a decision based on language barriers was made).
3. Organic reach of more popular and public accounts.
4. Filtering through comments that are not hashtagged, and that may be written colloquially or using mix of languages. Specifically, the study sought to find not just any form of commentaries, which might have included advertisements or self

promotion from other followers, but confined to these types of comments:

- a. Forms of criticisms, derogatory comments, and generally negative content that aim at “policing” or passing judgment towards the account/picture. These may come from genuine followers or it may be the result of trolling from unknown and often private accounts.
- b. Forms of praise and polite words aimed at providing agreement or endorsement to the account/picture.
- c. Forms of advice aimed at providing reminders, guidance, and counsel to the account/picture.

The photos then underwent a process of culling in which I qualitatively assess what is required to achieve the objectives set by this study. A big problem encountered in the process of selection was that many of the photos that were tagged #hijab, #hijabfashion, #hijabi, #hijabelle, and #hijabstyle were in fact owned by vendors aimed at promoting or advertising their products. As such these were treated as false positives and were excluded in the analysis due to the scope of the study. The next step towards analysis of textual data was to input the collected comments into the data processing software, NVivo. This was done to generate and identify themes and compare them with current knowledge regarding modesty and modest fashion. A real methodological problem encountered, apart from those discussed above, also include the fact that there is no guaranteed way of knowing that comments are truly coming from individuals who claim to know what they are saying (as it could be a copied text from someone else), or know if they are genuine users of Instagram (as they could just be trolling the account), or their gender (this matters because of the amount of policing and advising that occurs). Nonetheless, these issues were mitigated as much as possible by comparing with the available literature on the meanings of hijab as experienced by interviewees in other studies, as discussed earlier.

Notions of Modesty

A useful way of structuring the preliminary findings from this exploratory study is to firstly identify the characteristics and types of posts and commentaries found in

the modest fashion Instagram realm. Although not exhaustive, eight types of comments of various natures were revealed. These include 1) Reminders (Islamic law, injunctions, fatwa and opinions); 2) Praises and compliments; 3) Queries; 4) Instructional; 5) Counsel (also known as haram-policing); 6) Defense; 7) Prayer, and 8) Vulgar Trolling. For more detailed information and examples of these various types of comments, see Table 1. It should be emphasized here that these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, because of the nature of interaction in Instagram. For instance, Reminders are often accompanied with counsel, defense, and prayer – all identifiable from various commentators, and the functions may also overlap.

Here I refer to the “Reminders” category, which is usually a type of post that takes the form of pictures or videos with an excerpt from the Qur’an or hadith, or it could be a fatwa or religious opinion. The pictures would often contain captions and provoke many comments in agreement of the message conveyed. In one such post, a picture of famous turban-wearing Muslim fashion influencer @dinatokio was used in the Instagram account @womeninislam. This picture had an incendiary effect even though its purpose was simply as a reminder of a fatwa by Sheikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, which was captioned in the post which read: “Turbans that women wear are *haram* (unlawful) (Figures 4 and 5)”.

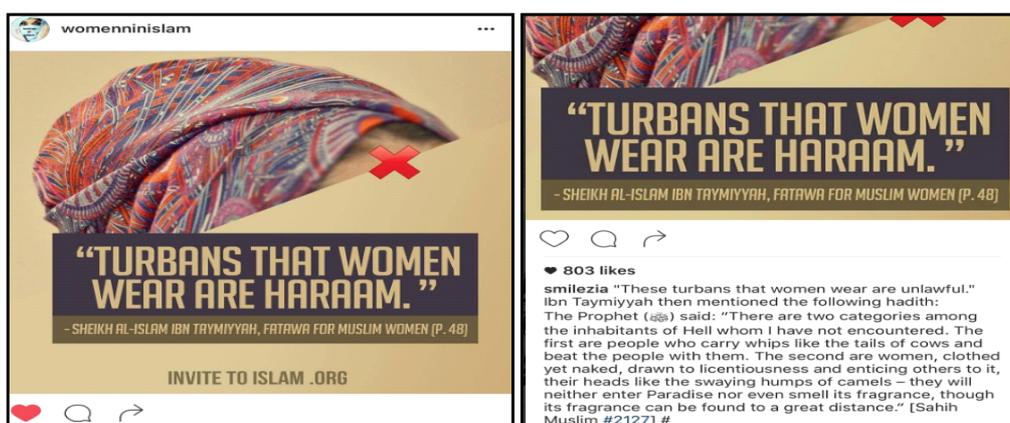


Figure 4. A particularly incendiary and provocative image related to Islamic wear/modest fashion is that of a Muslimah wearing a turban. An image like the above is often associated with Islamic injunctions, aimed to remind followers. Screen grab from @womeninislam and @smilezia.

Comments		Comments	
womenninislam بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ #Islam #religion #peace #hope #love #allah (ﷻ) #Quran #muhammad (ﷺ) #hadith #blessings #muslimah #dawah #freedom #choice #jihad #sisters #inspiration #faith #worship #hijab #therightway #hereafter #paradise #pray #instamuslim #instaquote #reminders #life #unity #instadaily	11h	early scholar of Islam sheikh ibn Taymiyyah (R.A) his knowledge wisdom , excellency and fatwah in Islam is based on Quran and sunnah of the prophet pbuh combined and has a very heavy weight in Islam. One of the reason of turban being haram for woman is that the purpose of hijab for Muslim women is to cover their awrah and also look different from the none believers. And turban is one of the well known hindu siekhs And if one disagrees with it has an option and choice obviously may Allah swt have mercy on us ummah Ameen	
yasminenasri_ @naayer.a ??	11h	zenaida_do	7h
ladexdadiva How and y pls @womenninislam	11h	@womenninislam WHY are they Haram? Can you explain?!	
olusojigold Why... Where is dat written in quran	11h	junaid17stevens @saraahria	6h
philly_philbert If the neck is fully covered (they make pieces like the ninja hijab) and nothing is added underneath for volume how is it haram?	10h	saraahria @junaid17stevens it's haram because majority of the time the neck is shown which is pointless because that's not the point of wearing hijab. Its meant to cover the head including hair ,neck and chest area.	6h
acstyling #how #receipts	10h	giantfoodies I always say posts like these are not beneficial. I wonder how the creator of this post would feel if they got sued for using someones picture without consent...	5h
naayer.a How wtf @yasminenasri_	9h	five.pillars Follow me for more daily reminders Insha Allah	5h
black.petite.cat @philly_philbert Even if it covers the neck, the cloth still sticks to the neck which is haram.	9h	adaridibesa true subhanAllah	3h
womenninislam This fatwah has been given by one of the greatest	8h		

Figure 5. Comments that accompanied Figure 3 above, relating to the lawfulness of wearing a turban for Muslimahs. Screen grab from @womenninislam.

It provoked comments from various points of views, but the overall narrative was that of admonishment of the turban as a particular form of modest wear.

Similarly, the influencers @littlemisskhan and @vivyyusuf each experienced “haram-policing” or Counsel from at least one of their pictures. For both individuals, whose pictures often showed them wearing a hijab, fully clothed, but the shape of their legs showing because of the tightness of their trousers and also the skin of their feet also on display, commentators have said, “Your legs are *aurat* lah, sis”/ “Above the ankles are also *aurat*”; or it could have a pinch of friendly sarcasm, which, in this case, was aimed at Vivy: @ncikasiah “Wearing maroon is what our Prophet wore when he welcomed his visitors #ilovesunnah. Hope you get rewarded (pahala) for wearing maroon and then you can wear socks after this hihi. MashaAllah so beautiful”(Figure 6 and 7).



Figure 6. Showing the skin of the feet is often regarded as non-compliant to *Syar'ie*, and some commentators often find it necessary to notify and offer counsel to the account user/person in photo. Screen grab from @vivvyusuf.



Figure 7. Another example is comment from @heyhani, which translates to “Above the ankles are also aurat. Which mazhab are you following? If you want to cover then do it properly. You have so many followers. Sigh”

This is a good example of how layered comments can be, and the level of complexity in analyzing the true intent of the post/comment. In this case, it was a mixture of policing, reminding, counseling, as well as praising. At this juncture, it is interesting to note that increasingly I have observed less of the policing types particularly on Vivy’s account, and the resounding narrative is that of praise and compliment. What this alludes to is the possibility that the notion of modesty is now gradually becoming more flexible in that people are accepting her way of styling and

keeping quite about it (at least in public).

A spectrum of styles reflecting different levels of fashion-related (outer) modesty can be collected from the observations of posts related to #hijabfashion/#hijabstyle. These reflect the varying nuances of what constitutes as modest fashion and modesty combined, but as the above case, in no way should this be seen as an exhaustive list of how modest fashion is worn and performed in real life and on social media. I looked for several observable traits in relation to the photos of the hijabis and the narrative of modest fashion, which is performed by the Instagram accounts as a whole:

1. Color and prints of garments; e.g. are they colorful? Monochromatic? Vivid? Neutral or earthy? Do they fall into the category of “minimalism” where the colors are muted and understated? Or are they “frivolous” and “flamboyant”?
2. Tightness or looseness of the garments, as well as lengths; e.g. are they wearing a loose tunic over skinny jeans or loose palazzo/wide leg trousers? Are the tops fitted?
3. Hijab coverage over the chest. Are the hijabs large enough to cover the chest area, or are they short – creating the quintessential *jilboob*?
4. Is makeup worn? And if so, is it done subtly that it is almost indistinguishable from a makeup-free face? Or is the makeup a complete makeover?
5. Opaqueness of fabric worn. Do they show the color of the skin? Are they sheer and see-through?
6. Covering the feet and arms. Are the feet shown or are socks worn? Are the arms above the wrist upwards visible, or are “arm socks” worn?
7. Are adornments and accessories worn, and how much is too much?
8. Is there a sense of ostentatious materialism, showing off, and pride (therefore not conforming to *hayā*)?

From the above, as well as the analysis of the comments and pictures, a few themes surrounding modest fashion and modesty were found:

1. Modesty is understood as more than just what Muslims wear, but also one’s behaviors and attitudes. Where hijabis display their “modest fashion” online, they often appear to make choices in selecting what they deem is acceptable by society

(and not necessarily acquiescent to *syar'ie*). Many photos of young Muslim ladies in hijab often portrayed the conflict between acceptable contemporary life (materialism, narcissism through selfies, close proximity with their boyfriends) and capturing these on their Instagram accounts, but to the detriment of a true understanding and embrace of the laws of Islam and what Islam permits or sanctions.

2. “Haram-policing” (haram means unlawful): Non-*syar'ie* compliant modest fashion often receive a number of judgmental comments, criticisms, and the account holder is often chastised for not following the true meaning of hijab.
3. “Jilboob” as a type of modest fashion, though offensive to hijab wearers, is extremely hypervisible on Instagram, and often attract the above type of comments (including lewd or vulgar ones). When approached and chastised, other commentators as well as the account holder would sometimes reply that they are not perfect, that modest fashion is a lifestyle and a journey, in which perhaps one day they will be perfect in the way they dress.
4. Praises and compliments of one’s beauty and taste in fashion are becoming a norm, and increasingly, advice or counsel regarding non-*syar'ie* compliant modest wear is expected to be conveyed in DMs (Direct Messages).

Where do all of these lead us, in terms of addressing the question of “How modest is modest fashion,” and what does modesty in terms of Muslim clothing truly mean? In practice, modesty in the postmodern world of social media appears to run along a spectrum, where both written and unwritten social and cultural rules and norms exist. On one end, there is the fully covered Muslimah whose burqa and niqab appear to be subjects of debate by the less accepting minds. Even then, there are rules about how one should cover in already completely covered attire (see Figure 8).

In the middle, we see those who wear the hijab “properly,” with long tops that provide enough coverage. But even with these, there are still people who will police and try to correct the individuals by pointing out what is right and wrong, such as not wearing socks (as with the example earlier) or wearing too much makeup to the extent that people would even use the hashtag #fakepiety to show their level of

judgment(Figure 9). Then towards the other end of the spectrum, we observe those who wear hijabs for the sake of a lifestyle or fashion trend, or to help advertise vendors' business (as is the case with many Malaysian female celebrities nowadays such as Fazura and Nora Danish – whose own hijab label, Owl by Nora Danish, was launched this year), but in practice do not wear the hijab on a day to day basis at all. This ephemeral and capricious behavior of *hijab*-ing is also rather hypervisible given the nature of social media exposure and, in fact, is not a new phenomenon. But what is striking is the amount of admonishing that is now acceptable on a public platform and the kinds of narratives provided in the comments in Instagram exemplifies this.



Figure 8. Checks and balances? What really constitutes syar'ie compliance when a Muslimah is already fully covered in these long dresses (abaya, or even with niqab)? Where is the line drawn? Screen grab from @howlongisalifetime, with hashtag hijab.

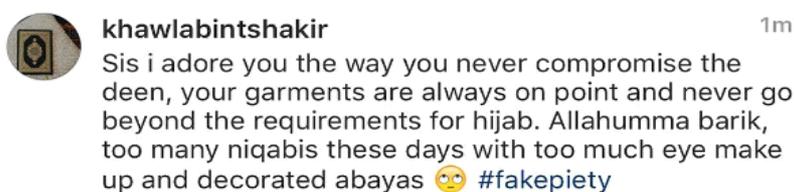


Figure 9. Emergence of #fakepiety

Table 1. Types comments and posts related to modest fashion on Instagram

[The posts/comments may be a combination of types and not necessarily mutually exclusive]

Type of Post (P)/ Comments (C)	Detail	Example [Emojis are not included in the examples below]
(P)&(C) Reminders: Islamic law, injunctions, fatwa & opinions	These may be based on Islamic injunctions, Qur'anic verses or hadiths. But many times it is just opinions. Pictures posted are often related to <i>hijabis</i> in tight-fitting clothes.	Picture of woman wearing turban with the caption “turbans that women wear are <i>haram</i> (not permissible) –Sheikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, Fatwa for Muslim Women (p. 48)” Picture of woman in niqab and two other hijabis in tight-fitting clothes with the caption: “Please...? Don't change the meaning of hijab just because ur loving to showoff ur body parts. Don't disgrace Islam” “So what if their hair is a topic in poems, your modesty is a topic in the Qur'an” “So the angrier Allah gets with the woman, the more she undresses, whereas the more pleased Allah is with a woman, the more she covers (out of modesty)” [This picture is accompanied with a Qur'an verse]
(C) Praise, compliments	Typically saying nice things about the account owner or the picture posted	“Slay girl!”, “Wow!!!”, “Yasss biss”, “OMG YOU SLAYYYY”, “On point”, “Awesome hijab love the whole outfit”
(C) Queries	Usually asking about the brand name and where to buy them, OR questions about Islamic law or requesting for further clarification	“Where is the jacket from? It's so <i>peng</i> ” “...WHY are they haram? Can you explain!?”

Type of Post (P)/ Comments (C)	Detail	Example [Emojis are not included in the examples below]
(P) Instructional	Used as an educational tool or guide to tell women how to dress properly	Picture of hijabi with the caption “The right way of wearing the hijab”
(C) Counsel (also known as “ <i>Haram</i> Police” or “ <i>Haram</i> -policing”	Usually admonishes the account owner or picture posted, lays down Islamic injunctions or opinions, purpose is usually to give counsel and chiding for a change. These may be about the fashion style itself, or it may be about other commentators who admonished the picture.	<p>“SubhanAllah I’ll be so happy when sisters realize they can’t do what the disbelievers do one of the conditions of hijab is to not imitate the dress of the disbelievers”</p> <p>“Yeah even so the picture of her specifically is unnecessary. Advise her in private or use other peoples’ (picture) too as an example. She’s not the only influencer wearing a turban”</p> <p>“Maybe you want to read the Qur’an, it’s written in there how a woman should cover her head and explicitly explains how and in what way”</p> <p>“Don’t wear high heels oh ukhti (sister)... The Prophet forbade it because it’s not good for your womb”</p> <p>“Why people don’t wanna believe it’s haram. Everyone knows what is haram and what’s not”</p> <p>“It’s haram because majority of the time the neck is shown which is pointless because that’s not the point of wearing hijab. It’s meant to cover the head including hair, neck and chest area”</p>

Type of Post (P)/ Comments (C)	Detail	Example [Emojis are not included in the examples below]
(C) Defense	Written by a commentator who is defending the account or picture	“With all due respect Allah does not judge a person by what they wear it’s their character and their belief in God it’s what good you do in this world . Girls in Burka or Niqab
(C) Prayer	Usually written as a simple comment on a contentious picture of a hijabi wearing “modest fashion”	“May Allah guide our Ummah #realdeen” “May Allah have mercy on us ummah, amen”
(C) Vulgar Trolling	Comments are often written by (apparently) male account users and aimed at “trolling” or poking fun in a sarcastic, vilifying manner	On a picture of a hijabi dressed in tightly fitting baju kurung, to the extent that the shape of her breasts were seen, commentator @arifamin01 said “Wow so big”, followed by the “wide eyes” emoji.

Discussion & Conclusions

Women have, for a very long time, been targets of shaming for whatever they wear. In particular, the phenomenon of “slut-shaming” – where scantily clad women who celebrate and embrace their sexuality in a more conspicuous way – is the exact opposite of what we observe with the kinds of criticisms that the fully covered Muslim women receive. In this sense, Instagram is but another platform for women to be targets of social correctness, whatever that may look like. When justified with religious injunctions and prophetic hadiths, such mediations of what constitutes as modest fashion can be quite compelling. Some users will occasionally respond to the “shaming” or counsel offered to them, displaying a type of self-defense against unsolicited advice and policing (Figure 10).

While it is compelling to engage with the debates relevant to Islamic veiling, this is beyond the scope and intent of the present study. Instead, this paper has positioned itself within the broader discourse of Muslim women’s transnational identity representation, specifically ones that are played out or “performed” on social media. I explored this through the performativity of “modest fashion,” within the context of the widely popular online social media platform, Instagram. Much of the *hijabi* “lifestyle” and embodiment is in fact performed on this highly accessible, decidedly public, yet simultaneously intimate and private, mobile application. The very nature of Instagram allows for mass sharing of pictures to a global audience, and followers of specific user accounts have access to a series of often carefully curated collection of digital photos – right in the palms of their hands. In this way, the *hijab* is ever more hypervisible, but there is now a turn in the way that it is narrated and understood, as women who wear them are presenting it in a different, postmodern context. Like Waninger’s study of online visual discourse of hijabi blogs, I tend to agree that the portrayal of fashion-forward Muslim women is not only embraced and celebrated on Instagram, but the visual discourse similarly “perpetuates Western notions of consumerism while also creating new spaces of identity-making for Muslim women within the online fashion world” (2015: 41).



Figure 10. When confronted with a comment from @indraswaridesi on her incomplete "modesty", which is roughly translated as follows: "Oh dear, your knowledge of wearing hijab is too minimal... That's quite enough, if you're wearing the jilbab and still showing hair... and furthermore the skirt is floating/short"; "It's only hijab fashion in her mind, instead of hijab to cover the *aurat*"; social media influencer @bashharry defended herself by suggesting the commentator to reflect on her own behavior.

In this preliminary study, eight categories were revealed from the content analysis of the photos and comments on Instagram, constituting a typology of Instagram content on Muslim modesty and modest fashion. While these are useful, we still need to ask the question: What are the common threads connecting modesty and modest fashion that are conveyed in this virtual space? And to what extent do they reflect life offline? In essence, these questions direct us to the notion of a socially mediated publicness mentioned earlier in this essay, and emphasize the process of social construction and (re)negotiation of what it means to be modest. Here, I have found three main types of modest fashion narratives found on Instagram:

1. **The Reproach narrative.** This narrative is marked by criticizing words that appear to admonish, berate, and vilify the acts of "covering up" or *hijabing* that do not

measure up to a certain standard, which may or may not be within the parameters of *syar'ie*, or as understood by the commentator. It is further complicated by the fact that there are different schools of Islamic jurisprudence (mazhab) and commentators may come from different cultural environments (and beliefs). At times the comments appear to “discipline” people’s actions, to “teach” them the proper way of modest wear; in essence, they act as advice. Many comments also react or reject to the Reproach narrative, often citing that what the women wear are “between them and God”, and the best way to advice as Muslims is to do so discreetly (i.e. by sending Direct Messages). Sometimes this narrative includes public shaming, ridiculing/pointing out “this is not hijab”, and comments with sarcastic undertones.

2. **The Aggrandizement narrative.** These comments and pictures speak of the women in a generally positive way, often appearing to disregard what others deem as non-compliance to *Syari'e* way of modest wear. They essentially accept all forms and ways of wearing the hijab as a trend and fashion statement, not just as a Muslim identity. These comments praise, show admiration, and even glorify the contents and users that upload the photos. For them, whatever the women choose to wear is really up to them. Influence is garnered when followers idolize the ways in which these women curate their everyday wear. But to what extent this is true can only be addressed with further research that dig deeper into the behaviors of users – because we do not know for sure that comments in praise of the photos/influencer are in reality genuine or otherwise.
3. **The Ambivalence narrative.** Comments along this vein show a level of uncertainty, and at times, neutrality about how modest fashion is represented. By and large, these include admonishing tones followed with a message about how the choice of what to wear and how far the women want to express their modesty is related to their level of piety, closeness to God, and their level of belief. This narrative appears to some extent relinquish the “duty” of judging and counseling and leave it up to God to judge (We can see this Figure 11 recently from the de-hijabized influencer, @littlemisskhan).

