

# The Understanding of Gender Equality in Indonesia by Indonesian Women's Diaspora in Germany

Supriyatningsih Wenang<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Diah Nahdiyati<sup>3</sup>, Teti Arndt<sup>4</sup>, Ima Rismawati<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctoral program, Westfälische Wilhelms University of Muenster, Germany

<sup>2</sup>Obstetrics and Gynecology Department, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta

<sup>3</sup>PCIM Jerman Raya (Pimpinan Cabang Istimewa Muhammadiyah Jerman Raya)

<sup>4</sup>PERMIF e.V. (Persatuan Masyarakat Indonesia Frankfurt)

<sup>5</sup>Muhammadiyah Maternal and Child Health Center, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta

\*Corresponding author. Email: Supriyatningsih.dr@umy.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The existence of gender inequality and injustice between men and women may block the national development. Indonesia has experienced an improvement in narrowing the gender gaps, but the challenges are continuous. This study aims to describe the understanding of gender equality and women's emancipation in Indonesia by Indonesian women's diaspora in Germany.

**Methods:** A quick survey through an online questionnaire was distributed to 35 Indonesian women's diaspora in Germany who attended the online dialogue. The questionnaire assessed the characteristics of participants and their understanding of gender equality and women's emancipation in Indonesia and was analyzed by SPSS.

**Results:** Ninety-four percent of the participants agreed that men and women are a partner and defined gender equality and women's emancipation as all rights and obligations of women that are equal to men, guaranteed by law, state and religion. Seventy-four percent of the participants saw that the four gender roles in Indonesia are still needed to boost and fight for. Seventy-four percent of the participants agreed that Indonesian women are ready to compete globally as professionals and workers.

**Conclusion:** The majority of participants seemed to have a high awareness of women's emancipation and gender equality and support to boost women's gender roles in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, women's emancipation, women's diaspora in Germany,

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has experienced an improvement in narrowing the gender gap in various key sectors (1), but challenges remain especially in the indicators of national priority development related to gender equality and women's emancipation including education, health, work and employment, violence against women, and discrimination and rights of vulnerable groups (2). The Gender Parity Index (GPI), a measurement of the relative access to education of males and females, has been achieved (1), but the net enrollment rate (Angka Partisipasi Murni/APM) was lower for female students (2). In the health area, the stigma and discriminatory treatment for women with HIV/AIDS is still higher since the society tends to position them as the party blamed (2). Women labor's participation rate continues to grow with better returns for educated women than men (1). However, more women workers have low education, therefore the majority of them work in the informal sector which is not protected by law, which puts them vulnerable to violence (2). Women's political representation has increased (1), but the percentage of women in legislation is still 30% of the maximum and it has never been fulfilled, only 14%-26% (2).

On the other hand, there are a good number of Indonesian women who live abroad in developed countries as professionals and international students, one of these countries is Germany (3). In 2014, there were 9.082 women living in Germany, most are students and professionals such as nurses – the number were higher than men with 6.790 (3). This is certainly very encouraging as Indonesia continues to strive to improve inequalities between men and women (1).

On 8 March 2021, coinciding with celebrating International Women's Day, we conducted a survey to Indonesian women's diaspora in Germany to get an idea of gender equality and women's emancipation in Indonesia (4). Germany is one of the countries in Europe that is both working to boost gender equality (5), as well as Indonesia.

This is an initial study and the results of the survey within this study may benefit as the basic data for further studies. This may will be a new study because we did not find a similar study exploring the understanding of gender equality and women's emancipation in Indonesia by diaspora women in developed countries, Germany in particular.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This is a descriptive study that was conducted to better understand how does women's diaspora in Germany understand gender equality in Indonesia