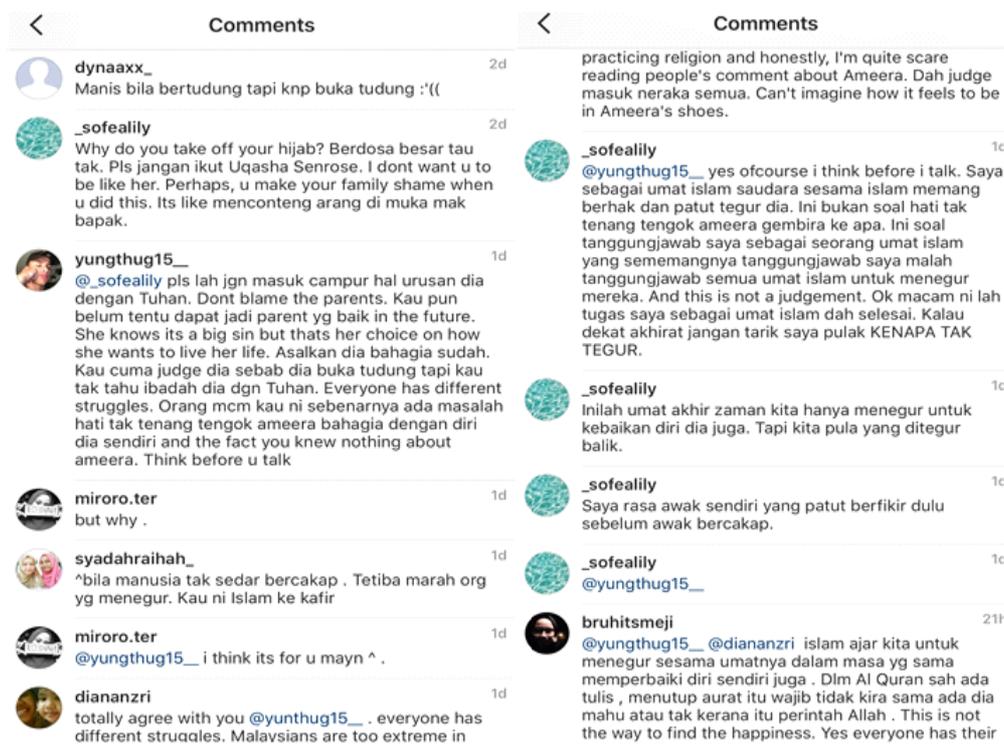


Figure 11. Written largely in Malay, the comments in @littlemisskhan's posts have erupted due to her recent de-hijabing/de-veiling. In the above comment by @yungthug15_ who is seen arguing with user @_sofealily, the former shows ambivalence and to some extent, defense, for the pictures: "Please don't be in the way of her business with God [...] She knows it's a big sin but that's her choice on how she wants to live her life". Others would comment that it is their duty as Muslims to say something about sinful actions.

It is interesting to see further in future how these types of narratives play out in terms of defense mechanisms, as well as (re)negotiation and regulation of an evolving *hijabi* identity (or identities) online, particularly on Instagram and perhaps even newer, more popular social media platforms. Furthermore, the introduction of newer options for content users of Instagram in late 2016, such as disabling comments, means that certain narratives, in particular, of the Reproaching persuasion, can effectively be silenced for good. In fact this has already happened, as referenced in the Ambivalence narrative above, influencer @littlemiskhan, who has recently de-hijabized and has begun to upload a continuous stream of her hijab-less pictures,

has also opted to disable commenting. As a result, followers have been quick to panic, showing their remorse and disappointment with her decision to unveil, and certainly, plenty of advise have followed suit in her older posts (where comments are still enabled).

While there are a number of studies focused on the experiences of *hijabis* and the way their identities are constructed both online and offline, as well as studies on the meanings attached to the hijab, none were found to be focused specifically on the meaning of modesty in the portrayal of quotidian modest fashion. Furthermore, this study is novel in its approach of utilizing content analysis (of both textual and visual in nature) in its search for the meaning of Islamic modesty on Instagram. The lengthy discussion on methods in previous sections provides a replicable audit trail for future research to replicate, if not improve. While it is very important to explore the meaning of the hijab among its wearers, here I argue that it is equally imperative to study the underpinning concept behind Islamic dress code, which is modesty, or *al-hayā*. This study thus furthers the discussion within the larger literature on hijabs performed online and specifically on social media.

The main concern of this study has also been in the interpretation and articulation of modesty through modest fashion as performed on Instagram; hence the inquiry, “How modest is modest fashion?” Future research will need to address the opposite of the constantly negotiated, (re)constructed, and protean notion of the hypervisible modest fashion. After all, the more orthodox modest Muslimah wear also claims its space within the multi-billion dollar fashion industry. Another area of interest is how commentators react to and interact with influencers who have chosen to de hijabize themselves. Another question relevant to this study is, to what extent can fashion and modesty be combined – and how are contradictory notions of modest fashion reconciled? This and many other inquiries related to the burgeoning modest fashion industry and the preservation of modest wear in accordance to *syar’ie*, are amongst some of the issues that future research could look into. The involvement of modest fashion vendors in (re)creating the narratives surrounding the hijab and what constitutes as “modest” should also be explored deeper, particularly in relation to trendsetting. Further research should examine the relationship between market trendsetting and

consumer culture, and assess which direction modest fashion is redefined – whether it is shaped by the consumer demands, or is it dictated by the fashion labels with their hype-building strategies. The results should be relevant to how modest fashion is then reconciled with *syar'ie* and fatwas.

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The Trans-Asia Politics of K-Beauty: Focusing on Images at 'E-Dae Ap' (in front of Ewha Womans University) Cosmetics Shops

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Introduction

Appearance management, including makeup, diet, and cosmetic surgery, has been one of the most important issues in feminist research. Feminist studies on appearance management has started from appearance as women's problem and analysis about women as victims under the patriarchy (Ko and Jung, 1992; Bordo, 1993:29-38). Later, it has developed the analysis about how consumption capitalism makes the discourse on women's body, appearance, and health (Kim, 2001; Choi, 2004; HanSeo, 2000). Also, how knowledge/power regime such as media or medicine medicalize beauty (Kim, 2013; Na et al., 2009; Lee, 2006; Lee, 2009; Lim, 2002; 2010; Lim and Kim, 2012; Han Seo, 2000; Pitts-Taylor, 2007) and the implication of subjectivity, which is constituted through bodily practice (Jones, 2010; Choi, 2004; Tae, 2012; HanSeo, 2000; Bordo, 1993) have been studied. Here, westernized appearance such as white skin, big eyes and tallness has been operated as the standard for making Asian women's subjectivity.

By the way, we recently noticed that the standard of women's beauty has been diversified by region. Especially, Korea has been risen as one of the space for "Asian beauty." So called "Korean style" of makeup, fashion and cosmetic surgery got huge popularity among Asian young women. It is called "K-beauty." Then, what does it mean in terms of feminist perspective on appearance management?

Usually, Korean media report the superiority of Korean beauty industry for explaining this phenomenon. This is true to some degree in that Korea's beauty industry has been existent for more than fifty years. However, such a view has a limit since it understands beauty, culture, and practice as a cultural apparatus that is inherent and finished inside each nation. In fact, it is difficult to ignore the global consumption

capitalism and its trans-local acceptance's effect on certain beauty culture and practice by region. In this regard, we should consider, encounter, and exchange among Asian young women in terms of "K-beauty."

This study tries to analyze trans-Asian meaning of K-beauty's image focused on "E-Dae Ap" (in front of Ewha Womans University) cosmetics shops. The area around Ewha Womans University used to be famous for unique clothes, artistic accessories, and sophisticated hair shops for young Korean college students. However, it seems to have become the place for satisfying Asian young women K-Beauty tourists. There are a lot of group tourists from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. It is not difficult to find out 2 or 3 tourists from Southeast Asian countries as well. Without these tourists, this area would lose liveliness. Why do they visit this area and what do they do? For them, what does K-beauty's image mean? Does it really affect their concept of "beauty" and subjectivities? This study researches these questions in terms of trans-Asian meaning of K-beauty's image. Main research methods are the textual analysis and qualification method such as interview and image analysis.

Why 'E-dae ap' (in front of Ewha Womans University)?

"E-Dae Ap" (in front of Ewha womans university) is one of Seoul's most famous tourist attractions along with Myeong-Dong, Gwanghwa-Mun, Insa-Dong and Gangnam. Actually, Shinchon area, where Ewha Womans University is located, is well-known as the place full of young people's energy because there are four famous universities in the area. In particular, "E-Dae Ap" has had a high reputation for unique fashion center from 1960's until 1990's. At this time, it was common to see photo journalists from fashion magazines who were looking for target in the street around Ewha.

Since the success of *Hallyu* (Korean Wave) drama in the early 2000s, Japanese tourists increased. Myeong-Dong and Insa-Dong were popular places to visit for them. In the mid-2000's, Chinese and Southeast Asian tourists joined *Hallyu* tourists because Korean dramas started to be exported in earnest. For example, the drama "Coffee Prince 1st Store," which was broadcasted in 2007, got tremendous popularity in the Asian region. The background of this drama was Shinchon area. Since then, Shinchon

area, including “E-Dae Ap” was added as Asian tourists’ spot. “E-Dae Ap” was designated as “the street you want to visit” by Seoul metropolitan government in 2007. Above all, China’s overseas travel liberalization in 2008 was the most important reason to increase Chinese tourists in Korea.

The popularity of the Korean Wave in China and Southeast Asia since 2010 has been followed by reality show “Running Man.” Especially after Ewha Womans University came out of this program in 2013, “E-Dae Ap” has been widely known as a place to visit for tourists from China and Southeast Asia. Five Chinese young women tourists who I interviewed all came to know Ewha through “Running Man.” They told me they became interested in the beautiful western style of buildings of Ewha through this program. The fact that Ewha is a women’s university also attracted their interest because there are no women’s university in China. In addition, the reputation of the traditional Ewha’s business district was an important reason to visit for them.

To sum up, Korean wave media contents, the image of Ewha Womans University as old, beautiful, and prestigious women’s university and reputation of a business district are the reasons why Ewha Womans University became famous for young female tourists in Asia. As proof of this, “moving tourist information center” by Seoul Metropolitan Government near Ewha was established and has been running since April 2010.¹

The Meaning of K-beauty Image of ‘E-Dae Ap’ (in front of Ewha Womans University)

As the number of tourists in China and Southeast Asia soared, so did the number of shops targeting them around Ewha Womans University. Among them, cosmetics shops have been overwhelming. Due to the competition of cosmetics shops, rents in the area skyrocketed and old unique clothes shops and artistic accessory stores were left out.² The hair shops were not an exception. It was symbolic that a hair shop with

¹ “Interview with tourist interpreters in ‘Shinchon Tourists’ Information,” Ewha Womans University newspaper, 2011.10.4.

² “In front of the main street of Ewha business district where tourists occupied”, Ewha womans university newspaper, 2015.3.23

a history of 50 years, which was located right next to the main gate of Ewha, turned into a restaurant for *Hallyu* tourists a few years ago and then changed to a cosmetic shop last year. Currently, more than 30 cosmetics shops for Asian tourists are in lively business around Ewha.

In this section, the trans-Asian significance of “K-beauty” images displayed at the cosmetics shops “E-Dae Ap” is analyzed.

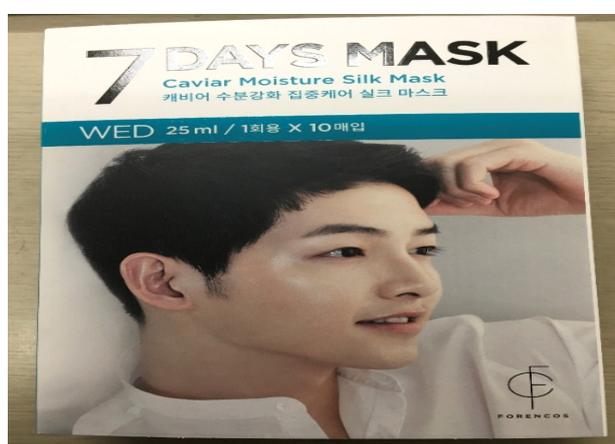
1. Popular *Hallyu* Drama and ‘K-beauty’ Image

Female actor Song Hea-Gyo and male actor Song Joong-Gi are standing facing each other in front of Ewha. What does it mean? Look at the picture below.



They are working as models for each of the cosmetics brand shops they face. They are the male and female protagonists of the popular Korean drama “Dawn of the Sun,” which was aired last year. This drama was broadcasted in China at the same time in Korea and was very popular in China and Southeast Asia.

Interestingly, both of them are not only prominent figures but also actors famous for “good” skin. Song Joong-Gi published the book “Good Skin Man Project” in 2010.³ Below is the product which one of the interviewees bought at a cosmetics brand shop using Song Joong-Gi as a model. She was 25 years old who works at an office.



She told me she became a big fan of actor Song Joong-Gi after watching the drama “Dawn of the Sun.” Therefore, the mask pack which he advertises was a good souvenir for her. During our conversation, she admired several times his “skin texture [that was] better than a woman’s.” She also mentioned “Korean people’s good skin,” which is smooth and light. I pointed out that those characteristics were not that of common people but those in a specific occupation like actors or entertainers. But she and her friends said that the Koreans’ skin was softer and brighter than the Chinese. The best-selling product, mask pack and cleansing foam, proves their interest in the skin. Look at the picture below.

³ “Song Joong-Gi, Hard Handsome Man.” Magazine IZE, 2016.3.14.



One cosmetics brand even promotes “the skin of a Korean actress” as a motto. Their motto is “if you use our cosmetics, you can have the skin of [a] Korean actress.” As such, Korean Wave media contents have a decisive influence on the composition of the K-Beauty image, which focuses on smooth and radiant skin.

2. *Water Light Make-up*: Self-Management of Neoliberal (Female) Subject in Korea

If so, are Koreans’ skin originally smooth and shiny? It is not. This kind of skin can be shown through specific cosmetic procedures. The Korean cosmetic industry has begun to emphasize the smooth and radiant skin texture dating back to about 2007. This cosmetic method called “*water light makeup*” is rapidly gaining popularity among entertainers, especially actresses. Below is a big hit image of cosmetics ads at that time.



The essence of the “water light makeup” is that it is “naturally shiny like originally good skin.” Here is a paradox that requires unnaturalness to look natural. Then, why has “water light makeup” been popular in Korea since 2007? First of all, it is necessary to understand that makeup is not an expression of personality but labor of working femininity for Korean women, especially working women. Even the expression “women’s makeup is a kind of duty” is openly used. So to speak, Korean working women have no freedom not to makeup.

In addition, the mid-2000s was when neoliberalism was introduced after the peak of the 1997 financial crisis. Individuals were all forced to become neoliberal self-development subjects (Seo, 2005). In particular, women had to be flexible subjects between “women” and “individual” to be responsible for the various burdens and conflicts caused by the neoliberal society. In a society where “individual” is identified as male, this is a dual project. Women had to be like men, and they had to manage the competitiveness and risk of women as they continued beautifying their femininity (Yum, 2016). In this sense, “water light makeup,” which requires artificiality to look innate, has been operating a great self-management of neoliberal (female) subject in Korea.

3. ‘K–Beauty’: The Making of Trans–Asian Modern Working Women?

As we have seen, the trend of “water light makeup” business that started in 2007 overlapped with the trend of China’s overseas travel liberalization in 2008 and the popularity of Korean media contents in China and Southeast Asia. In particular, young Asian women’s interest in their skin is related to their lifestyle change. Modernization and capitalization in Asia are changing the lives of women, their sense on the realm of public and private, and their interest in femininity. Here, consumption is “...a pivotal concept to use in thinking about the place of gender in the new affluence” (Stivens and Sen, 1998: 5).

The 20’s Chinese working women I interviewed stated that Chinese makeup is “strong like stage makeup.” On the other hand, Korean style of makeup seems “natural.” Reflecting the interest in the skin itself, the most popular products for them were mask packs and cleansing foams. Below are the products from one of the

interviewees.



They were interested in “the skin that seemed to be managed with care, time, and effort” and “styling that could be done in one or two points without over exaggeration.” Likewise, consumption for the skin constitutes female subjectivity who does public labor but also retains her femininity. To them, Korea is a place where products and image models exist that can satisfy the detailed interests about beauty and fashion. In other words, K-beauty shows us the process of remaking “femininity” of modern working women in affluent new Asia.

Conclusion

This study tried to analyze trans-Asian meaning of K-beauty’s image focusing on “E-Dae Ap” (in front of Ewha Womans University) cosmetics shops with textual/image analysis and interview. As a result of the survey, “E-Dae Ap” has emerged as a must-see destination for Asian tourists, especially young women tourists since the mid-2000s. Here, the popularity of Korean media contents in Asia, which aired in the background of Ewha Womans University and China’s overseas travel liberalization in 2008 have had major impacts. Since then, “E-Dae Ap” has rapidly transformed into a shopping area for Asian tourists centering cosmetics shops.

Cosmetics shops around Ewha have been trying to draw tourists’ interest by

using popular Korean wave drama characters as models. The products that these cosmetics brands are promoting from the mid-2000s are the “watery skin” that is popular in Korea, that is to make the skin smooth and glazed, which seems to contain moisture naturally. “Water light makeup” began to become popular in the period when neoliberalism was the most prevalent in Korea and is a cosmetic procedure that requires an unnatural process to look natural. In this sense, “water light makeup” is a great self-management of neoliberal (female) subject in Korea.

Working young women in cities in China and Southeast Asia are also facing the process of reconstruction of femininity. Korea’s beauty and fashion industry, which emphasized natural skin and unexaggerated point styling, seems to provide a way to live as a working subject in the public domain without losing femininity. Korea is the place where it reconstitutes modern working women’s femininity through the consumption of “feminine” industry such as beauty and fashion.

However, this study is merely an inquiry into the trans-Asian significance of K-Beauty. It will be necessary to supplement this with specific studies on how “K-Beauty” works in other areas in Korea and in Asian countries.

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Femininity in the Auto/Biographies of Ageing Female Celebrities: Portraying Third Age in Contemporary Indonesian Culture

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Abstract

This paper investigates the notion ageing femininity as it is performed within the frame of celebrity culture which privileges youthfulness in beauty and body image. It focuses on the issues of age, the process of ageing, the significance of ageing, the impact of ageing as part of the construction of celebrity identity and femininity. Age[ing] is an important context that female celebrities need to negotiate and embrace the ways in which cultural values need to be considered as well. Looking into the portrayal of the auto/biographical subjects and the visual images used, the paper argues that celebrities negotiate, transform and extend their forms of femininity as they age. Both auto/biographies present their auto/biographical subjects to show the construction of appealing ageing celebrity femininities that are closely linked to the characteristics of the Third Agers, being fit, fashionable, functional and flexible.

Keywords: Ageing femininity, celebrity, beauty, body image, auto/biography

Introduction

Old age is particularly difficult to assume because we have always regarded it as something alien, a foreign species: "Can I have become a different being while I still remain myself?" (Beauvoir, 1975: 29)

When I celebrated my 40th birthday, I found myself a new woman, a confident, still relatively slim, still looking pretty (somewhat), a woman of the world. My life was somehow complete. Despite the deeply unhappy marriage, I had two children and it made me feel complete. I celebrated my 40 when I was abroad doing my doctoral

degree funded by a prestigious scholarship. I was acutely aware that I wasn't young anymore and I somehow felt very confident about my age. I never hid my age when people actually asked, and people did actually ask. In my forty, I didn't feel old. My hair was still black, except for some strains that I thought came from the stress of doing my Ph.D. My face was still free from the ageing traces, no blemishes, no wrinkles yet. Years went by, I still felt that I was still 40, until the day I turned 46. That day, I realized I was more of a 50-year old than a 40-year old. Being 50 sounded so much different from being 40. Forty is young, fifty is not. Then my body became truer to my age. I gained weight, I got blemishes, I got tired more easily, and I tend to be more forgetful as well. I am becoming a person I know nothing of. As Beauvoir writes, I feel I'm becoming "an alien - a foreign species" (1975: 420) 1975: 420). While I still embody the same body, my body is not the same.

Ageing, Body Image, and Celebrity Culture

The issue of ageing has taken more attention now. More researches on old age and ageing people are emerging. However, the issue of ageing, particularly in relation to gender and ethnicity, has been, in general, largely neglected (Wray, 2003) Wray, 2003). The experience of ageing is different between that of men and women. In effect, Wray (2003) 2003) argues, following Ginn and Arber (1993) 1993), that "sexism and ageism [...] constructs a double standard of ageing and its effect on women". The way ageing women and men's bodies are perceived serve as a very clear evidence of how women's bodies continue to be a site of struggle more than the bodies of men. Ageing women's bodies, just like young women's bodies, continue to be biasedly perceived compared to that of men's bodies. Clarke (2011) 2011) observes that many literature on the issues of gender and ageing address three different areas that are actually interconnected, namely (1) body image, beauty ideology and the politics of women's bodies, (2) embodiment, and (3) the politics of ageing.

The issue of ageing bodies is a crucial entry point to understand better how ageing is perceived and experienced. Following Cash et.al. (1997) 1997), Clarke proposes that "body image encompasses thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about, as well as investment in the body" (2011: 20) 2011: 20). She further explains that on one

hand, body image concerns the assessment and perception about one's body, also in its comparison with other's bodies. On the other hand, body image pertains the investment one makes about one's body. This investment is closely related to what Bartky (1997) 1997) argues as a form of self-surveillance, or what Bordo (1995) 1995) underlines as self-monitoring and disciplining. In short, investment in body image is a form of managing the bodies. Julia Twigg (2015) 2015) defines this form of body management as "bodywork," which includes the various "carework" that imposes bodies to the different procedures and experiences.

As ageing bodies are not the normative bodies in the culture that takes youthfulness as the norm and the normal, ageing bodies are "strange" and even laughable. People mock at ageing bodies, some brave people actually laugh at their own old[er] and ageing bodies. At times maybe out of desperation of the inevitable.

Taking into account another aspect of embodiment, ageing body provides a crucial site for further discussion as the body is almost always presented through dress and clothing, which are always culturally and socially bound. Dress and clothing present another intersecting point between culture, ageing, gender, body and embodiment. As Twigg delineates, talking about dress and clothing, in this case in the context of old age and ageing bodies, we can pursue further discussion on "identity, performativity, moral regulation, governmentality, and resistance" (2015: 57) 2015: 57). It is through dress and clothing that women's bodies experience more act of policing and surveillance. The current issue in France regarding the "burqini" reminds us again how women's bodies continue to be the object of regulation and discipline of different powers, orders, and ideology. Being what Entwistle (2000) 2000) defines as "situated body practice," dress and clothing serve as the "boundary between the body and its social presentation, and as such, they reflect ideas and norms," (Twigg, 2015: 60) Twigg, 2015: 60) including those pertaining to old age and its related cultural assumptions and expectations.

Within the specific context of popular and celebrity culture where I locate the object of my research, glamor and youthfulness have constantly served as enforced norms. In this context, ageing bodies provoke more questions regarding how old age and ageing bodies are displayed and continue to significantly represent the celebrity

status, and how ageing bodies negotiate the norms of youthfulness and ideal beauty that highly focuses on young bodies. As quoted by Jermyn (2012: 2) 2012: 2), Holmlund urges that “assessing ageing is one of the key tasks confronting celebrity studies today.”

Young slender body become the significant marker of normative femininity. This puts ageing women in the margins where they have to navigate around the young and slender norms preferred in the media, and ageing bodies become effectively marginalized, not only in popular culture but also in terms of the research conducted on ageing women. As Hurd (2000: 77) 2000: 77) argues:

The existing literature on women’s body image [which] has largely ignored the experiences of women in later life and [which] has tended to focus on adolescent and middle-aged women...Given the fact that beauty is equated with youthfulness and thinness in our society, older women face unique challenges as they strive to construct and maintain positive evaluations of self.

This is particularly true in women where the body is the predominant marker of femininities, as previously suggested. This marginalization, for example, can be observed in the mushrooming of the so called “anti-ageing” crèmes (Blaikie, 1999; Clarke & Griffin, 2007) Clarke & Griffin, 2007). An article in New York Times - appropriately entitled, *Is Looking Your Age Now Taboo?* (Singer, 2007) Singer, 2007) - delineates different approaches and strategies women adopt in dealing with as well as in combating their age, which range from anti-wrinkle crèmes, botox, to plastic surgery. The obsession for youthfulness also creates a more pressing urge, particularly for the aged and ageing women to an impossible extent to stay young and youthful. According to Biggs (2004: 49) 2004: 49), following Baudrillard, this gives rise to an experience of double absence:

Taking the example of “femininised” identity, one can foster the identity of being a young woman more easily than being an old woman, both of which are arguably premised on an absence. However, old age encompasses a double absence, that of being “not male” and of being “not young.” From being only too visible, one becomes invisible, as the attention of a masculinised and youth-obsessed society

ebbs away.

The issue of ageing in women and women celebrities, in particular, is highly contextual and deeply interwoven among various aspects, including but not limited to: gender, identity, class, socio cultural construction, and even religious beliefs. The issue of “successful ageing” (Gingold, 1992; Knopf, 1975; Neuhaus & Neuhaus, 1982) Neuhaus & Neuhaus, 1982) and the more popular term “ageing gracefully” exemplify the complex issue that ageing presents. The notion of “ageing successfully” has been critically discussed by many theorists, for example, Andrews (1999: 302) 1999: 302), who argues that ageing successfully is “a method... not to age at all, or at least to minimize the extent to which it is apparent that one is ageing, both internally and externally.” Thus “successfully ageing” ageing persons are those who can “pass” as young, who do not look ageing or aged, and more importantly those who actually do not age. The desire to “pass” (Andrews, 1999) Andrews, 1999) implies the desire to remain within the center and at the same time the submission of being in the margin.

Previous research on celebrities and ageing by Marshall and Momin also provides a framework of what Laslett (1987) 1987) coins as “third age” within celebrity context where celebrities portray themselves and/or are portrayed to promote “4Fs” as an aspiration for the Third agers, namely: fit, fashionable, functional, and flexible (2015) 2015). Through the portrayal of celebrities’ particular attributes, characteristics and expectations in their respective auto/biographies, this paper will shed light to how ageing is perceived, negotiated and represented within the specific context of Indonesian popular and celebrity culture.

Celebrity Auto/Biography and the Construction of Ageing Selves

In this article I am looking at the auto/biographies of two Indonesian female celebrities, namely Titik Puspa and Lenny Marline. Their auto/biographies respectively entitled *Titiek Puspa: A Legendary Diva*, written by Alberthiene Endah and *Si Lenny dari Ciateul: Otobiografi Lenny Marlina*, written by a team of five writers, namely Titie Said, Lies Said, Muthiah Alhasany, Titien Sukmono, and Yuni.

The term “celebrities” here refers to glamour celebrities, namely those who work

in the entertainment industry or show business and who encompass various types of entertainment profession (Marshall, 2001) Marshall, 2001). The term “auto/biography” is used because it is a critical intersection of the overlapping practices of autobiography and biography. This paper is informed by the critical approaches both to biographies and autobiographies and argues that the term “auto/biography” is appropriately applied to the new forms of autobiographical practice being generated in Indonesian mass culture by specifically female celebrities.

Initially, Lejeune (1989: xvi) 1989: xvi) offered the conventional definition of autobiography as “retrospective prose narrative that someone writes concerning his [sic] own existence.” In his later works, this definition has been expanded to include the different ways of “referential self-expression...in contemporary culture,” as Eakin (1989: xvii) 1989: xvii) proposes:

“Someone” might well include someone else, a ghostwriter, say, or oral historian, while the “prose narrative” in question might in fact be a transcript or oral discourse, broadcast on the radio or presented in film. The ownership implicit in the phrase “his own life,” moreover, was now frequently a subject of litigation.

In this way, autobiography, which generically means “self-life-writing” (Stanley, 1992: 43) Stanley, 1992: 43), can potentially include biography as in “life-writing” written by others. As Lejeune has outlined, the boundary of autobiography and biography is becoming blurred. The same argument is raised by Bakhtin (1981: 132) 1981: 132), who asserts that “there could not in principle be any difference between the approach one took to another’s life and to one’s own, that is, between the biographical and the autobiographical point of view.” Following Bakhtin, Marcus (1994: 15) 1994: 15) argues that “autobiography” is a “hybrid form” where the “perceived instability and hybridity... are inextricably linked to the problematics of selfhood and identity, with the boundaries between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’, ‘private’ and ‘public’ becoming the sites of the greatest concern.” Thus, her use of the term “auto/biographical” suggests this collapse between autobiography and biography as well as the blurring of various domains that establish auto/biographical subjects.

The discussion on auto/biography by/on women also raises the issues of the

content included in the auto/biography. With the conventional auto/biography tells the narrative of success of male auto/biographer where public achievement is the primary focus, the auto/biography by/on women tells more of the personal, the everyday, and even those considered trivial. As Miller (2002) 2002) observes, there is often an exclusion of the everyday as minor and insignificant in traditional auto/biographies. However, “trivial writings” such as female celebrity auto/biography act as a valuable form of history, in which particular and specific details of the experience of self at a specific locality of time and space constitute a valuable picture of the self. In producing their lived experiences in these formats, women reveal not only their own identities and subjectivities, but also the history, politics and social landscape of their daily lives. By taking up these “trivial” issues, women “talk back” to the structures that mute them.

Through auto/biographies, women establish a space wherein their subjectivities are established by making their lives matter, their opinions surface and their perspectives heard. Cosslett et al maintain “[i]f women have been categorized as ‘objects’ by patriarchal cultures, women’s autobiography gives an opportunity for them to express themselves as ‘subjects,’ with their own selfhood” (Cosslett, Lury, & Summerfield, 2000: 6) Cosslett, Lury, & Summerfield, 2000: 6). Being women and celebrities and ageing, the celebrities discussed in this research touch the different significant issues in what it means to be ageing in contemporary popular culture in Indonesia. I am arguing that auto/biographies of Indonesian female celebrities offer opportunities to negotiate women’s positioning in the cultures that objectify them by subverting existing conventional frameworks (Ussher, 1997) Ussher, 1997). More specifically by the blurring of private and public implied in the use of the term auto/biography.

The term “autobiography” suggests the clear difference between “self and world, literature and history, fact and fiction, subject and object” (Marcus, 1994: 7) Marcus, 1994: 7) and it assumes the containment and the distinctiveness of the subject. Such attributes also imply the knowability of the autobiographical subject, which this article argues otherwise. I am thus proposing that the term “auto/biography” provides more space for potential blurring of such containment. I argue that femininities, particularly

as performed by female celebrities are fragmented yet coherent and drawing on complex ideas of public and private.

Body Image and the Construction of Youthful Self

This subsection examines in more depth how ageing femininity is depicted both through the textual as well as the photographic narratives. The two auto/biographies discussed are quite similarly structured, written by other writers but using the first person narrative, “I”, as if it was written by the celebrities themselves, and not by other writers. Both auto/biographies are written in chronological order and both have the conventional auto/biographical plot of bildungsroman, where the celebrities are depicted as survivors and victors. Both Lenny Marlina and Titiek Puspa are described to have been able to overcome the various obstacles and hardship, financial and otherwise, in their respective life and emerged as prominent, contented, and wealthy celebrities. These auto/biographies are important to look at for this research because not only were they published to mark the crucial stepping stone in terms of the age 50 and 70, but also, as Marshall argues, celebrity is “the embodiment of the battleground” of our own social cultural values and structure (2001: 65) 2001: 65). Research on how these celebrities portray their experience of ageing can arguably provide some understanding about how ageing is perceived within the context of Indonesian locality and Indonesian popular culture in general.

Using the concept of “ageing successfully” combined with the previous understanding proposed by Marshall and Rahman (2015) 2015) on the construction of the Third Age, the article examines how the two auto/biographical subjects are portrayed to have fulfilled the requirement of being in the category of the Third Age, ticking every single F required: fit, fashionable, functional and flexible. More specifically, the article takes a close look at how the two auto/biography deal with the issue of beauty and body that benefit the young un-ageing face and the slim body. In this part of the article, it examines how the two celebrities navigate around the challenges to portray their [un]ageing bodies in cultures that highly value youthfulness and, at the same time, highlight their maturity and well-established celebrity status that actually recognize their seniority.

Comparing the two auto/biographies at hand and thinking of body and beauty as the primary markers of femininity, my attention is drawn to the auto/biography of Titiek Puspa. The title of the auto/biography suggests somewhat positively the issue of age as it claims Titiek Puspa to be “legendary.” One can only be legendary when one has acquired enough age to be a legend. In the cover (Figure 1), Titiek Puspa is portrayed to be wearing a highly decorated kebaya, Indonesian traditional costume. Her hair is also done in a traditional way, with hair bun and flowers. Her eyes are directed sideways, exposing her smooth face and neck. She looks so much younger than her 70 years old of age.

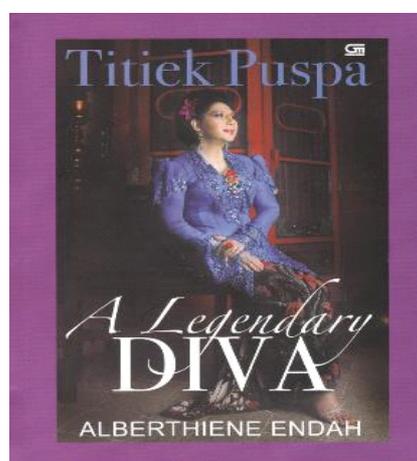


Figure 1. The Cover of Titiek Puspa’s Auto/Biography

Titiek Puspa’s auto/biography is very much structured like a fashion magazine, with images of her in glamorous gowns and background scattered predominantly throughout the book. The first chapter of the book is illustrated by a two-page continuous image, half of which portrays Titiek Puspa in a golden highly glamorous long gown (Figure 2). Her hair is done up, her makeup is perfect. Again, her eyes are diverted sideways, her face and neck are exposed, free from wrinkles. Even through the first two images, it can be suggested that the narrative structure that lies heavily on the photographic narrative provides a way of blurring the age. The images unmistakably portray Titiek Puspa as a much younger person than she actually was at

the time of the publication of the book.



Figure 2. Glamorous image

Figure 3. Chapter title page

On the first page of this chapter, a glamorous image of Titiék Puspa is presented (Figure 2). This glamour image is followed in the adjacent page by the title of the chapter (Figure 3) which refers to her experience of economic disadvantage, the time when she was so poor she even ate cat food (the head of the salted fish, which is not usually consumed by people). This contrast blurs the temporal relationship between the image and the narrative. While the narrative reveals the auto/biographical subject in the position of a poor girl, the image shows the auto/biographical subject in her position as a Diva, a beautiful, successful, and wealthy woman. Deeper reading into the narrative also finds discrepancy with the image as the narrative tells in detail the skin diseases that contributes to her being unappealing as a child, while the image shows no traces of the skin diseases, erasing the younger poor self and replaces it with the older and wealthier self who nevertheless still retains her youthfulness and beauty. It can be argued that this image suggests agelessness. Age is made absent through the depiction of transcendence of chronological age and disconnection from the actual narrative following the image. Keeping in mind the framework of successful ageing, Titiék Puspa is shown to have been able to “cheat” age. Her portrayal of self is represented by a young[er] version of herself, who is both herself and not.

However, despite, or because of the very fashionable gowns, some of the photographs reveal the tension between the desire to portray youthfulness and the reality of old age because the chronological facial features and bodies cannot always be transcended. The image of Titiiek Puspa in Cleopatra-like gown and hairstyle (Figure 4) presents an ambiguous auto/biographical subject, who is neither old nor young and who is simultaneously both old and young. She is both herself and other.



Figure 4. Titiiek Puspa, Cleopatra

In this image Titiiek Puspa's attempt to manage her 70 year-old identity has been complicated by the fact that age is negatively contextualized. This ordinary image of her "looking young" in her seventies can cross over into "unusual," namely "strange" and "unnatural," which may explain why this image is not very successful in its attempt to portray her age-defying image. As Biggs (2004) 2004) argues, the equation of youth to beauty is problematic for mature women. A seventy-year-old woman who attempts to look thirty or even twenty is disconcerting. It is even more disturbing when an older woman is portrayed to be sexual. While "well-preserved" (Bildtgård, 2000) Bildtgård, 2000) older women are more easily "allowed" to create a sexual image of herself, in general, women's older bodies and sexuality are considered revolting (Vares, 2009) Vares, 2009).

The consciousness of concealing age implies the consciousness of its presence. The marks of the age itself remain adamant. Early in her auto/biography, Titiek Puspa has already addressed the issue of ageing as she shares the story of finding “*wrinkles [...] playing more cheerfully*” (Endah, 2008: 13) Endah, 2008: 13) in her face, then tells, “*luckily I like making up, wearing powder and blush on so that I can still play hide and seek with wrinkles*” (Endah, 2008: 13) Endah, 2008: 13). Here age is presented as a game over which she has power to choose either to submit to it or to resist it, and makeup is a technology used to negotiate the ageing skin. However, it can also be argued that wrinkles, as the representation of age, is presented as something embarrassing, if not shameful, that needs to be hidden, and make-up is a form of body management applied specifically to manage age.

Other body management is observed in her daily life, portrayed in the advertisements she models. In the latter part of the book, there are pages of commercial narratives where she is the model. In those pages she describes the various “recipes” to her young-looking body and face. The first advertisement to appear is a milk brand targeted for adult people. In the copy of the advertisement, Titiek Puspa explains at length how she maintains a healthy lifestyle to keep fit and active, illustrated by various images of her drinking the milk, showing how healthy and fit she is. All images show her at work, again illustrating her functionality and flexibility, “... my body is still dynamic in carrying out my different activities” (Endah, 2008: 335) Endah, 2008: 335).

The following advertisement is for “natural cosmetics” boasting to have been derived from Indonesian traditional recipe of beauty. Titiek Puspa’s motto, as she conveys, is actually used as the tagline of the advertisement, “The Secret to keep youthful and free from stress.” Her youthful body image and beauty show how “well-preserved” she is and they have become her investment not only for living a functional life, but also to continue working as a professional performer.

As I have outlined, maintaining a particular bodily appearance are crucial in normative forms of femininity. While the arrangement of the images obscures a coherent, chronological narrative, it functions as a strategy for “age management” (Biggs, 2004) Biggs, 2004) through which one defies one’s age and conceals it through

narrative.

In Titiek Puspa's auto/biography, the present is stabilized in the glossy colored images taken in studios or other "sterilized" spaces, while the past is mostly suggested through black and white images. I offer further examples of how Titiek Puspa's age is managed through the deployment of sporadic images of herself in the present time and in the past, i.e. pictures of herself as a seventy-year-old woman and the counterposing images of herself at younger ages.

Five pages into chapter one of Titiek Puspa's auto/biography, the readers are exposed to an old family picture in black and white dated 1948 (Figure 4) taken during the difficult period of war and food scarcity. This image would actually best illustrate the title as the chapter generally describes their difficult life as a big family with so many mouths to feed. The image thus denotes a distant difficult past when Titiek Puspa was young and poor.

However, just like the illustration of the opening of chapter one where the "sad title" is illustrated by a glamorous image of a diva, the picture that refers to their hard past is also countered by another image of the glorious present (Figure 6). I argue that this narrative strategy can also be argued to be a form of age management in the representation of female celebrities. While the "poor" image represents her youth, the current glamorous diva image attempts to retain and renegotiate her youthful image through the instruments of adornments, gown, make-up and hairstyle. Her age is camouflaged, yet her status is highlighted. Similar images are presented throughout the book. Figure 7, placed four pages, later portrays Titiek Puspa looking soulfully outside



Figure 5. Titiek Puspa's old family Figure 6. Glamorous image



Figure 7. Her glamorous image

Figure 8. Natural look

and literally under the light, wearing yet another gown with the color of gold, the symbol of wealth and success. The image reiterates how age is denied through dress and adornments functioning to imply her agelessness. The overly glamorized gowns that she wears in the images are not relevant to any specific time frame of her life. In other words, her gowns do not mark the time in which the auto/biographical subject is located. As shown in the sequence of images (5, 6, 7), there is no connection between Titiek Puspa's image in figure 7 and her image in 8.

The unchronological arrangement of the time frames of the narrative and the images, as well as among images, obscures the age of the auto/biographical subject throughout the book. As we read the text and flip the images, we lose a sense of the subject's chronology and it exposes the readers to gaps and ruptures in the performance of the autobiographical subjects. The auto/biographical subject produced in this kind of photographic narrative is inevitably fragmented. The irony, as Dyer (1987) 1987) argues, is that while we are aware that this celebrity is fragmented both by time and by its split into ordinary and extraordinary iterations, we are encouraged to see that there is consistency and coherence among the different images and, in this way, we are led to believe that she is one and the "same." This then highlights that ageing femininity in female ageing celebrity auto/biographies renders age as absence. The age, especially in the case of Titiek Puspa, is so publicized and familiar that it is not significant anymore. The readers of the auto/biography are led to the idea that no

matter what age she is, she remains the same Titiek Puspa as she was when she began her humble beginning in a small town in Central Java.

The next image (Figure 8), only three pages from the last three images discussed above, is a zoom-in photograph that brings the readers closer to Titiek Puspa's face. It invites the audience to see her not-so-wrinkled face as well as her quite-wrinkled hands. This "natural" image again obscures time. Her simple outfit, the modest make-up and the very simple hair cut imply a more approachable and ordinary persona. Despite or because of some inconsistency, this image represents her as an everyday person. Without the masquerade of gowns and excessive adornment, her age is absent. Her short hair suggests youth, but the wrinkled hands suggest otherwise. Her minimal adornment - very simple earrings, glasses, and a ring - paradoxically invoke youth and simplicity. I argue that this image presents "ageing successfully" in which age is not totally denied, but her "well-preserved" face is emphasized.

This image is later juxtaposed with images of her when she was really young (Figures 9 and 10). Despite the age difference, the two images (Figures 9 and 10) establish the coherence and validity of her "natural" appearance at seventy in Figure 8. This juxtaposition suggests nothing has changed. She is as youthful in her 70s as shown in Figure 7 as she was in her 20 or 30s in Figures 8 and 9.



Figure 9. Titiek Puspa, 1970s



Figure 10. Titiek Puspa, 1980s

Apart from looking young, in her auto/biography, Titiek Puspa is also described to be what is identified as Third Age, namely older people who are fit, fashionable, functional, and flexible. I have discussed how she is portrayed to be still beautiful and, in some regards, young in a rather complex way. Throughout the book, seventy-year-old Titiek Puspa is pictured to have continued being productive as a song writer and active as a singer. While rumors that she had a plastic surgery to maintain her very young-looking face still circulates (Lesmana, 2013) Lesmana, 2013), Titiek Puspa actually acknowledges her age, and consider the fact that she is still fit, functional and flexible – not to mention fashionable – as a blessing from God.

“I am a granny now. I have reached the age of 70s. People say it’s the time to retire, to rest. The fact that I can still be performing on stage, singing, and a little bit dancing, it’s a blessing from God” (Endah, 2008: 257) Endah, 2008: 257)

Apart from the highly choreographed pictures of her in haute couture gowns, the auto/biography also includes quite extensively – twenty three pages altogether – of various candid pictures of her during the concert to celebrate her 70th birthday. The pictures portray her laughing, singing, dancing, rehearsing, and playing around. Professionally she is a very much functioning performer. Her schedule is still tight, and she still earns money that contributes to her agency and independence. “One thing that I am really grateful is that in my 70 years of age, I still can earn my own living...” (Endah, 2008: 9) Endah, 2008: 9). More than that, she finds work rewarding and fulfilling.

“My secretary told me that I had calls requesting for cooperation. My designer told me that my dream gown has been ready and it’s beautiful. My grandchild called me and asked to meet. She wanted to talk about her boyfriend. Inul called me and said she missed me. The President invited me to sing in the Palace. Not to mention the never ending invitations to sing abroad. What will you call that if not a blessing. I have a beautiful life” (Endah, 2008: 13) Endah, 2008: 13).

What is important to note from her remark is that her sense of fulfilled self, with the recognition of her age, is built on different attributes, the profession, the financial

power, the recognition, and the personal relationships with people around her: her family and friends. These are the issues dwelled in depth in her auto/biography, using her own perspective as she narrates to her auto/biographer. Alberthienne Endah, the writer of her auto/biography, aptly notes in her preface that the book is “a note from the heart of a woman” (Endah, 2008: 9) Endah, 2008: 9). Titiek Puspa’s auto/biography is about her personal life - her sense of being a woman, as much as it is about her professional life. The fact that her account of personal life constantly gives context to her account of her professional life means her experience of ageing is perceived positively, and instead of fearing the loss of her young face and body, she embraces it. In the commercial for the milk product, she even compares her active life to those of women so much younger than herself, “I am grateful that in my 70s, I can still do the activities usually carried out by active young women” (Endah, 2008: 332) Endah, 2008: 332). She further remarks that she still has so much enthusiasm for keeping her beauty through healthy lifestyle. This statement underlines again the work done to maintain youthful beauty, which she religiously observes.

In addition to maintaining active life, which is also her objective, she reiterates the healthy life that contributes to her youthful beauty. The title of the commercial of an Indonesian “natural traditional cosmetics” that she models bluntly affirms “natural beauty, the secret to my youthfulness.” This statement can be read firstly, as a form of knowledge sharing among women, taking beauty as a key issue in a woman’s life. Secondly, Titiek Puspa acknowledges that people attribute to her as youthful. Thirdly, the advertisement both acknowledges people’s opinion and also Titiek Puspa’s recognition of her youthful beauty. The advertisement commodifies all those to its own benefit as evident in the tagline of the advertisement, “The secret for keeping youthful and free from stress” (Endah, 2008: 340) Endah, 2008: 340).

However, more than being the model of the product, Titiek Puspa also elaborates her relationship with Martha Tilaar, the owner of the company, that can be traced back to twenty-five years before when she modeled in the newly launched anti-ageing products of the company in 1983 when she was only 45 years old.

“My friendship with Martha Tilaar is still going strong till today. Now we’re both women of 70s. However, in our age that people think we should be ‘resting,’ we

are still doing our girly chats, we are active doing this and that, and of course, we still put on our makeup and be beautiful. We are happy that we have lived our seven decades of life upholding our womanly values” (Endah, 2008: 339) Endah, 2008: 339).

Her depiction again shows her embracing the old age and specifically contributing her happy ageing experience as a woman in the context of her ability to maintain an active and happy lifestyle. This is further validated by her other cosmetics advertisement that she started to model when she was 60 years old. While there is no reference to her old age in the advertisement per se, the commercial narrative clearly makes age a point of significance as the cosmetics to claim it is good for the 70s as it is for the 20s, “cosmetics that is good for the 20 to 40 year-old women might not be good for women in their 70s like me.” The commercial narrative here can be argued to classify women based on age, but as the text goes, it is in fact constructing women to be ageless. It disregards women’s actual needs and condition due to the difference of age and claims the “brand to pay attention to the needs of women of all ages” (Endah, 2008: 346) Endah, 2008: 346). This claim is further elaborated by Titiek Puspa by saying how the cosmetics make her “feel as beautiful as a princess.” Here Titiek Puspa’s girly excitement can be signified to radiate a form of desirable youthfulness. The reference to princesses is arguably a mainstream form of girly desire and fantasy, which she manifests in the form of putting on makeup as girls make believe in playing adult women. Here, interestingly, ageing is experienced as a chance to play a young woman, emphasizing again the construction of youthfulness as a desirable trait and quality.

The products that she represent in various advertisements included in the auto/biography are part and parcel of the auto/biography, and I argue that her femininity is represented in the narrative and the images of the auto/biography as well as through the advertisements she models. Her youthfulness that is constantly featured in the advertisements that she models can be signified as a form of acknowledgment o her achievement in her body/age management. Considering the framework of “Third Age” as a perspective to see her portrayal, it can be argued that in her auto/biography, Titiek Puspa is depicted to belong to the category of the Third Age as a fit,

fashionable, functional and flexible person. Her beauty and body are described to be “well-preserved” with various age management. In the portrayal in the auto/biography, while age is embraced and acknowledged, it is perceived as a manageable challenge that can be negotiated in many different ways. Following Entwistle (2000) 2000), age can be managed through the “technology of the self,” the ways in which one can somehow produce identity to meet certain purposes and/or to submit to certain norms.

Ageing Femininity: Transformations and Establishment

Unlike Titiek Puspa, who retains her glamorous femininity across her full life span as very much reflected in her auto/biography, Lenny Marlina withdrew from the entertainment business when she married her second husband, who was a politician, a month before she turned 45. This retirement from the show business did not end her celebrity status as she continues to appear in public as the wife of her politician husband. Much of her auto/biography is about her life and her relations with people close to her. She dwells on the issue of body and beauty in a different way from Titiek Puspa’s, which I will argue to be a different way of portraying youthfulness and the Third Agers’ attributes.

Lenny Marlina’s auto/biography opens with a series of images of herself in the opening chapter entitled “Series of Self” – or perhaps more accurately “Series of Selves”, ranging from the time she was in junior high school to the time when she’s already married for the second time. Most of the images are candid pictures, which do reflect her age more accurately.

Mostly throughout the book, Lenny Marlina is portrayed as a fresh healthy looking fifty-year-old woman. She does not wear heavy make-up or any glamorous clothing. The only image that can arguably be considered as fashion photography is the one on the cover of the auto/biography (Figure 11), which draws on and reflects her images as it appeared in various magazines in her younger days (Said et al., 2004: xxiv-xxv) Said et al., 2004: xxiv-xxv). The similarities between this image on the cover of the auto/biography, the covers of various women’s magazines, and the advertisements included in the text indicate the deliberate effort to connect this auto/biography to women’s magazines. The inclusion of magazine covers throughout

further strengthens this link and it makes an interesting visual narrative, too. All the magazine covers included are dated 1982 when she was 28 years old. What is interesting is that although the peak period of her career lasted quite a long time, the covers chosen for inclusion are from six different magazines all from the same year. I would argue that age 28 is located as the highpoint not only in terms of Lenny Marlina’s career, but also in her physical beauty. These images serve to solidify the beauty of Lenny Marlina, the auto/biographical subject at one particular time, despite the auto/biography’s account of transition and triumph.



Figure 11. Lenny’s Book Cover



Figure 12. Lenny’s Magazine Covers

I argue, too, that the portrayal of the auto/biographical subject in Lenny Marlina’s auto/biography shows Lenny Marlina to be presenting as a number of different women in the year that she was 28 (Figure 12): she is a calm and makeup-free woman as presented in *Kartini*; a heavily made up and adorned woman who presents a traditional concept of beauty in *Sarinah*; a sophisticated upper-class woman in *Famili*; a seductive persona in the clearly codified celebrity/global culture in *Vista* and *Variasi*, which are entertainment magazines; and a more “natural” woman in need of making up in *Rias* (“rias” in English means to put make-up on), as dictated by the magazine. The constant visual reference to the age of 28 suggests that she presents herself as both aged and timeless. By drawing on diverse images from one time of her life, these pictures of

Lenny are simultaneously marking timelessness and an always existing present.

This transformation is articulated in her auto/biography through the particular portrayal of her femininity, which differs from the celebrity femininity that is imaged earlier in the text. Starting from the chapter “*Getting Married Again*,” she no longer portrays herself as a glamorous celebrity. Rather, she retreats to a more conventional performance of femininity as a full-time housewife and partner. This transformation from celebrity femininity to her newly-embraced mode of traditional femininity is shown as simultaneously mature and youthful. The fact that she has become a full-time wife does not necessarily require her complete withdrawal to the domestic domain because ironically her new status as the wife of a prominent politician transforms her again into another type of celebrity, a public figure, albeit in a different context. Her celebrity status metamorphosed and she is “rebranded” from a film star to a politically involved wife. Her already established fame as a film star is useful to her husband’s effort to gain popularity in his political standing. She not only functions as a wife, but brings her celebrity status into her new femininity. Her continuous public appearances and meetings with important people pictured here in Figures 12 and 13, such as presidents, former presidents, as well as other high-ranking officials and other prominent figures, sustain her transformed celebrity status. Lenny Marlina’s immersion in her new role as a fulltime housewife to an important politician is supported by images where she poses with different former presidents.



Figure 13. Lenny Marlina,
with President Habibie



Figure 14. Lenny Marlina,
with President Megawati

Although the auto/biographical voice of Lenny Marlina presents herself as an ordinary wife and not as a celebrity in her own right, her everyday life is still extraordinary. Many of the seemingly everyday images of her with her husband actually reflect her extensive travel. These foreign settings highlight her extraordinariness and distinctiveness. They also emphasize her high social status. Again, her everyday images, while partially representing her as ordinary, secure her extraordinariness and sustained celebrity status. In fact, there are twenty three travel photographs included in her auto/biography, twenty of which were taken abroad with her second husband (see Figures 15 and 16). These images construct Lenny Marlina as a teenaged-girl, having a good time with her boyfriend. Age is not negotiated through the display of youthful body image, rather through a “girling” process of older women, which, according to Jermyn (2012: 1) 2012: 1), “is symptomatic of postfeminist culture and indicative of a move to push back the boundaries of ageing.” Therefore, I argue that her travel photographs present a complex image of the new mode of femininity that she has embraced through the marriage.



Figure 15. Lenny’s holiday 1



Figure 16. Lenny’s holiday 2

It is this particular portrayal of ageing femininity that distinguishes Lenny Marlina’s celebrity femininity from that of Titiek Puspa. Lenny Marlina’s present is largely represented by images of her with her second husband and the new family she

entered through this marriage. Through these images, I argue that her second husband is signified as the central marker of her new femininity, supposedly different from her previous celebrity femininity. Although she continues to present herself as a fashionable subject, she aims for a more domestic and everyday version of femininity. She embraces her age to the extent that she is even portrayed in trainers in what could otherwise be unappealing poses. I argue that these poses draw on ideals of the contented wife and move away from the glamorous celebrity (see Figure 17). As a wife of a politician, she projects a more restrained and conservative image. Thus, her glamour is shown through objects such as the luxurious home that she established and the expensive painting that represents her Chinese astrology sign, i.e. the horse (Figure 18) rather than through her own appearance.



Figure 17: Lenny in trainers



Figure 18: Lenny's new glamour objects

The images of a good mother and wife are also closely tied to the portrayal of her as a good Muslim. This can be particularly seen in the chapter “*Umrah and Hajj Pilgrimage*.” In this chapter Lenny Marlina talks about her spiritual journey in conjunction with the happiness that she gains from her second marriage. She marks the third pilgrimage that she made with her second husband as the restoration of her

position as a wife that can financially count on her husband as she remarks (Said et al., 2004: 128) Said et al., 2004: 128):

What also felt different was that Mas Bambang paid for this pilgrimage. I had to pay for the two previous pilgrimages.¹ Thus, this time I experienced a really beautiful pilgrimage that was full of spiritual meanings that I did not get in my previous pilgrimages... I also felt the pleasure of cooking for my husband even though we were in a special pilgrimage group.²

The pilgrimage is depicted as another crucial marker of her new femininity, one in which she can submit more completely to her husband. This is particularly due to the fact that in the second marriage, she can financially depend on her husband, contrary to her first marriage when she had to support her family, including her husband's hobbies and business. As the narrative goes, the feeling of being able to submit completely to her husband enhances her sense of spirituality. The many images scattered throughout the auto/biography further emphasized her religiosity. In these images, she is portrayed performing different rituals in Islam, including the Hajj (Figure 19) and the recitation of Al Qur'an (Figure 20). She is also pictured as a good humanitarian through the charity work that she does for orphans, a deed that is considered an obligation in Islam (Figure 21). Thus, through the different images, Lenny Marlina performs her femininity as a good Muslim and a good wife and mother. In other words, in the context of Indonesian femininity, she enacts a certain kind of Indonesian Muslim femininity. There is particular demand for this role in her new position as a politician's wife.

¹ She took the first pilgrimage with her mother in 1991 against her first husband's will and the second with her husband in 1996, which she said "ended up in our divorce" (Said et al., 2004: 127-128) Said et al., 2004: 127-128).

² The special pilgrimage group refers to what in Bahasa Indonesia is known as ONH Plus. In Indonesia, pilgrimage is arranged by the government. The people who want to go on a pilgrimage have to pay ONH (Cost of making the pilgrimage to Mecca). ONH Plus is arranged by private companies and it offers luxury that is not given if one is on the government's scheme.



Figure 19. Lenny's Pilgrimage(2000)



Figure 20. Lenny's reciting Al Qur'an



Figure 21. Lenny's Charities

As I have shown in this section, in the auto/biography of Lenny Marlina, age is present and celebrated as ageing physicality is embraced in the knowing recognition of its changes. The more candid pictures of the present show how Lenny Marlina, the auto/biographical subject as an ordinary (good, loyal) wife and loving and understanding mother, is celebrated. In fact, the transformations of ageing celebrity in both auto/biographies are linked to the roles as mothers and grandmothers, mostly represented by the inclusion of family pictures. In this case family pictures are instrumental in establishing the image of a happy family. Both Lenny Marlina's and Titiek Puspa's auto/biographies include a significant number of family pictures, which I argue following Stanley (1992) largely fall into the category of the "high street norm" of family pictures (Figures 22 and 23).

As argued by Stanley (1992: 29) 1992: 29), high street photograph conventions produce false representations of women/people that "act as a standard that everyone thinks is or should be attractive and desirable and which they should aspire to or at least give the appearance (sometimes literally) of doing so." Following Stanley (1992) 1992), it can be argued that the basic idea of family pictures in general is that people

should look happy, relationally connected, and appealing. The element of happiness is often highlighted by the building of “harmony,” which is observable through the kind of clothing uniforms worn in family pictures. This “uniform” suggests togetherness and familial bonding. Considering the fabrication involved in this process, it is arguable that this kind of photograph somehow presents what Stanley calls a “patterned lie” (1992: 32) 1992: 32). Looking happy or even happiness itself is just an occasion. In the case of family pictures, it is an event when certain happiness is created (Sontag, 1979) Sontag, 1979). Family pictures, thus, secure ideals of the happy family, important in this context because proper Indonesian femininities are closely related to women’s roles in the family. Women are located as the pillars of the family. The family pictures of the celebrities included in these auto/biographies reflect the ways in which the private and the public roles of the female celebrity are molded into a new form, where the private and the public are simultaneously lived.



Figure 22. Lenny Marlina’s family picture



Figure 23. Titiek Puspa’s family pictures

In the cases of both Titiek Puspa's and Lenny Marlina's autobiographies, roles as mother and grandmother are secured by the family pictures of both celebrities. This particular role of being a grandmother is linked to notions of ageing for these auto/biographical subjects, unique in these book-length auto/biographies. These family pictures allow these two auto/biographical subjects to extend their femininity beyond motherhood to grandmotherhood, and also to show that despite their age, they are still fit, fashionable, functional and flexible, both within the personal as well as public domains.

Conclusion

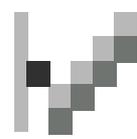
In this paper on ageing femininity, I have discussed how photographic narratives in the auto/biographies of ageing celebrities can be used as a site where the age of the auto/biographical subject is re-negotiated. This is particularly important because of conventional norms of popular culture regarding beauty and youthfulness. In this article, I have shown how ageing celebrities transform and extend their forms of femininity as they age. Particularly in the case of Lenny Marlina's auto/biography, Lenny Marlina the auto/biographical subject is portrayed as transforming her glamorous femininity to a more conventional form of femininity whose primary roles are as a wife and a mother, while in Titiek Puspa's auto/biography, the auto/biographical subject is continuously portrayed as a glamorous celebrity despite her age. In the case of both auto/biographies discussed in this section, the auto/biographical subjects extend their performance of femininity to grandmotherhood as shown in both family pictures. Having examined the various forms of the representation of femininities, I also argue that the ageing auto/biographical subjects continue to occupy both the private and public spheres and the two spheres are blurred and intermingling in the production of these auto/biographical subjects, constantly showing their attributes of the Third Agers: being fit, fashionable, functional and flexible.

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Theme

6

**Gender, Sex/Sexuality
Education, and Culture**

Gender, Sex/Sexuality Education, and Culture

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The role that education plays in understanding *gender* (i.e., self-identification, socio cultural expectations, and social constructs of femininity, masculinity, or intersexuality), *sex* (i.e., biological, physical, and physiological characteristics of the human body), and *sexuality* (i.e., personal interests, attractions, and relationships developed towards others) is crucial to the development of culture and society. May it be called “gender and education,” “sex education,” or “sexuality education,” an education that “provides information to children, teenagers and young adults about sexuality and its possible negative consequences, ...include[s] the intervention of trained and open-minded professionals on a holistic approach,...[and] teaches] comprehensive, honest and varied information mixing physiological and relational aspects of sexuality” (Beaumont & Maguire, 2013, p. 7) is tantamount to our call for gender justice and democracy in Asia.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), “[c]omprehensive sexuality education enables young people to protect their health, well-being and dignity. And because these programmes are based on human rights principles, they advance gender equality and the rights and empowerment of young people” as “[e]very young person will one day have life-changing decisions to make about their sexual and reproductive health.” UNESCO (2012) affirms this by saying that “[w]ithout access to sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, adolescents and youth face daunting reproductive and sexual health problems. These include: unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, maternal mortality and morbidity, violence, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, exploitation (such as exchanging sex for food or money), and discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual orientation.”

In Asia and the Pacific, UNESCO (2012) reports that of the 28 countries,

Indonesia was one of the few that had in place national laws and/or policies on HIV, population/reproductive health (RH), youth, and education. While Korea had national laws and/or policies on HIV and youth, the report showed none on population/reproductive health and on education. Similarly, Singapore was reportedly having laws and/or policies only on two (i.e., HIV and education) of the four areas covered in this study.

In the following pages, you will see that sex or sexuality education studies in Indonesia, Korea and Singapore put forward education, fundamentalism, and culture as endogenous factors or the school, home, and society as connected contexts for teenage pregnancy, gender identity construction, and sex education. In particular, the first research collaborator explores the implementation process of sex education in Indonesia and argues that the pro-human rights advocates and the fundamentalists have greatly influenced the sexuality discourse in Indonesia while proactive teachers and feminist activists face their own struggle to apply sex education in their classrooms and their own localities. Using glocalization and transnationalism as theoretical frames, she reveals that the educators prefer to use “reproductive health” and conduct their lessons on sex education through the lens of religion. The teachers also gain their support for educators’ training and sex education module development from transnational feminist movements and international institutions advocating sex education in schools.

The second collaborator argues that sex education in Korean schools is limited by the regulatory policies of the government. In a highly technological Korea, she strongly believes that media is a fundamental issue that should not be taken for granted in sexuality education. Therefore, her study, which she conducted with another colleague in Korea, critiques regulatory media education and promotes feminist media literacy as an effective approach in sex education. She and her co-researcher believe that feminist media literacy will enable the teenagers to self-examine and transform themselves as consumers, producers, and circulators of alternative media images.

Meanwhile, the third collaborator from Singapore conducts a critical document analyses of government policies, school materials, and approaches of sexuality education designed for 11- to 12-year-old children using document

analysis as its. She finds that although the content design and materials were secular in nature and were age appropriate, the curriculum was not comprehensive but centered on abstinence and focused on prevention from unwanted pregnancies and STDs. She offers recommendations to make the class materials and lesson plans less prescriptive and more child-centered.

Overall, our research team has taken an “activist-feminist” position, which allows us to critically “[intervene] on hegemonic practices and [serve] as an advocate in exposing the material effects of marginalized locations while offering alternatives” (Fine as cited in Madison, 2005, p. 6). As critical qualitative researchers, we hope to “unveil the complexities of societal systems and inequities that constitute hegemonic conditions” (Perez & Cannella, 2011, p. 115) in order to contribute to the celebration of equality and freedom and the promotion of peace and justice in Korea and the ASEAN region. The issues addressed in such a collaborative research endeavor do not only describe the daily reality of women; they are sensitive concerns of men and women that should be central to the agenda of the school curriculum. However, considering the distinct three-country cases of this research, we encourage you to read intently in order to find and establish the epistemological relevance of these studies to your own personal or professional mission.

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The Implementation of Sex Education for Adolescent Group in Indonesia: The Tension between the Grand Narratives and the Local Interpretations

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Abstract

The main idea of this paper is to explore the implementation process of sex education in Indonesia. It relates to the intensity of global call to immediately insert sex education inside the school curricula due to the intention to eliminate the risks of early marriage, unintended pregnancy, sexual violence, and human-right violation among the adolescent group. On the other hand, the sexuality discourse in Indonesia is colored by the tension between the pro-human rights and the fundamentalist group. The dispute is also followed by the unsure national policy on sex education. However, local communities represented by the teachers and feminist activists keep struggling to apply sex education within their locality. In order to explain more and analyze the implementation process of sex education, this study utilizes the theoretical frameworks of glocalization and transnationalism. It has two main results: *First*, in the glocalization's point of view, the educators prefer to use the term of reproductive health and consider to framing the lessons with the religion perspectives. It could be said as their negotiation to ease the internalization process of the global scheme in the local discourse that is full of controversy. *Second*, in the context of transnationalism movement, the absence of government policy on sex education drives them to gain the cross-boundaries supports in the activities of the educator training and the sex education module development.

Keywords: sex education, glocality, transnationalism, adolescent

Introduction

Based on the United Nations' framework, sexuality education provides young

people with the knowledge, skills, and efficacy to make informed decisions about their sexuality and lifestyle (UNESCO and UNFPA 2013). The accurate information given should be about human development, anatomy and reproductive health, contraception, childbirth and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. However, the process of learning does not only focus on the exploration of the issues. Rather, it is also important to lead the young people to always frame those issues in the context of human rights and gender equality. Therefore, in the practical implementation, it needs the formulation of the comprehensive sexuality education that enables young people to protect their health, well-being, and dignity. It is a right based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education, whether in school or out of school (UNFPA 2016).

The initiation to encourage young people to be more aware of their body and rights is in line with the global calls such as the ICPD agreement on the definition of sexuality reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Here, SRHR is defined as the right of all individuals to make decisions concerning their sexual activity and reproduction free from discrimination, coercion, and violence (UN Foundation 2015). The important point to underline is the individual's consciousness to choose is highly respected. Therefore, in terms of sex education, it is necessary to make sure the alignment commitment from the regional, the national and the local level is in order to guarantee the absence of individual rights violations.

In the ASEAN level, there is an intriguing specific platform namely "ASEAN Women's Blueprints for Alternative Regionalism." This initiation is strongly driven by the basic needs to make a breakthrough in the critical issues of human rights and gender equality in which it must go beyond the economic integration. In the target to eliminate the violence against women, it comes up with CEDAW, Beijing Declaration Platform for Action and ASEAN Declaration on Violence Against Women (APWLD et al 2015). Even though this blueprint does not directly mention about sex education or SRHR issues, the way to frame the human rights concept and violence against women is a very good match with the global discourses. The emphasis on violence against women also has an important role because, in the problem of sexual rights, women or girls often become the victim. This blueprint increasingly strengthens the ideas to immediately reform the law and implement the national action plan for

protecting women and girls (APWLD et al 2015).

In Indonesia, the growth of the idea of sex education for adolescent definitely came along with the rise of the idea of human rights in that global discourse. Indonesia indirectly claimed to involve in this discourse by signing a series of international agreements, such as the International Conference on Maternal Health (1987), World Summit for Children (New York) (1990), International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (1994), Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) (1995), Safe Motherhood Technical Consultation (Colombo) (1997), Make Pregnancy Safe (1999) Millennium Development Goals (MDG's 2000) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's 2015). Those signed platforms, even though mostly focusing on maternal and infant mortality, clearly show that the government has the mandate to improve women health quality, especially the reproductive and sexual health (Sadly 2007:25).

Moreover, the international commitments led some changes in national level. The strategic programs coming from the Ministry of Health were also more diverse such as maternal mortality, baby mortality, under-age marriage and youth friendly services. As adopted in the framework of SRHR, the approach of family planning even shifted to construct that all pregnancies belonged to the couple's choice, which meant that all pregnancies were supposed to be based on a well-thought plan; on the other hand, an unplanned pregnancy would be noticed as a problem that was usually found in the case of contraception failure. In terms of youth and health, the Indonesia Government has a series of reports namely Indonesian Demography and Health Survey (IDHS). In order to provide a more specific data on SRHR, Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik—BPS), in collaboration with National Population Planning Board (BKKBN) and the Ministry of Health (MOH), also publish the Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) component. It is one of the government commitments to increase the awareness of related stakeholders and young people about the importance of reproductive health. It is also the response of Global Youth Forum recommendations regarding the points on health, education, employment, families, youth rights, civic participation and well-being issues (IDHS 2012). The 2012 IDHS questions asked to the never-married women aged 15-24 included additional background characteristics; knowledge of the human reproductive system; attitudes toward marriage and having children; the role of family,

school, community, and media; use of smoking tobacco, alcohol, and drugs; and dating and sexual activity.

Meanwhile, MOH in collaboration with BKKBN, the Ministry of Education, UNFPA, WHO and UNICEF also designed a program named Youth-Friendly Health Services (*Pelayanan Kesehatan Peduli Remaja/PKPR*). One of the goals of PKPR was to indirectly raise the awareness of unintended pregnancy in adolescents. PKPR also had a strategic role in providing reproductive health information and services that were needed by young people. Another related program addressed to young people health was GenRe (Generation with a Plan). It had the main purpose to reduce young people's vulnerability in terms of premarital sex, drugs abuse, and HIV/AIDS. This program also contained a campaign to be more aware of underage marriage. As a complementary element of this program, BKKBN inserted a more comprehensive program like Youth Family Development (*Bina Keluarga Remaja-BKR*). The program would be implemented on the family level, in which the parents were involved in the further discussion about youth-related problems (Margono, et al 2015). These programs, at a glance, represent the government opinion in which the issue of sexuality among the adolescent group was regarded as a critical issue. In this sense, the adolescent was assumed as a critical issue and it needed special treatment.

In terms of policy, there are *Undang-Undang Kesehatan No. 36 2009* (Law of Health No. 36 of 2009) and *Peraturan Presiden Tentang Kesehatan Reproduksi No.6 2014* (Presidential Regulation on Reproductive Health No.6 of 2014).¹ As a commitment to raise the importance of SRHR, Indonesia then derived the substance of reproductive health that was loaded in Law of Health into a more specific regulation. Hence, Presidential Regulation of Reproductive Health was enacted in 2014. The ideas of Presidential Regulation principally refer to the Law of Health. However, in some points it describes the detailed setting of SRHR treatment over distinguished fields, such as health services, maternal issues, contraception and even education for teenager groups. Concerning teenager groups, it is more sharpened in Chapter 3, Section 2 Article 12. By having some points above, it implies that the government has been

¹ Presidential regulation in Indonesia aims to give more detailed technical explanations on special issue and it is derived from the related national law.

showing a commitment to lead sexual education to be part of a formal school lesson. Nevertheless, this initiation is likely hindered by the unclear standing position of Ministry of Education. As known, this institution has much authority to manage all formal education settings in Indonesia. The Ministry also has the task to determine whether the curricula substance should be improved or revised. Therefore, in order to insert reproductive health or sex education inside formal education, the initiation must attain an approval from this Ministry.

Based on *Undang-Undang Sisdiknas No. 20 Tahun 2003* (Law of National Education System No. 20 of 2003) Chapter 6, Article 15: *Type of education covers general education, vocational, academic, professional, diploma, theology and special education*. In addition, this law also does not straightly mention sexual or reproductive health as one of the curricula materials. However, some activists argue that Law of National Education System needs to be revised. They especially criticize the substance of Article 37 paragraphs (1), letter (h), in which the point of physical and sport science is supposed to be interpreted as reproductive health education. Thus, there is no reason to refuse the initiation to enforce sex education as part of the school lessons. Unfortunately, when this field research was over, the debate was still ongoing. It means that the Minister of Education, as the highest stakeholder of the education system in Indonesia, is unsure whether sex education could be one of the important curricula materials in formal school.

This situation could be said as a paradox because there is a gap between the practices and the ideology. Some programs relate with SRHR issues that much delivery of information and education to young people seems to go beyond the state. It is admitted that the process to internalize the ideas of modernization and globalization in Indonesia is also contested with the local values such as custom and religion (Bannet 2015). SRHR and sex education here is assumed as the product of global discourse that very much relates to the ideas of “being progress”. It could be denied that sex education for adolescent also has an agenda to eliminate the early marriage and unintended pregnancy for the girl students. Indonesia historically did not really have the concept of early marriage and all pregnancy was mostly wanted because it always happens inside marriage (Geertz 1969). Therefore, the most vocal fundamentalist based

on Islam nowadays plays an important role to influence the process of national policy decision-making (the process would be more explained in the following part). At the same time, the massive fundamentalist movement to offend the modern concepts of freedom and sexual rights less also give the color of the discourse of morality and body disciplines in the grassroots.

On the other hand, the local movements represented by feminist activists and teachers have different expressions. Regardless of the national policy debate on sex education and the resistance of fundamentalist group, they prefer to keep inserting sex education in school through a number of strategies. They even work in collaboration with local NGOs and international funding to provide the module even though they do not implement all module lessons in class. They mostly integrate the SRHR materials with the religious concept. The main point they teach is to avoid premarital sex due to the construction of sin. It, of course, does not match with the UN standards on comprehensive sex education. However, it is not categorized as a resistance but it is more about the way to negotiate. Hence, the terminology sex education is also not fully accepted even though the teachers agree with the importance of SRHR lesson. The educators then usually use the term of reproductive health to avoid the controversial interpretations.

Therefore, this paper attempts to explore the dynamics of the teachers and students in implementing sex education in relation to the tension between the global discourse of human rights and local interpretations not only on individual rights but also on moral standards.

Methodology

The location of this research is in Province of D.I Yogyakarta Indonesia for several reasons. *First*, Yogyakarta is often called an education city because every year more than 3000 students migrate to continue their education. The contradiction between a formal education culture in the city and the high risks of premarital sex makes it an interesting setting to be analyzed. *Second*, the culture of most of Yogyakarta people is still influenced by local traditional and religious understandings. The influence of Javanese values, encouraged by Sultan Hamengkubuwono, provides a productive

context for assessing the construction of taboos, power relations, identity, and agency. Lastly, Yogyakarta has a strong meaning for the researcher who has long been concerned with the topic of sexuality among adolescent people in the city. Thus, the researcher has ample relevant experience in previous projects and do not find any difficulty in establishing good communication with the prospective informants and other relevant actors for this study.

As the main data collection, I, by having the informant's consents, interviewed several teachers coming from public high school, private senior high school, and Islamic senior high school. I, of course, could not directly access and meet those teachers. I first visited the local NGO concerning SRHR issues, namely PKBI (Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia: Organization of Family Planning of Indonesia). I had a strong bonding with this NGO because I worked as a volunteer before. The director of this NGO then arranged the appointment with those teachers, but it was not easy because of time constraints. I also needed more than one time to interview them. In order to protect them, the informants' name will be hidden and I will just mention their initials as AN, YL and TY.

AN is the religion teacher in one of the senior high Islamic private schools. She is coincidentally also the vice head school and has a strong bonding with the local NGOs concerned with reproductive health issue. As a religion teacher, she inserts the material of SRHR inside her main course because the government does not yet allow involving it as a part of formal curricula. AN was also vice coordinator of PKBI branch office in one of the regions in Yogyakarta and the leader of SRHR teacher consortium in the city. AN often initiated the teacher gathering at least once per week to update and share the issues of SRHR. It aimed to support the teachers because their willingness to share reproductive health lesson, in the absence of a government policy, was purely a voluntary job. I, fortunately, had a chance to attend her reproductive health class during my fieldwork. She was a very humble teacher and was loved by her students. She also had the interesting strategies to break the strain when the students started to be ashamed to discuss sexual experiences.

Meanwhile, YL is a male teacher in one public high school. He is actually a counseling teacher. His first involvement on the reproductive issue was when PKBI

asked him to join the training on the SRHR issues in 2013. At that time, PKBI initiated to gather as much teachers in one forum, purposely to create a possible action on sex education implementation in school. YL was selected as the representative of his school and did not mind learning more about this issue. Since then, he became more active to join either as a participant in a forum or a seminar that discussed reproductive health among the adolescent group. In the school, he inserted the materials of reproductive health inside the counseling curricula. He taught second-grade students and it took two semesters. Some related materials that he gave were about gender, reproductive organs, LGBT and dating violence. He just introduced these parts because he thought that high school student still had limited experience to imagine the complex issues.

Similar to other teachers, YL often enclosed the religion perspective as a framework. In one of the private schools, there was TY, a counseling teacher who facilitated the reproductive health materials in her class. TY came from the private senior high school. Teacher AN was the one who recommended me to contact TY. She considered that TY would give another perspective because she came from the private senior high school but the milieu of school was close to the catholic principals. TY was also active to attend the teacher gathering together with AN. As mentioned, that school actually was engaging with catholic principals. It was shown through the cross symbol in the entrance door of the building. However, the teacher always emphasized that it was a hetero school either in terms of gender or religion even though her way to frame the issues of SRHR and sex education in her class was little bit different.

For the students, I actually did not have enough time to discuss with them. I tried to find the girls who had pregnant experiences through PKBI, as well as get their reflections on the importance of sex education. However, it needed some time to convince them that this research would not be risky to discover their identity. I then changed to just interview the students who already received reproductive health lessons. Teacher AN then called her potential students, namely ML and IS. They shared about their experience in the reproductive health class. They, in the end, agreed that the lessons gave many benefits to them in facing the dynamic social relationship in today's society.

However, my friend, who was also a feminist activist in the city, suddenly shared

about her previous research on adolescent pregnancy in senior high school. She would recommend her informants to be interviewed, if necessary. I thought it would be a good opportunity because I could ask about their pregnancy experiences in relation to the discourse on sex education. I agreed and she then accompanied me to meet her previous informants, namely AM dan NV. AM (22 years old) got married when she was still in second grade of senior high school. At that time, her marriage was not officially registered; it was just recognized by Islam or *nikah siri*. Her family encouraged this marriage because the husband had a good job and enough income. However, she had the pregnancy soon after marriage. It meant she was pregnant when she was still registered as a student. She decided to resign from the school because she already knew that her school would never accept pregnant student even though it happened inside marriage. The last one was NV (21 years old) who got pregnant when she was 17 years old. She also had gotten married when she was 16 years old. She got married because she could not continue her school. After graduating from primary school, her family said that due to economic problem, she had to pull out from school. She then helped the family to work in a small factory nearby her house. However, after she met her husband, she resigned from her job and became a fulltime housewife until now.

Literature Review

There are at least three literatures that deeply discuss the dynamics and perhaps the problem of sex education in Indonesia.

First, it comes from Utomo and McDonald's (2009) paper that is entitled "Adolescent Reproductive Health in Indonesia: Contested Values and Policy Inaction." This research mainly focuses on the problem of national policy in dealing with the reproductive health issue in Indonesia. The authors argue that there is a gap between the increase of educated people and the rise of awareness of the risks with uncertain government position to immediately provide the legal actions. The intersecting problems of westernization, traditional values and fundamentalism then become the basic analysis. Westernization plays an important role to create the new standard of being settled. While in the past, marriage was regarded as the chip of being adult and

subsequently the daughters or the son should independently live apart from the parents, education has successfully reconstructed that the promising future was determined by a good career and material ownership. However, this situation was not the same with the SRHR discourses. Even though the data continuously reported the risks of premarital sex and sexual violence among the adolescent group, the pressures coming from the fundamentalist group to reinforce the discourse on virginity and pornography acts were also undeniable. And the government, as a mediator, never showed certain action to solve this constant dispute.

Second, it is the research written by Holzner and Oetemo (2004). Their journal paper on Youth, Sexuality and Sex Education Messages in Indonesia: Issues of Desire and Control tries to explore the ways of young Indonesian to engage in different forms of relationship and to find their own sources of information about the knowledge of sexuality. The constraint of the study is still about the contestation of the discourse of sexuality within the coexistence of pro and contra groups. As a result, based on the group discussion Indonesian young people were curious, experimenting and unafraid, but also careful. In this sense, young people argued that the information and knowledge on sexuality were really necessary, as well as their efforts to find correct answers. They also need to be recognized as responsible beings but it seems to be difficult if the permission of sex education is strictly banned. This research also came up with a number of constructed images over young people that were found in some magazines. These magazines, instead of framing the young people as frightened of the terrible consequences of sexuality and needing protection, the young people were constructed as exploring an experimental field of pleasure for themselves.

Lastly, it is the study discussing “Zina and The Enigma of Sex Education for Indonesian Muslim Youth.” The research conducted by Bennet (2007) attempts to explore the problem of sex education in relation to the overlapping ideas of health, human rights and Islam. *Zina* (illicit sex), as the specific term on Islam is deployed as the main concept to more scrutinize the Islam’s perspectives in constructing the discourse of sexuality. *Zina* here is simply defined as all acts of sexual intercourse between woman and man that occur outside of a religiously sanctioned marriage. The term and the explanation of *zina* could be easily found in the Qur’an (the Holy Book

of Islam), especially in the context of general warning against adultery. Furthermore, the concept of *zina* could be used as a justification to forbid premarital sex among adolescents. When this discourse is linked to the global framework of sex education, it, of course, does not match well. However, in the end, Bannet's idea is better to be put as complementary possibilities co-existing along a continuum of ideally safer and better informed choices for young Indonesians. Also, the probation of *zina* is compatible with the Indonesian state ideology that is very much connected to the promotion of harmonious family and social relations.

By having those literature reviews, I reflect that my research has similar contents in terms of the discourse of sexuality in Indonesia, including the tension between supportive feminist activist and the resistance of fundamentalist. However, my research focus would be different because it explores more the teacher practices in delivering sex education in the school. It also aims to show how the teachers deploy beyond state networking because sex education is not really recommended by the government. Therefore, this research will respectively use the theoretical frameworks of glocalization and transnationalism. It has two purposes: first, the glocalization is to analyze the way of a teacher in internalizing sex education and, in turn, reproduce this knowledge to the students. Second, the transnationalism is to describe the teacher involvement in beyond border solidarity because the SRHR educator training that they attend and the sex education modules that they use are funded by International funding.

Theoretical Framework

Two interrelated frameworks, such as the glocalization and transnationalism becomes the analysis tools in this study. The term of glocalization refers to the explanation in favor the individual way to internalize the standard of being global and to adjust the local demands at once. It is simply found in the world capitalistic productions that in order to increase the global market, the adaptation to local cultures matter. The phenomena of McDonalldization is an example of globalization in which the global standard of fast food has a number adjustment of taste and style in each country (Ritzer 1993). The way to locally adapt is indeed an evidence that there is a global pressure requiring the togetherness in supporting the universal idea. However,

it is not also the simplification of being same or being homogeneous. Roland Robertson (1995) argues that the local-global problematic is on the view that contemporary conceptions of the locality are largely produced in something like global term, but this certainly does not mean that all forms of the locality are thus substantively homogenized. Thus, glocalization will lead to the invention of the culture heterogeneous. In the context of sex education, it is undeniable that the global call has created the framework standards. The UN even already provided the key points to be involved in sex education materials. However, for the local communities, sex education concepts are taken for granted, even though they fully support the global narratives.

Meanwhile, the birth of transnationalism has criticized the binary oppositions such as global-local, center-periphery, first-third world, and dominant-dominated. Those categorizations are considered as the obstacle to go beyond the western hegemony as well as the effort to search the local values. It also relates to the diver effects brought by the rise of global discourses in terms of social, economic and politic. Grewal and Kaplan (1994) further point out that global-local, as a monolithic formation, may also erase the existence multiple expression of “local” identities and concerns and multiple globalities. The problem of gender discourses, for instance, is that it is almost impossible to agree with the general conclusion, which the periphery or third world women have the same interpretations of “being oppressed.” In that world system theory, there is even no space to come up with the feminist issues because the discourse of the first-third world is simply male-biased. Accordingly, transnationalism is deployed to seek creative ways to move beyond constructed opposition without ignoring the histories that have informed the valid concerns about power relations. It then requires the comparative work rather than the relative linking of “differences” (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). In this sense, the practices of cross-borders solidarity make sense since people are likely united by issues rather than by structure. In the context of sex education, transnationalism would be very fruitful to explain the efforts of the teachers and feminist activists in gaining the cross-countries supports in the middle of the unclear national policy and the execution process of sex education in school along with the absence of global standard implementation.

The Results

The Discourse of Sex Education in the Grand Picture of Indonesia

The basic idea of sex education was to formulate the more comprehensive information and services related to SRHR issue among youth and adolescent group (UNFPA 2016). Further, they had an idea to insert SRHR inside the school curricula. However, this initiation provided the rejection from the government and some fundamental group. They argued that material of SRHR would indirectly persuade young people to be much involved in pornography acts which is not appropriate with the Indonesian customs. They were also afraid that instead of avoiding premarital sex, young people, in fact, would be more curious about sex.

The problem of sex education implementation is also connected to the paradox of democracy values in Indonesia. The fall of Soeharto Regime in 1998 had become the turning point for the rise of democracy in Indonesia. However, it also comes with the emergence of fundamentalist groups. When the decentralization started, some people had an idea to enact *sharia* law in some local areas purposely to apply Islamic rules in all life aspects. Several moral values were also increasingly introduced to young people. Parents or families no longer initiated arranged marriages; rather, the members of religious groups, in the name of solidarity, played the role to organize it. In order to institutionally maintain the movement, they established an Islamic school that was very different from the Western style of schooling. These schools, however, still managed the curricula within global perspective so that they provided an expensive enrolment fee and exclusive facilities for the students (Utomo and McDonald 2009).

The fundamentalist group was getting stronger and started to be involved in national policy level. One of the controversial moments was at the debate on The Anti-Pornography and Pornographic Acts Bill (RUU APP). It was originally drafted in 1992, but it was not passed then, which was then revived in 2006. The Bill contained an offense, for instance kissing in public or displaying “sensual body parts,” such as women’s breasts, navel, hips and thighs (Parker 2009). The supporters of this Bill argued that this initiation would protect children and young people from western culture and prevent them from conducting improper sensual acts. This kind of moral panic also performed in attacking the publisher of *Playboy* magazine and forcibly broke

out a book discussion about LGBT brought by Irshad Manji in 2012 (Jakarta Post 2012). This incident even injured some victims and caused distressing trauma for activists. The conservatives' effort to standardize women's expression and to ban all "sexual" (or sensual) acts in public successfully resulted in what they expected as was found in the Pornography Law enactment in 2008.

Another controversial sexual issue was the virginity test that should be undertaken by all female students before their graduation (Sindonews 2015). Such act, once again, was conducted to continuously warn young people to be more aware of premarital sex. Some commission members in legislative house argued that it would be a good strategy to save the young generation from the penetration of western culture. In addition, by having the morality standard, decentralization enabled several local leaders to enact headscarf law as a mandatory uniform for female students because women's bodies were perceived to be a source of seduction and a source of erotic fantasy. These phenomena showed that the society really feared the practice of "free sex" in which it would not only lead people to commit sin but also bring about the social disintegration through immoral transgression (Parker and Nilan 2013 in Nilan 2016).

Concerning some controversial issues, the state did not really show a satisfying reaction as mediator. The arguments and negotiations coming from progressive groups (women, LGBT, reformist) did not provide a positive response. The government, represented by legislators and also local leaders, in fact, neglected the basic principle of democratization as a reformation mandate. The idea of a liberation that needed to show through the freedom to express without any fear had been abolished by an enactment of pornography policy by the massive growing of *sharia* laws and by the sustaining anarchy threat of fundamentalist collective mass. The moral panic spread through some locations in Indonesia, which, in fact, emphasized that the idea of sexuality is destroying the young generation's morals unless people manage it based on their religion values. The young generation, which mostly refers to girls, in fact, becomes a field of fundamentalism exercising power. In order to maintain the anti-western agenda, the girls should perform their obedience and their faith according to the perfect laws of Islam.

Meanwhile, Indonesia also has the problem in defining the adolescent group, whereas the information about the target group of sex education is a basic. It is almost never clear to denote the categorization of adolescence. In Indonesia, the term of young people is more popular than a teenager or a child. It is, at least, found in the official policy on *Undang-Undang Perlindungan Anak No. 35 2014* (Law of Child Protection No. 35 of 2014) where children are those who are 0-18 years old. While in *Undang-Undang Kepemudaan No. 40 2009* (Law of Youth No. 40 of 2009), young people are denoted as those who are in the age range of 16-30 years old. Besides the age category, the term *pemuda* (young people) has an important signifier in Indonesian revolution history. The fall of Soeharto (the President of the New Order Era) was the most recent situation to show young people movement achievements. Although the coup in 1965 addressed to Soekarno (the President of the Old Order Era), the young people also played their major roles.

The *Peringatan Sumpah Pemuda* (Celebration of Youth Pledge Day) and *Hari Kebangkitan Nasional* (National Awakening Day) even deliberately aimed at the remembrance the young people as a center of national development. Hence, as noted by White (2016 p.8-9), young people are closely associated with the term of “generation.” It provides a way to capture the structures that set young people apart from other social groups and constitutes them as part of the historical context and political traction in Indonesia. Above of an overlapped determination on those both policies, the term ‘teenager’ is not discussed further. In order to deal with the human stages development, Indonesia culturally just recognizes the children and the mature people. Children mean those who are not yet married or still depend on the parents and family in terms of economic status. In contrast, mature people refer to men or women who are already married or live apart from their family. Thus, it could be said that the difficulty to implement sex education inside school curricula because of the national discourse, either in sexuality or in the adolescent as a target group, is still problematic.

The Implementation of Sex Education in School

This passage then explores about the implementation dynamics of sex education

in the middle of the grand narrative of adolescent and sexuality in Indonesia. It generally does not fully reject, but bases it on the global standard, which does not perfectly apply as well.

As the paradox situation between the inaction national policy on sex education for adolescent and the huge number of adolescent people with the risks of premarital sex, some local NGOs, working together with several groups, had an initiation to create possible strategies. The first problem that should be dealt was about the development of sex education module because they did not have many experiences on this even though they were really aware of the problem of power relation, gender inequality, and sexual rights. Therefore, they initiated the collaboration project with some transnational or international networks. It could be said as the face beyond border solidarity which people were united by the issue or the same concern against scattered hegemony (Grewal and Kaplan 2005).

It was not new actually in Indonesia because the Ford Foundation, UNAIDS, UNFPA and the World Bank funded the adolescent reproductive health (ARH) trial and a pilot project in several provinces of Indonesia to be presented along with the existing activities and programs provided by NGOs (Hasmi 2002 in Utomo and McDonald 2009). In the module development, collaborative work between the local NGO of PKBI and Rutgers WPF was to be founded. The local government also had the sex education module development. The local leader of Kulonprogo residence, province of Yogyakarta Indonesia for instance, already published the reproductive health modules addressed to primary school until senior high school students. The local government actually not purely created this initiation. They, in fact, had the collaborative projects with the international funds before. However, in order to show strong commitment, they needed to discover the local government as a single identity. The result, which was the will to provide the modules in local basis, evoked the confidence feeling among the teachers. They became more convince that sex education is not harmful because it is totally supported by, at least, the local government.

By having the support of the local government and community bonding, the teachers and the activists then voluntarily worked together to gradually insert the sex education inside the school. As already conducted by AN, YL, and TY, they indeed

did not have the definite subject on sex education or they preferred to call it as reproductive health lesson. However, they had an idea to insert it inside their main course. AN for instance, as a religion teacher, would insert some important points of reproductive health inside the religion lessons. Meanwhile, YL and TY mainly were the counselor teachers in which they just had an hour every week. They sometimes did not have enough time to deliver all reproductive health materials because they also had to consider other materials in a very limited time. Therefore, they would take two semesters of one module. Besides the limited chances, the problem they sometimes face was the controversial comments coming from other teachers who still thought that sex education or reproductive health was close with liberalization and pornographic acts. However, regardless of all those challenges and imperfections, they felt that this strategy worked enough to give an inspiring knowledge to the students in terms of sexuality, health, and rights.

Another interesting point, although they realized that the module material contained western ideas in defining gender and sexuality, the teachers kept utilizing religion as the main perspective. It seemed that the teachers did not mind applying the western concept of gender, equality, and rights but at the same time they also used the principal of religion in dealing with the forms of relationship. In this case Nilan (2016) also found that Indonesian people were developing values influenced by the west but with the strong traditional Indonesian Islamic modifications so that the opportunity arose to create effective reproductive health and sex education programs and services that would not be offensive to various religions, ethnicities or the Indonesian state. Accordingly, the teachers kept reminding the students that premarital sex was a social deviance, a sin, and danger. This was also the reason why teachers never share the information about contraception and abortion as a part of SRHR lessons. Rather, the teachers emphasized the importance of puberty as a prelude to maturity. Thus, in order to avoid premarital sex, it was necessary to manage their desire within the concept of sin and the fear of God.

YL pointed out that high school students usually experience the *baligh* period (baligh is the Islam terminology for boys or girls who reach a puberty). This period is the prelude to maturity in which girls have the potency to be pregnant, while the

boys are able to cause pregnancy. Therefore, the reproductive health is very important to make them more aware of the risk of premarital sex. Thus, stressing on reproductive health lesson is almost same with this lesson, which plays as an “educational warning” for students to strictly avoid premarital sex because it could lead to risks of unwanted pregnancy.

As a counseling teacher, TY also strongly encouraged the students to really focus on their studies. In the 1990s, the school had cases on pregnant students. Subsequently, the students resigned with force. There was not a specific regulation that pregnant student had to be dropped out. However, it, once again, was the culture, habit, and constructed values. The students themselves were ashamed to stay at school, while their body shapes were getting strange. Hence, they did resign from school. Besides providing a negative reputation, it also became the trigger to create preventive action. Furthermore, they convinced that sex education or they called it as reproductive health lessons would be one of the alternatives. Also, the milieu of the gender-mixed school provides anxiety when romance dating or touching each other in public would be internalized as a culture. Therefore, reproductive health is necessary to be acknowledged by students so that they have information about the risks of premarital sex at adolescent age.

As the teachers had training before, the method to teach reproductive health lessons were also very friendly. AN, for instance, was very open to the students who needed a partner to share regarding adolescent problem or reproductive issues. One day, she got a student who was accidentally pregnant when she was in third grade. Based on school rules, she should resign by herself or she would be dropped out. AN then had an initiation to evacuate this student for a while in one of the NGO shelters until she delivers her baby. For AN, the point was avoiding this student from social stigma and abortion, but she continued her study at once. It was also an interesting point that although she argued that sex or pregnancy outside marriage was a moral and religious violation, she would not judge the pregnant girls as criminals. Rather she would help save students and guide them to keep continuing their studies.

Also for YL, he said that he never blamed the students. If the students show different opinion on such subject, it would be regarded as diversity of expressions. It

also related to the understanding that every student should have come from the different background and experiences. Thus, there was not a wrong idea in terms of their everyday life. This method, for YL, was very effective to break the hierarchy; thus, the students did not have any burden to share and discuss their problem about reproductive health.

The closeness relationship constructed by the teachers also provides positive impressions for the students. Some students that were interviewed confessed that this kind of relationship made it easier for them to internalize the lessons of reproductive health. ML and IS were the student representatives that shared their experiences about the importance and impact of reproductive health class. They said that they experienced some changes after joining the class, particularly on the material of reproductive organs. By knowing the relationship between reproductive organ, reproductive rights and gender, they became more aware of their bodies. Also in the context of the romance relationship, they argued that it made sense to have an equal relationship between a man and a woman. Instead of doing violence, relationship should be conducted within the respect and regard for each other. As an intimate relationship, it was also possible for students to always share their dating problem to their teachers. For teachers, this openness would be a good attitude since the teacher could prevent the unwanted problem as early as possible.

Some students, who had pregnancies at the adolescent age, also agreed that sex education was very needed. She never accepted the comprehensive knowledge on sex education when she was at senior high school. There was health education that was given from the district clinic but it did not really contain the appropriate information. She meant that if sex education could help adolescent to be more aware of the risk of unwanted pregnancy, she never had it before. For her, the relationship between school and student was very hierarchal. Instead of recognizing the students as a responsible subject, the school more often regarded students as troublemakers. In some schools, the teachers usually provided a watchful eye over the students when they commit a mistake. Therefore, in the case of AM, if the school found her pregnancy, she was afraid she would be dishonorably dropped out. Thus, Holzner and Oetomo (2004) also critically noted that Indonesia was very permissive for under-age marriages

but there was a prohibition for having sex outside marriage because the adolescent pregnancy was highly unaccepted in public institutions like schools.

Also for NV, she only got the information about reproductive health when she had become a very young mother. Even though she was under 20 years old, she could join the *arisan* (gathering for married women), the event that often provided the health counseling for *ibu-ibu* (mothers). She also did not know about the risk of under age pregnancy before. As mentioned, that she was the one who did under age marriage. In her village, early marriage and adolescent pregnancy were very common for girls who could no longer continue their studies. In this case, economic matter mostly became the strong trigger for early marriage. It meant that family burden would be a bit reduced when the daughter got married because economic responsibility was going to be transferred to the husband. The girls then got pregnant soon after marriage, even when they were not mentally and physically ready (Suryakusuma 2016). However, NV, in the end, have high hopes so that her younger sister will not follow her situation. She strongly encourages her to always focused on the study for future career. She reflected that education played the important role in current situation.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that the discourse on sex education in Indonesia exists on the tension between grand narratives and the local initiations. The grand narratives here refer to both the standard of the global framework and the constructed sexuality discourse in the national level. In the global level, the basic ideology goes to the intention to create the new paradigm of being progressive addressed to the young generation. In order to be modern, the young people should be well educated and have broad orientation in the future, while the term early marriage and early pregnancy has already been regarded as the problem. The discourse to eliminate sexual violence and human rights violation among teenager group then becomes the main reference. Sex education here is considered as a method to bridge the will to create this kind of modern society and at the same time, it is the media that constructs the image of modernity.

In the national level, sex education exists on inconsistency national policy and

the resistance of fundamentalist group. As written above, there were many SRHR-related programs led by a number of ministries in collaboration works with the international agencies. Indonesia also already has the adequate policies on SRHR that were shown in the Law of Health and the President Regulation. However, in the context of sex education, the government that is represented by the Ministry of Education did not show the same reaction. This unclear position of the Indonesian government was parallel with the series of resistance of fundamentalist over all sexual discourses. In the case of Indonesia, Islamic group was the most vocal fundamentalist that often reproduced a number of prejudices for all sexuality related issues, including the idea to involve sex education in school curricula. Worse, instead of cracking down this anarchism potency, the state, in fact, performs ambiguous reactions.

Meanwhile, teachers and feminist activists keep struggling to insert sex education in school even though it is not a taken for granted. The internalization process of the idea of modernization or westernization, in terms of sexuality and sex education, also goes through the interaction with local values. Those teachers especially argue that it is undeniable to consider sex education as an important knowledge. However, they also reflect that it is not easy to introduce the invented notion of sex education to those who do not have experiences before. Moreover, the strong resistance of fundamentalist groups makes this discourse more contested. Accordingly, they have the idea to utilize the religion approach in order to smoothly integrate the global idea and the local values. This initiation provides the positive output because some students, at least, become more open minded and more aware of the risks of premarital sex. However, it must be admitted that the implementation is not really in line with the global standard due to some reasons. *First*, since they put their local value of religion as the main framework, it has cut off some points of sex education standard. Their religious interpretation is limited on the understanding that whatever the reasons are, sex before marriage is a sin. For teachers, it is not enough to just explain the relationship between premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy because pregnancy could be aborted. They think that moral value would be more preventive. The implementation of sex education then focuses on how to continuously remind the students to fear God and subsequently avoid premarital sex. Thus, the material of contraception is mostly skipped because

they are afraid that the lesson would be internalized as an alternative to doing “save-free sex”. *Second*, in order to be recognized as the comprehensive one, it is necessary to have a deep discussion on gender equality, human rights, the works of reproductive organs, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. It does not only need the special teaching method or the qualified competence but also requires much time to spend. Therefore, the integration of sex education in formal school still matters.

In the last part of this study, it concludes that national policy to not prohibit sex education in school curricula is urgently needed for some reasons. *First*, it is no longer about the question whether sex education is harmful. Rather, it is about how to sustain the good practices performed by the teachers. Regardless of the imperfection in relation to the global standard, they have successfully proved that sex education plays the important role to create a broad-minded generation. It could be seen in the student’s opinion after joining AN’s class for several semesters. They became more decisive over their own bodies and more respectful to diversity. It means that they are promising to be the agents for a better Indonesia in terms of gender equality, solidarity, tolerance, and justice. The government should take this experience as a main reference to deconstruct the discourse on sexuality and adolescent so that it would be easier to enact the national policy on sex education without any prejudice. *Second*, regardless to the tensions provided by fundamentalist, Indonesia signed the global agreement related to SRHR issues. Thus, it is actually very clear that Indonesia should immediately take an action regarding the implementation of sex education in the school curricula. There is also no reason to still fear the negative effects of sex education for the adolescent group. The proper implementations of sex education, so far, based on all teacher experiences, never provide “bad” students.

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Sexuality Education and Media: Towards Feminist Media Literacy

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Abstract

Media is a fundamental issue of sexuality education in this new media era. However, we will get the only simple result of merely asking “how will we protect teenagers from bad influence by media?” if we don’t set a perspective on the relationship between media and adolescents. And it is related to the regulatory policies as a tool of eliminating toxic environment. This regulation approach does not fit teenagers in Korea at all. They are not only the passive consumers but the producers of these various media products. This paper insists that we need to address a question ahead of all on the relation between media, the sex images that media creates, and teenagers. The paper aims to place this issue in the context of sexuality education in Korea. This article suggests that the regulatory media education should be changed into the training on feminist media literacy. Education on feminist media literacy will help to have a perspective for self-examine and then teenagers grow into the consumer, producer, and circulator of alternative media images.

Keywords: sex education, media regulation, media literacy, feminist media literacy, feminist sex education

Introduction

This paper deals with media-related issues required in the recent sexuality educational practices. The authors are the co-researcher of Repletion Development Project of Program Manual for a Youth Center for Sex Education and Counselling in 2015. The project was initiated by the requests of communities and classrooms that required new teaching manual to handle various environmental changes around children

and teenagers. Media is a key issue of this requirement. The main requirements are that more teenagers exposed to a harmful environment such as pornography due to an advance of media and the development of sex education contents that connect with their daily lives, particularly sex culture.

However, we will get only simple result of merely asking “how will we protect teenagers from bad influence by media?” if we don’t set a perspective on the relationship between media and teenagers, and it is related to the regulatory policies as a tool of eliminating harmful environment. The current Education Ministry’s “School Sex Education Standards” and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family’s policies on media are based on this epistemology in Korea. The paper insists that we need to address a question ahead of all on the relation among media, the sex images that media creates, and teenagers. The presentation aims to place this question in the context of sex education in Korea. It includes the contents mentioned below.

First, we will explore the media issue, which came into the social problems in the history of sex education in Korea. Sex education in Korea has been referred to as “sexual morality,” restricted female sexuality.

Second, we will analyze the perspective in Education Ministry’s “School Sex Education Standards” (SSES) and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family’s policies on media in Korea. They only have the regulatory policies on media environment surrounding teenagers.

Third, we will analyze the changing media environment of youth which should be considered in the educational field. This “media” does not include only “pornography” as harmful environment. Therefore, we will expand the definition of changing media environment in this presentation.

Fourth, we will suggest a concept of “feminist media literacy” as epistemology of media and media-related contents based on the actual necessity for changing media environment. The new concept of “media literacy” means “the critical capacity to read the narrative and intention of the message and image expressed by media and then make new communication skill.” Therefore, we will discuss the “feminist media literacy” as a capacity for teenagers that they should have in this male-dominated media environment.

Historical Backgrounds of Media Related Sexuality Education Issues in Korea

The consideration of media began in the 1920s in sync with the appearance of “sexuality education” in modern literacy in Korean society. Since the mid-1920s, people had started to consume Japanese pornography printouts delivered through mail order. The issue on how to educate “students” on sex came into notice when a discourse and knowledge on sex was offered to people through the “media.” A column of *Donga-ilbo* on 10 October 1925 first started a necessity on sex education and the problems of students’ consumption of obscene “moving pictures,” namely “pornography” movies. The old magazine *DongGwang* put an article “discussion on sex issues,” (December 1931) which mentioned a survey asking experiences and opinions on sex knowledge and sex education. Most respondents stated that they heard sex knowledge from schools or novels and movies (Kwon, 2006: 111). These facts imply that real consideration on sex education in Korea started when modern media such as film, novels, and photograph collections appeared.

However, finding solutions to actual problems related to “media” has been neglected in Korea while sex education focused more on chastity and purity of women. For example, the article “curiosity of boys and girls on sex” in *Donga-ilbo* (1 December 1929) emphasized the necessity of sex education while insisting that sex education for women is more important than for men. It cited the reason that women’s physical development is faster than men’s. The content of the article though reveals its actual reason by actively urging women to have control over their bodies as they are on tempter’s position. With this background, a committee on the discipline of female students was held by principals and teachers in charge of moral training of girls’ middle schools in *Gyunggi* province (*Donga-ilbo*, 30 August 1933).

From the modern view, the discourse on sex education, which started in the 1920s, started from the question on how to understand the media. However, it did not have a chance to solve problems of media seriously while giving extreme value in educating purity and chastity for women. From the late 1930s to after Korea’s liberation, sex education was not mentioned in society. “Education to maintain innocence” was a slogan in the 1950s. “Purity education” and strengthening “family

policy” were keywords of “eroticism boom” era in the 1960s. In 1983, by conducting purity education even in elementary schools, education authority in Seoul expanded passive sex education to ongoing chastity education.

The changeover of sex education took place in the 1980s when feminist activities, youth movement and discourses of gender equality expanded with the democratization of society to a great extent. An alternative sex education came up, new attempts were seen, and teenagers’ sex aroused public opinions. Many civic organizations and feminist groups started to implement sex education considering gender equality. Only then did “media” become the essential part of education.

Although “media” issues precipitated sexuality education, these fell outside of the training contents. Jung (2004) pointed out this reason that “education” considered as general school education ignored a “cultural” issue. Therefore, the assumption that “education” should be separated by “culture” was the primary factor that slowed down the development of media education in sexuality teaching in Korea.

In the late 80s, media education for youth outside the school was included in the sexuality education, but there was also a problem with the perspectives on media. Their activities focused on the observation of media as a consumer watchdog. The most representative action would be the media monitoring activity. Media control as consumer's sovereignty was a type of elimination of corruption and pleasure seeking culture. They did not focus on “education,” but concentrated on the activities of teenagers to block unhealthy media images.

Feminist sexuality education started in the 1990s, but that was prevention education to sexual abuse. This knowledge considered media as a sexist expression and regulation object. The entire country had been thrown into utter confusion due to a sex video called “red muffler video” made by a teenager student in 1997. This event was evident that sexuality education did not cover the media issues of teens, which were unrealistic and abstract.

Current Regulations on Teenagers-Related Media

The place of media in Korean official sexuality education is a kind of external environment. It is called “obscenity”. Teenagers should be protected from it. This

research analyzes the logic of “Obscenity” in School Sex Education Standards by the Ministry of Education in Korea and Act on the Protection of Children and Adolescents’ Sexuality.

School Sex Education Standards by the Ministry of Education

Sexuality education inside the high school by text analysis of “School Sex Education Standards.” In 2015, SSES was published by the Ministry of Education in Korea. This book was made so that teachers from kindergarten to high school can refer to it when they provide sex education to their students. However, this was embroiled in controversy due to its more regressive contents. This guideline valued much of abstinence and showed biases against homosexuals and women, which was criticized by the feminist group and progressive activists in Korea.

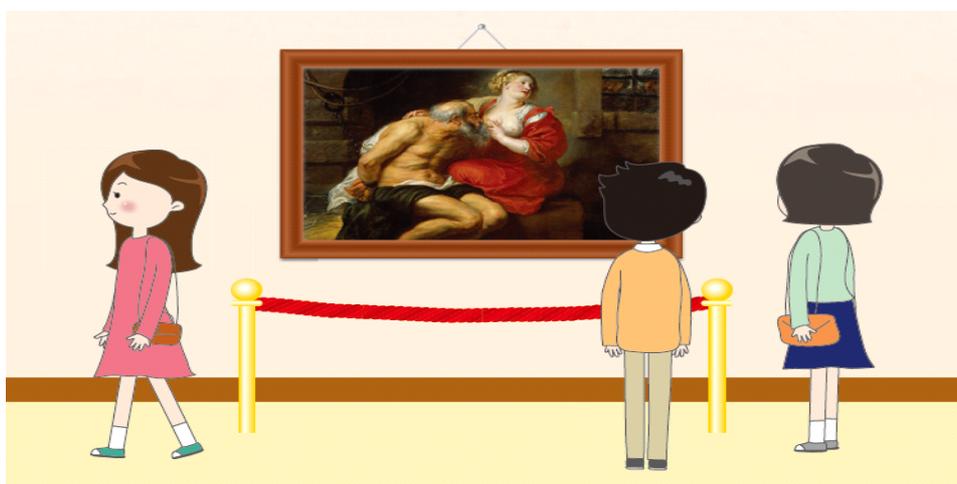


Figure 1. SSES suggests that teachers explain whether this painting is an art or obscenity and why.

Here are the judgment standards: is it an artistic expression or stimulation of sexual desire? Is it acceptable as an artistic expression or does it make people feel sexual shame? Does it use sexual representation related to theme or satisfaction of sexual interests?

The concept of “obscenity” has a specific context in Korea. The concept of “pornography” in western countries focuses on the media contents such as movie and video, which are made only for sexual alert without narrative. In contrast, the standard of “obscenity material” is people’s sexual shame. It is easy to judge it arbitrarily and still focus on the print media. In reality, Korea is one of the biggest importing countries for hardcore pornography from western countries and Japan.

다
활동 3 음란물 중독의 단계

음란물 중독의 단계별 내용을 정리해 봅시다.

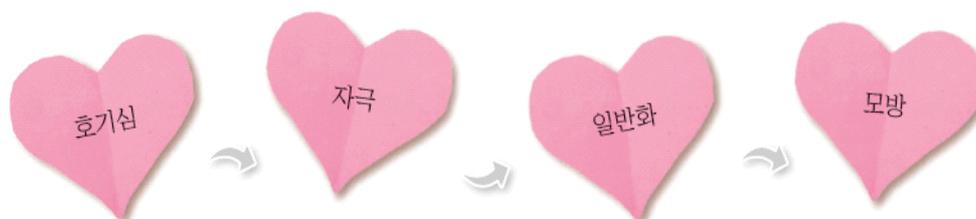


Figure 2. SSES explains the stage of poisoning to obscenity material. This process is comprised of 4 stages: curiosity, stimulation, generalization, and imitation.

In this Freedom of Expression and Obscenity Material chapter, sexually explicit material is related to “addiction.” Therefore, the cases of downloading and watching obscenity material, sending his/her own genitalia, and downloading but not watching obscenity material related to children and adolescents’ image are all punishable based on Special Act on Sexual Violence, Act on Information Network Promotion and Information Protection, and Act on the Protection of Children and Adolescents’ Sexuality. These cases can be completely different activities in detailed situation. But SSES pushes all cases based on “the addiction to obscenity.”

Act on the Protection of Children and Adolescents’ Sexuality

We can find the viewpoint of Act on the Protection of Children and Adolescents’

Sexuality regarding media in the definition of “The Obscenity Material in Terms of Children and Adolescents” (Article 2.5). According to Article 2.5, “The Obscenity Material in terms of Children and Adolescents” is “film, video, game or communication media, which represent sexual act by a person who can be recognized as a child or adolescent.” It means that whether the contents that actual child appears or not must be punished under the same regulation. However, the issues should be on the human rights violation of children and adolescents, not obscenity.

One of the recent issues are the increasing cases of children or adolescents taking pictures or making moving images on their own bodies or sexual acts. There has been discussion in western countries because these kids should be punished as child pornography producers. The concept of “sexting” is emerging in this process.

In case of Korea, the concept of “obscenity” should be changed because it covers indefinitely and easy to judge arbitrarily. Also, it must be based on children and adolescents’ media experiences and their own senses.

Changing Media Environment to Youth

Failure to read the changing needs of new teens and their behavior is diagnosed as a failure of modern education. In this context, Mark Prensky, an American education consultant, grasped the concept of “digital natives” and “digital immigrants,” pointing out why educators failed to understand the current demands of youth. “Digital natives” are using digital literacy as their native language and do not need to reinvent their knowledge like “migrants.” Through the concept of “digital natives,” Prensky concluded that the obsolete methods of education to “digital natives” is not considering the way they think and process information. The Georgia Tech News Center said it created a map of the worlds “digital natives” in 2013 and 99.6 percent of South Korea’s youth is participating in active online activities, which is the highest rate in the world. There is a variety of efforts to understand today’s “ethicized” youth, and in the center there is media.

According to the research conducted by Kwon et al. (2015), “digital natives” and “digital immigrants” were not distinct clearly from the use of media device, online contents, and SNS in Korea. Only noticeable differences have emerged between “digital

natives” and “digital immigrants” in the effects of online materials and SNS on cognition of social relationship. Online contents and SNS networks are closely intertwined with their sense of connection, isolation, and belonging to their communities. These findings show that contemporary Korean teenagers do not understand their sense of belonging online as a supplement of offline, but this is soon recognized by themselves.

It is common for teen girls on Twitter to routinely sell the close-up shot of their bodies, genital or masturbation video to adult men in Korea. The pictures of masturbation wearing school uniform sold at about 50,000 won per 10 pieces. They are not involved in direct sex trades with men, but they are participating in this video and image transactions in ways that eliminate the risk. And video footage or images purchased by individuals are being uploaded into the porn website, and these spread as “public goods.” These videos, which are bought at a low price, have already played a particular role in the Korean porn ecological system.

Thus, these girls who are producing pornographic photographs and videos can no longer be considered as an object of isolation to prevent the “obscene” material. They should be analyzed to be part of the production of cheap images, which are labelled as "obscene materials" and are establishing a Korean porn ecosystem. In these situations, today's youth are the combined subjects of the distribution, production, and consumption in that they can collect the original text and reinvent this as “digital natives”. Still, there is a question of whether a teenage male and a female are equally understood as "digital natives" in this context.

Kim (2006) re-analyzed the media theory of McLuhan, which is an ideal starting point for the discussion of digital natives. She argued that McLuhan’s analysis that the media is an extension of the human body and what social progress achieves is an expansionist concept based on a male-centric modern view. For teenagers, the media system experienced is “clash and conflicts” rather than “harmony and evolution.” Thus, girls are made up of media-bodies itself instead of physical extension through the media.

When regarding the relationship between youth and changing media, gender gaps need to be considered. It should be analyzed in the relevant market, which enables

them to gaze at their bodies and make this gaze itself to trade. Beyond the regulatory education, which considers teens exposed to potential pornography, we will have to seek sexuality education that these teens are becoming active and critical media producers.

Towards Feminist Media Literacy

In Britain, where media education was first launched, media training is being conducted primarily in the course of the English curriculum in middle school. And at the age of 14 or older, students can choose media studies as the subject matter of their choice under the school circumstances (Buckingham, 2003). In the case of Canada, media education, including language and visual communication part, is conducted in the course of the first grade to the eighth grade in elementary school. Just like in England, it is possible to choose media courses as an independent subject in the 11th or 12th grade (Ann, 2000). In Australia, students include elements of media education in related subjects such as English, sociology, and art in elementary school. Before graduating from high school, they are setting up a television and film course as an optional subject for art, and this is a bit of a vocational education's aspect.

Recently, critical media education such as media language learning, media education, media literacy education, multi-literacy education etc. has been actively discussed in South Korea. Not only does it show how it will reveal in the media, but how it will be considered in the context of how it is structured through. However, the question of how to handle the dimensions of sexuality, which is not only revealed by the media but also structured through it, is not found in education.

In this regard, gender equality media education, which was conducted by the Media Center of Korean Women's Minwoo-Hoe since 2000, is noteworthy. They are focusing on the gender equality perspectives which can critically read the gender and sexuality related images in the media. Their activities are composed of the category of media policy, media monitoring, and media education. In the part of media education, they include the feminist media literacy education which could be reflected in a certain image and its relationship to gendered sexuality.

However, feminist media education should go one step further. The reason is that

the media should be able to deal with the new teenagers as “digital natives,” who are a consumer of various images as well as a producer/circulator in the current situation. Therefore, this feminist media literacy education should be an education that allows teenagers to reflect on the media production process, and it should be an education that helps them grow into alternative images producers, consumers, and circulators.

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Sexuality Education in Singapore Primary Schools: An initial Analysis

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Abstract

This paper examines the sexuality education approach and materials that are currently in use for P5- P6 (ages 11-12) children attending Singapore's public schools. The paper adopts document analysis as its main methodology and examines the Framework on Sexuality Education and the Growing Years Series created by the Ministry of Education (MOE). It was found that the content design and materials were secular in nature and were age appropriate. However, contrary to what MOE documents note, the curriculum was not comprehensive. Instead, it was centered on abstinence as key and focused more on prevention, i.e. unwanted pregnancies and STDs. It also advocated family as the key support and place of intervention. The pedagogy suggested by the analysis of the in class materials and lesson plans also seem more teacher centered than child centered. The paper provides some recommendations on how the sexuality education curriculum can be less prescriptive and more child centered in order to enable greater engagement with the material.

Introduction

Discussion on sex education worldwide is anchored on one of two models, a) abstinence-only-until-marriage (AOUME) and b) comprehensive sexuality education (CSE.) AOUME programmes promote a context in which young people abstain from having pre-marital sex so as to limit unwanted pregnancies, abortion and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). This model encourages heterosexual sex within marriage, arguing that sexual activity and child-rearing outside of marriage would lead to negative personal and societal consequences (Malone & Rodriguez, 2011). The

Christian Right movement has been aligned with this paradigm (Chong, 2011).

UNESCO (2016) defines CSE as “an age appropriate culturally relevant approach to teaching about sex and relationships by providing scientifically accurate, realistic, non-judgemental information.” It is important to note that CSE is conceptualised to enable young people to have access to accurate and objective knowledge, skills, and ethics/moral values that would facilitate sound decision-making. The focus is to inform young people of their sexual and reproductive rights. As such, ideally a CSE curriculum would cover topics such as reproductive choice, abstinence, contraception, homosexuality and transgender issues, along with the more traditional topics such as puberty, relationships and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Liew (2014) argues the two models form the theoretical poles within which a spectrum of sexuality programmes take shape, based on context, dominant beliefs on the nature of sexuality and the values that societies want to instil in their young people. The Ministry of Education (MOE) (2016) defines sexuality education as a “process of acquiring knowledge and skills, and forming attitudes, beliefs and values with regard to human sexuality.” The curriculum designed and promoted by the MOE comprises elements of both AOUME and CSE, even though it is described as being of the comprehensive model (MOE, 2016a). The Framework on Sexuality Education and the Growing Years Series (GY) developed by the MOE provide invaluable information on the ideological leanings of the curriculum. This will be discussed in detail in the segment entitled, Policy on Sexuality Development.

Background to Sexuality Education in Singapore

The government stepped in to regulate the sex education curriculum and delivery to local schools in the early 2000s (Ting, n.d). In order for an incisive analysis of how the program has been conceptualized and operationalized in local schools, it is important to be familiar with the political and social landscape of Singapore. The discussion that follows highlights key understandings of the kinds of values and beliefs that the ruling elite and the larger community hold as critical to healthy growth of the minds and bodies of young Singaporeans.

Political Ethos of the Peoples' Action Party (PAP)

Singapore is an economically vibrant, cosmopolitan city-state in Southeast Asia. Predominantly Chinese (74.3% of the resident population), it prides itself on the harmonious co-existence of different ethnicities (Malays and Indians at 13.4% and 9.1% of the resident population, respectively) (Department of Statistics, 2016). A former British Crown Colony, Singapore experienced the Japanese Occupation in World War 2 and attained independence under the leadership of the late Mr. Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP in 1965.¹ Since then, its growth and development has been phenomenal.

Fundamental to its economic success is PAP's political ethos. It sought political and social stability through the implementation of significant policies, namely multiculturalism, multiracialism, bilingual education policy with English as the medium of instruction, meritocracy and the relentless drive for economic prosperity before the entrenching of democratic principles (Patapan, 2013). The current leadership of the PAP has not shifted its stance on these policies significantly.

The opportunity cost for stability however is authoritarian rule (Gwynne, 2013, p. 174). Singapore is an illiberal democracy (Ho, Alviar-Martin, & Leviste, 2014). Even though elections and other instruments of democracy have been employed to attain legitimacy to govern, the PAP cannot be classified as being strongly democratic. Diamond (2015, p. 143) posits that democracy's key components include "freedom of multiple parties and candidates to campaign and contest, opposition access to mass media and campaign finance, inclusiveness of suffrage, fairness and neutrality of electoral administration, and the extent to which electoral victors have meaningful power to rule." A thriving civil society, which ensures the achievement of certain

¹ Lee Kuan Yew was the first Prime Minister of Singapore. He graduated from Cambridge University, with a first class honours degree. Lee was the co-founder of the People's Action Party in 1954 and was its first secretary-general until 1992. Under his leadership, Singapore gained independence as part of the Malaysian Federation in 1963. Ideological differences and financial considerations led to its separation from Malaysia. In 1965, Lee took over the political reins as Prime Minister. He stepped down in 1992 but continued to serve in the Cabinet as Minister Mentor. He is credited with transforming Singapore from a backward economy to one of the strongest economies in the world today. On 23 March 2015, Lee Kuan Yew died of severe pneumonia, aged 91.

freedoms, including the right to free speech and expression also defines the scope of a democracy.

Singapore, however, has argued for stability and economic prosperity over the establishment of a liberal democracy (Ortmann, 2014). Opposition parties are a feature of the political landscape here but their existence is precarious. Ortmann (2014) describes PAP policy as “stigmatizing opposition” – the credibility and the abilities of members of opposition parties are usually called into question, limiting their popularity with the local population. Instead, the Singapore government’s rhetoric highlights a narrative of vulnerability which necessitates tight control on points of fissure that may erupt in a multi-ethnic society, namely race, religion and to a lesser degree sexuality. Lee (1992, p. 29) noted that,

“Given that Singapore is a such a small country with big neighbours (Malaysia and Indonesia) and limited resources, then perhaps the existence of a Leviathan-type government is more beneficial than a liberal democracy... I maintain the argument that Singapore’s form of democracy serves to establish an efficient and effective government that is able to deliver the goods”.

Lee had resolutely argued that a small Chinese majority nation with very limited natural resources, including water and food (imported from neighbouring Malaysia) necessitates the adoption of fair and equal treatment of all races/ethnicities in domestic policies and insistence on non-partisan foreign policy, which champions free trade.

In order to mandate the political and social boundaries, the ruling elite has imposed a set of unwritten dictates known as *OB markers* or *Out-of-Bounds markers*. The markers include sedition against the State, inciting of racial and/or religious strife, acts of terrorism, maligning of particular ethnic groups in mainstream and social media. These OB markers are enforced using various legal instruments. The Sedition Act, the Internal Security Act, and the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act govern what and how sensitive matters are discussed and portrayed in the media and the public sphere. Irresponsible behaviour, action or speech can result in punitive action (Ho, Alviar-Martin, & Leviste, 2014). The government enacts the consequences of such attitudes and action publically as in the recent Amos Yee² case.

It is critical to note that the regular Singaporean today perceives harmony (at least on the surface level) in society as critical for continued prosperity. More importantly, the populace is convinced that raising the discussion of OB topics like race, religion, and language and to a lesser degree, sexuality can have negative consequences for an individual. People tiptoe around taboo topics or choose not to dialogue at all, due to apprehension and fear of punitive consequences as sexuality is seen as an OB issue. Ho, Alviar-Martin, & Leviste, (2014) noted that educators tasked with teaching Sexuality education find it very discomfoting, choosing instead to discuss issues in a very prescriptive manner. They do not easily engage with children's questions, which may border on areas not covered in the syllabus.

It is important to note that even though the PAP is not as watchful of the discourse of sexuality in the public realm or its surveillance over citizen's sexual lives, the PAPA nevertheless advocates a mainstream definition of what a family constitutes and how sexuality is to be presented to young children and teenagers.

A Short History of Sex Education in Singapore

In the 1970s-1980s, sex education was *ad hoc* at best and taught by medical professionals and the Singapore Family Planning and Population Board (Ting, n.d). Talks were conducted in the Community Centers in English and Mandarin. The nature of these talks are not well documented but sources like the University Health Service records suggest that abstinence was promoted (Ting, n.d). School based sex education programmes were non-existent.

Ting (n.d) noted that by the late 1980s, the medical professionals were arguing for a sustained sexuality education, spearheaded and conducted by schools. Doctors suggested that a sexuality education programme was needed to teach young people aspects of sexuality – i.e. sex, virginity, love and relationships as parents were not comfortable or equipped sufficiently to discuss this with their children. By the 1990s, sex education was incorporated into the school system, to be delivered through selected

² Amos Yee is a teenage blogger in Singapore who used offensive language to describe Muslims and Christians in Singapore. He was fined \$2000 and jailed for six weeks. See <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/teen-blogger-amos-yee-gets-six-weeks-jail-and-2000-fine-for-wounding> for details.

courses like Health Education (primary schools), Science, Civic and Moral Education and Pastoral Care (Secondary and above). The Ministry of Education had yet to step in to organize the sex education programme; however, it enabled funding to schools to engage external training agencies to provide this kind of education for the students. The tide for sexuality education turned in the 2000s, when the MOE took a direct interest in how this critical knowledge set was delivered to the young Singaporean.

MOE designed and developed a Comprehensive Framework on Sexuality Education and the Growing Years (GY) and Empowered Teens (eTeens) series in 2000 and revised these in 2012. The former document delineated the philosophical underpinnings of the program and operationalized the approach that it wanted schools to adopt when delivering the curriculum. The GY and eTeen series fleshed out the curricular objectives and provided the resources with which teachers could teach sex education. Students, aged between 11-18 years and enrolled in local schools were exposed to the GY and eTeens series and this continues to this day. The syllabus was updated in the 2000s by MOE in collaboration with medical professionals, social workers, parents and educators.

MOE expects all external training agencies contracted by schools to conduct Sexuality education to strictly adhere to the framework. Failure to do so would result in termination of such contracts. This was borne out when AWARE (Association of Women for Action and Research), a NGO's contract was terminated when parents and the conservative elements within AWARE highlighted that the curriculum taught was presenting homosexuality as neutral and discussed sex acts like anal sex as being neutral as it concerned the consent and pleasure of the individuals concerned (Liew, 2014; Ting, n.d).

This particular case also drew in the Christian Right as AWARE's members who belonged to a single church in Singapore criticised the offerings as being too liberal and not congruent to the larger community's conservative take on sexuality for children aged between 11-18 (Chong, 2014). The MOE after its own investigations into these allegations revoked the contract as it felt that the curriculum being offered was not in line with its main ideological premise that the family was the basic unit of society.

Sample and Methodology

Convenience sampling was used to gain access to the two schools, which participated in this study. Bright Fields Primary School is situated in North Central Singapore and caters to middle, working and low SES families. Parkview Primary is situated in the east of Singapore and caters to a mostly middle SES demographic. Both are neighbourhood government funded schools.

This paper adopts document analysis as its research methodology. Bowen (2009, p. 27) defines document analysis as a “ systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents...document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and developing empirical knowledge.” Document study can provide invaluable insight into the philosophy, beliefs and values of organizations. The conceptual framework of this paper espouses that a) documents are situated in the context of their birthing, b) produced in social settings and considered collective in nature and that c) noting how documents are consumed, deconstructed and function in particular contexts is a crucial aspect of a social science research project (Owen, 2014).

Therefore I examine Sexuality Education by analysing the documents pertaining to the program that are freely available on the MOE’s website (2016) . These include the Introduction to the program, the Role of the stakeholders and the Scope and teaching approach of sexuality education in schools. I also review the Parents Guide (2008) that the then Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS³) developed in conjunction with the Health Promotion Board (HPB), even though this resource is not used in sexuality education lessons per se. The Parent Guide can provide insight into the ideological underpinnings of the State as the two developers of the content are part of the government and have a vested interest in how parents as stakeholders help to manage sexuality related issues. Their approach to how parents could help can shed light on the aspects of sexuality education, which the State wants to draw attention to and inculcate in the population.

The Health Promotion Board (HPB, 2014) also maintains a dedicated website on sexuality education, which has many audio-visual and print material to support parents

³ MCYS is now known as the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).

in broaching the topic of sexuality with their young children. The material on this website was also surveyed to get an understanding of the philosophy and ethos behind the sexuality education initiative which is available on the World Wide Web and accessible to all.

The bulk of the analysis is based on the in class materials and resources that the two schools are using to deliver the curriculum. My focus is on the GY series, which is targeted at the Primary 5 and 6 pupils, i.e. 11-12-year-old preadolescent youths. I examine Unit 2 in some detail, which is entitled “*Where I Belong*.” It comes under the topic of Families, Gender Role and Identity. The big idea that children examine is Relationships. This unit spans both P5 and P6. This particular unit was chosen as this specifically deals with gender related issues.

Policy on Sexuality Education in Singapore

It is imperative to locate the framework within the ideological understandings of what human sexuality is and how both society at large and policymakers in the various ministries, especially the MOE and the MSF, define it.

Ideological Stance

The state continues to adopt a conservative view of human sexuality. First and foremost, the family is seen as the building block of society (Mathew, 2015). The traditional heterogeneous concept of a two-parent household, which produces children within wedlock, is the dominant paradigm that shapes policy with regard to social relationships and obligations. Sexual activity is premised to take place between legally wedded male and female individuals, when they reach physical maturity.

The key thrust of the sexuality education program is directed at preparing young people to make informed choices by a) providing them with accurate, age appropriate knowledge on human sexuality and b) educate on the consequences of sexual activity. Hence, the main focus is to reduce pregnancy rates among teens, manage the issue of sexual promiscuity and the rise of STDs. For example, GY program discusses physical, emotional, social, and ethical aspects of sexuality. Topics include building relationships, the nature of romantic relationships, including dating, going steady and marriage.

Importantly, the program draws attention to sexual health, behaviours, and consequences of sexual activities, teenage pregnancy and the role of the media.

The central messages of the Framework (MOE, 2016b, emphasis mine) are the following:

1. *Love and respect themselves as they love and respect others;*
2. *Build positive relationships based on love and respect (which are the foundations for strong families);*
3. *Make responsible decisions for themselves, their family and society;*
4. *Practice abstinence before marriage, as it is the best protection against STDs, HIV and unwanted pregnancies. Casual sex can harm and hurt them and their loved ones.*

The key messages underscore the abstinence only thrust of the sexuality education programme. A three-prong approach (see Figure 1) is used to deliver the key messages of love, respect and responsibility for self and towards others within the strong frame of positive family relationships. The State envisions that these messages can only be entrenched in the minds and influence the values of the individual child if parents own these ideas and transmit these by cultivating strong communication skills with their children. School leadership and the MOE would support them, especially since teachers are specifically trained to help children make sense of physiological and emotional changes, while navigating conflicting messages that they may hear from peers and the media. The Sexuality program also leverages on community expertise as schools can partner with relevant agencies to enhance the sexuality education program. The aftermath of the AWARE saga cemented the MOE's ideological stance towards sexuality education programme deliverables - "messages which could promote homosexuality or suggest approval of pre-marital sex (MOE as cited in Liew, 2014, p. 708)" are not examined or even probed in the GY series.

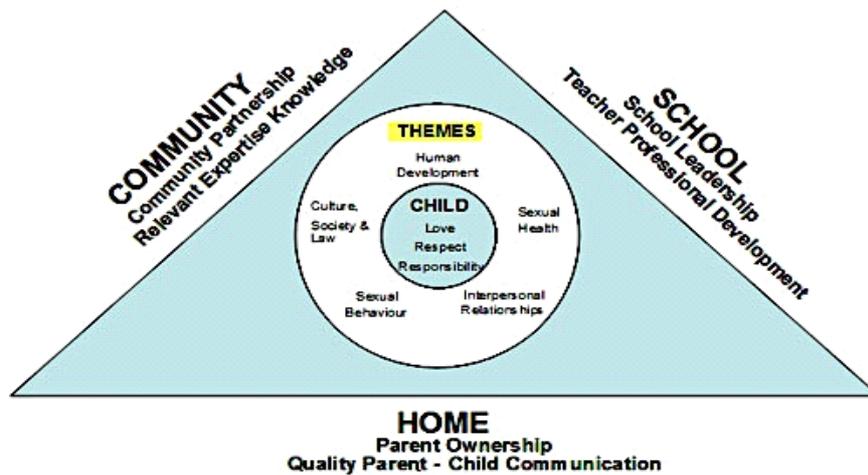


Figure 1. Three-Prong approach to sexuality education (MOE, 2016b)

MOE's Sexuality Education Curriculum

As can be seen in Figure 1, the themes discussed in MOE's Sexuality Education Curriculum relate to human development; sexual behavior; sexual health; interpersonal skills; and culture, society and the law. These concepts are further examined over the P5-P6 years in the categories presented in Figure 2. Teachers are provided the teaching resources including the lesson plan, PPTs and worksheets to explore the topics which come under each category.

The key themes in the GY series

Both the GY and the eTeens programmes are delivered through a series of mass lectures or talks and in class activities. A specific Scheme of Work (SOW⁴) orders the delivery of the curriculum. Sexuality Education is incorporated into subjects namely, Science and Health Education (Primary school), FTGP (Form Teacher Guidance Period for primary schools), Biology (Upper Secondary) and Character and Citizenship Education (all levels). Teachers are specifically nominated by schools and sent for training at the MOE before they are deployed to teach classes. These teachers as Liew

⁴ The syllabus for Sexuality Education is controlled and not made available to the public by MOE. As such it is not possible to attach a copy of the SOW or syllabus in this paper.

(2014) notes need to align their value and belief set to what the MOE prescribes.

Since, parents are perceived by the MOE (2016) as key stakeholders who have the primary responsibility to educate their children, schools have been given the leeway to include parents in the sexuality programme by enabling them to sit in during class activities, and provide constructive feedback on the curriculum and pedagogy. Cognizant of the cultural and religious diversity of the Singapore population, however, the MOE has given parents an opt-out option.

Review of Policy Interpretation by Primary Schools

To reiterate, the sexuality education framework is premised on the family being the bedrock of Singapore society. Family composition is understood in the traditional way and, as seen earlier, abstinence is advised as the best course of action for young people. These key understandings are delivered through the categories and accompanying topics presented in Figure 2 over the course of the children's P5-P6 years.

Comment on Sexuality Education Curriculum and Pedagogy noted

Topics relating to puberty, reproduction and abuse are covered through the Health Education syllabus for both P5 and P6. Building relationships and role of the child within the family has been integrated into the Character and Citizenship education periods (P5-6), while topics related to the Internet and dangers of chat lines for instance are covered under the Cyber wellness lessons (P5-6). Gender roles and stereotyping have been included in Health Education. Note that teaching of physiological changes and emotional states associated with puberty and reproduction is delivered according to gender of the students.

A review of the in-class materials suggest that the MOE syllabus is meant to be a secular one and is age appropriate, but not very comprehensive. Children are sensitively introduced to human sexuality, reproductive science; know their responsibilities in minimising sexual harm and prevention of unwanted pregnancies and spread of STDs. The main aim is to present these concepts in a rational, scientific way so as to convince the child that the ways outlined are logical and objective.

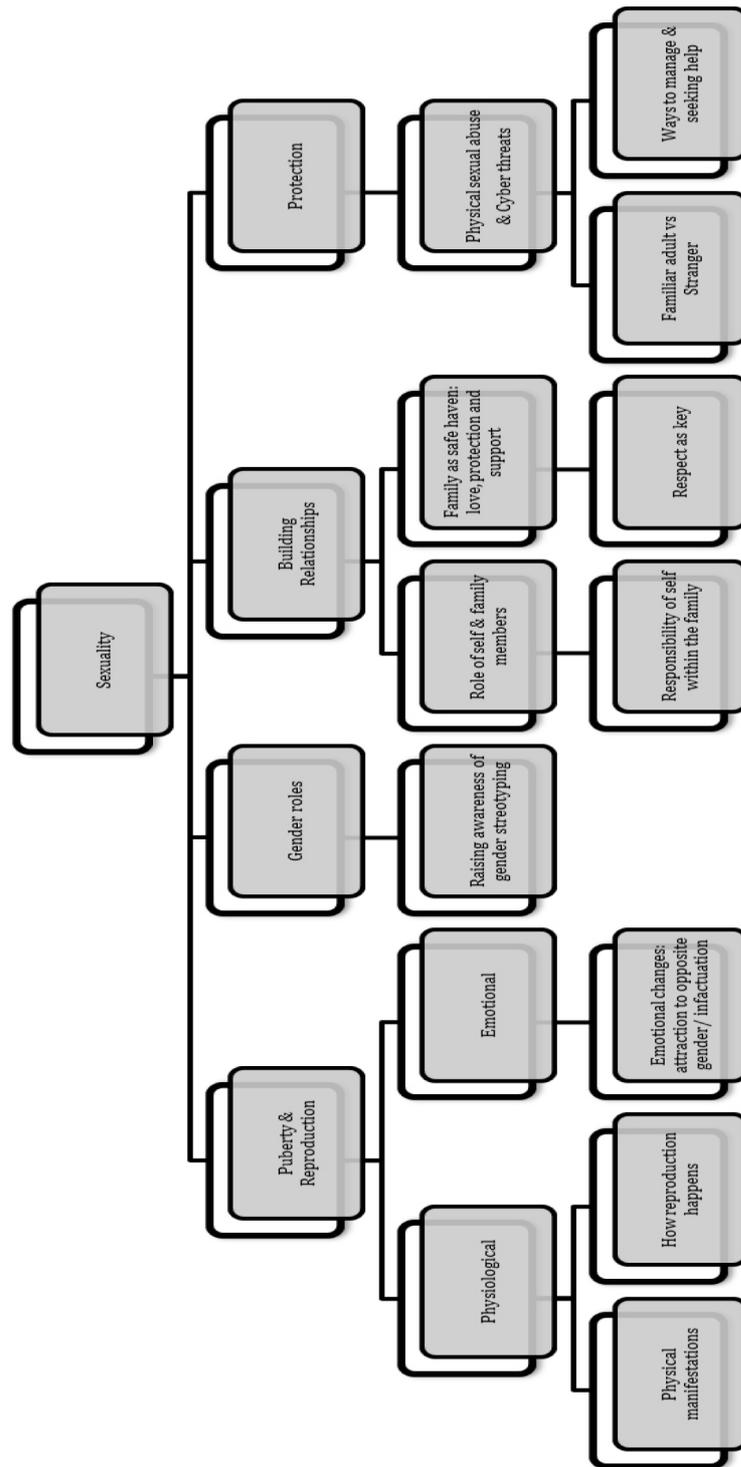


Figure 2. Key themes distilled from the SOWs provided to schools

The Framework emphasizes the role of family and relationships in the life of the sexually evolving young child. It disseminates the knowledge of human sexuality, reproductive science and informs of personal responsibilities through the context of strong family relationships. Having said that it is also critical to note that the definition of family offered by the course content includes single parent families, along with extended, blended, foster and nuclear family types. Children are exposed to the idea that families are different but unique. The focus is to limit stereotypical concepts of family structure. The family structures discussed reflect the current situation in Singapore, with the rise of divorces and the increase in the number of both single parent and blended families. The notion of adaptive families, i.e. a family functioning as a unit but not necessarily connected by the blood ties usually associated with families is a phenomenon that is gaining legitimacy in Singapore recently (Saad, 2015). This evolving context is reflected in the materials given to children.

The key message that is transmitted to children is that the family is ballast for the growing child. The family environment is conceptualized to provide love, affirmation, support and sense of belonging. The child is taught that family members can be trusted to protect and safeguard the child's physical and emotional safety. The child is encouraged to turn to the family in times of uncertainty and doubt. The child is continually taught that s/he has a responsibility towards the family s/he hails from. The intention is to emphasize the correct behaviour, i.e. to abstain from pre-marital sex at all costs and seek parental advice when not sure about the physiological, emotional and environmental challenges faced.

This idea that the family is the child's strength and that family members would provide the best information and course of action can also be seen in the video resources that are available on HPB's website (Video entitled Shall we Talk?). The parents are encouraged to speak openly to the child about puberty and the physiological and emotional changes that they may encounter. The discourse used is couched in scientific terms to enable a sense of objectivity. It is noted that sexuality education takes that tone in the materials available for teachers and parents. The guide prepared by the then Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports (MCYS, now known as Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and HBP entitled, "Love them.

Talk about Sex” also focuses on opening the communication channels between growing children and parents. The booklet however, considers the issue of same sex crushes and advises parents to discuss sexual orientation if the need arises. It underscores again how homosexuality may have its roots in biology. There is no endorsement or support of homosexuality as a lifestyle however.

HPB (Loh, 2014) had also published a FAQ on sexuality on its website. The FAQ had the following questions on it –

“What is homosexuality/bisexuality?” “Am I normal? Is being gay or bisexual a mental illness? Do I need to seek medical help?” “Can homosexuals have long-lasting relationships?”

The answer on the website was

“Yes, homosexuals can have long-lasting relationships. A homosexual relationship, like any other, is based on trust, love, commitment and support.”

But the onslaught of public criticism caused the HPB to remove the links to LGBT websites that it had originally included. The definition remained and was supported by the Health Minister who argued that it was “objective” information and not directed at encouraging homosexual relationships (Liew, 2014). The booklet also considers the dangers of STDs and unwanted pregnancies and the dominant advice to parents is to dissuade their youngsters from engaging in sex. It underscores the need to have respect for self and others when in a relationship.

The GY series also highlights the central role of respect in building relationships, especially within the family. The child’s sense of self, it’s place in the family and how relationships should be built is a recurrent theme in the sexuality education framework. Children are exposed to the concept that relationships are rooted in respect and that choices one makes should consider the impact on family. This is a core responsibility of a child.

The issue of gender roles and stereotyping is tackled in this series of two lessons. Children are taught that traditional roles of males and females have shifted and now

people get to enjoy careers irrespective of gender, i.e. gender does not limit the kind of work people engage in. The children are taught to not discriminate based on stereotypical understanding of gender roles, for instance that boys don't cry or that only girls do housework. The only topic discussed in some depth is how career paths should not be dependent on gender.

Recommendations & Conclusion

As discussed above, the sexuality education prepared for local students aged 11-12 years is secular in nature and age appropriate but not very comprehensive. It is important to say at this juncture that I was not able to observe a class session. The following assertions and recommendations are based on an analysis of the documents, i.e. syllabus, SOW, lesson plans and accompanying PPT slides that teachers were to use their students.

An important point to note with regard to delivery and pedagogy is that the content design ideologically places the learner in a very passive position – as recipient of instruction. This was seen in the lesson plans that accompanied each topic, prepared by the MOE. Adults are presented as the people who have the resources to help the child understand the situation he finds himself in. For instance, the children are told through PPT slide that a key learning point is that “Families, usually your parents, are the main providers of love, guidance and protection.” Before this slide is shared, the lesson plan asks the teachers to “select pupils to share: i) situations where they would prefer to seek help from their families or other sources and explain why.” Though, the lesson plans include children by asking them to share prior knowledge and their own perceptions, these are quite directed to the core messages that the framework wants them to see. It is recommended that a child-centered pedagogy be adopted instead when sexuality education modules are conducted.

A child-centered approach argues that children have the skill to construct knowledge rather than rely on the teacher to impart knowledge (Tzuo, Yang & Wright, 2011). Child centred learning is premised on the critical understanding that comprehension of knowledge is best facilitated when the learner actively participates in the meaning making process. The teacher is the facilitator and is instrumental to the

learning as both adult and child contribute towards the meaning in any activity undertaken together (Lindsay, 2015). Hence, a child-centered pedagogy is based on children's needs and interests. Child learning is enhanced when the teaching process gives space for child initiated questions and study directions. The world is rapidly developing and the easy access to media and technology has enabled children to get curious about issues related to sexual acts, practices and behaviours. For instance, in Singapore homosexuality is acknowledged but still criminalized. Section 377A of the Penal Code prescribes a maximum 2-year prison sentence for male homosexuality. Yet, one can see evidence of a gradually opening society, for homosexuality is being accepted as matter of fact. Young people today feel that sexual orientation is a matter of personal choice and not something for the State to be concerned with. Young preadolescent children who are more technologically connected today than ever before would be cognizant of this.

It is imperative that the sexuality education program be open to what children may want to discuss rather than take the prescribed approach currently seen. The materials and activities presented to children in the units I examined are not child-centered. Apart from getting the children to discuss the answers to the questions posed, many of the lessons do not let the children lead the discussion. When there is limited autonomy in the classes for children to air their concerns, the learning is not as expansive as it could be. A dialogic approach with openness to discuss sexuality in the areas the children want to go may be far more effective than getting them to merely agree with the normative view of families and practices seen in the syllabus.

For instance, with the rise of divorces, many individuals are choosing to cohabitate and have babies in such unions. Culturally, such practices are shunned and many religions endorse marriage over cohabitation. Such conflicting perceptions of sexuality can be very confusing for young children, whom may be experiencing such family configurations. The syllabus as it is designed now does not have the scope to discuss grey areas or give voice to the types of concerns children may have with regard to their lived realities.

Family as a main source of support and intervention is a core assumption of the Framework. However, not all families can provide the kind of support that children are

taught to expect. Family members may not be ready to speak on these issues with their young children, or they may not be available to speak on such matters. Children may feel really lost when they find they are unable to connect with their immediate family members with their concerns with growing up. It may be good to also educate children on other sources of support within the school community, apart from teachers, the wider community, for instance the Police Force. The telephone numbers they could call when facing emergencies or danger especially for children without strong family support is important and should be furnished by schools.

It is recommended that along with preparing the children to locate and gain strength from their families, schools also reach out to parents to help them communicate effectively with their children. Parents can experience difficulty broaching topics related to sexuality with their young children. They may feel ill equipped to answer such questions due their personal beliefs, lack of knowledge or even cultural barriers to such topics. It is also important for schools to take a more pro-active approach with children who come from less than able families. Schools could connect with extended kin and provide opportunities for these interested adults to play proxy for the unavailable parent, subject to parental agreement. Aunts, uncles or cousins for instance could step in and be trained by the schools to attend to the child's queries especially in sexuality related issues. This can provide the child with the needed security.

The children in P6 are also introduced to the dangers of online relationships, pornography and chat lines. The key principle again is to help identify the dangers and how the child can protect himself or herself. The focus here is very appropriate as the Internet connects children across distances and age groups. The fact that the syllabus introduces that notion that abuse is not restricted to the unfamiliar or stranger adult but can be perpetrated by a known adult is a fair approach. The curriculum also empowers the learners with the requisite knowledge that may indicate wrong doing on the part of the adult and provides avenue through which the child can protect him/herself in two contexts, namely a) physical and b) online. The syllabus also spends quite a bit of time discussing the nature of romance and infatuation by examining the nature of friendships. The focus is on equipping the child with knowledge and provides strategies

to be free of peer pressure.

It is noted that the material used to teach both the above topics are prescriptive. While raising their awareness of the dangers of predatory online chat lines and pornography, it may also be beneficial to spend more time on how individuals actually build committed relationships with the opposite gender. It may prudent to introduce to them values in a spouse and the nature of committed relations that come with age and maturity. Once again, it may prove more effective to start such conversations with what the children want to know more of.

The discussion on gender roles leaves much to be desired. The design of the unit and the individual lessons do not probe the place of gender in Singapore society. It speaks of limiting discrimination and presents that within the scope of careers and roles in the home. Both genders would benefit from an open and constructive discussion of how gender is operationalized in Singapore. In that way, educators would be able to discuss the role of gender in sexuality, for instance, sexual activity manifests in females through pregnancies. What then is the role of the male? What about women who choose to rear their child without being married to the child's father? What is the responsibility of the male to the child he begets? Examining and critiquing cultural assumptions and norms in Singapore could address these questions. Children could be introduced to legal rights and the women's charter to note that both genders have responsibilities.

The whole concept gender can be expanded further. The UN (FAO, 2016) provides the following definitions of gender.

Table 1. Defining Gender related terms

Gender roles	<i>Behaviors, tasks and responsibilities that a society considers appropriate for men, women, boys and girls.</i>
Gender relations	<i>Ways in which a society defines rights, responsibilities and the identities of men and women in relation to one another.</i>
Gender discrimination	<i>Any exclusion or restriction made on the basis of gender roles and relations that prevents a person from enjoying full human rights</i>

Gender equality	<i>Women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life</i>
Gender equity	<i>Fairness and impartiality in the treatment of women and men in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities</i>
Gender analysis	<i>The study of the different roles of women and men in order to understand what they do, what resources they have, and what their needs and priorities are</i>
Gender balance	<i>The equal and active participation of women and men in all areas of decision-making, and in access to and control over resources and services</i>
Gender mainstreaming	<i>Globally recognized strategy for achieving gender equality</i>

The syllabus talks at length about discrimination without examining adequately issues of equality and equity. One way the syllabus can do this is for children to actually conduct a gender analysis. This sort of inquiry can be taken as a post exam activity as this would need a substantial amount of time. Probing how assumptions about gender can restrict the potential growth of both male and female members of our society can lead to a more empowered population that is in time able to move away from gender bias and provide both genders an equal take at life. Potential of every child can be pushed far and wide. Children have the potential to change the viewpoints and actions of their own families when they have been given the appropriate knowledge and the power to act. Empowering both genders to see beyond the social construction of what one's biological sex can and cannot let them do, will strengthen society in the long run. Another fissure or divide in society can be reduced.

In conclusion, the sexuality education programme developed for the P5-P6 children in the GY series can be very prescriptive in nature. This renders it myopic. The prescriptive tone and limited scope, especially its lack of child-centeredness can limit its efficacy. Would children take the messages seriously? Children would develop a stake in the learning, when the lessons begin with their questions and interests.

The effectiveness of the curriculum is very dependent on the teachers and the school environment. An open, sensitive and empathetic educator team would go a long

way in influencing children to act in responsible ways. It also means that the teachers selected to work with the children be of a flexible mind-set that is open to questions which may be in the grey areas or a shade inappropriate. Teachers may not be aware of the lived circumstances of the children in the classroom. A non-judgemental and constructive approach to questions and queries from the children would be an asset. These questions may be very sensitive or even sound too mature for the child, but the teacher will need to have the sensitivity and the empathy to engage with the child positively.

For example, a child may be intrigued by the practice of homosexuality and may want to know if it right or wrong to feel an attraction to the same sex. Family and community may have told the same child that such attraction is, for example, “sinful”. The child may want to seek clarity with the teacher. Teachers, who personally believe that homosexuality is not correct, may need to still let the child ask his question and be neutral in his or her answer. The teacher may want to ask why the child was motivated to ask this question and perhaps seek to understand the views that have been shared by his or her family before any conclusive statements could be made about how the child could understand homosexuality. In all honesty, there can be no real conclusive answer to questions about sexuality practices. These differ by culture, religion, education level and the attitude of the individual teacher concerned. A dialogic approach that does not penalise questions that border OB markers would enable children to feel secure to ask questions and still be validated as being ‘normal’, rather than feel Othered in a prescribed curriculum, which celebrates one way of being – a heterosexual for instance. It is recommended that further study be undertaken to explore the kind of questions children may have in relation to gender when they are given the autonomy to ask. This type of research can help raise teacher awareness of the grey areas and prepare them to competently answer the children’s questions.

It goes without saying that the school is only effective if the family comes on board to support it. Having common aims would help, as would greater training for parents to support growing preadolescents. However, this expectation may not be met by the reality on the ground. Schools and the teachers concerned must be prepared to develop materials for children, which scaffold them with the necessary knowledge, and

skills to make informed decisions and are responsible for every action they take.

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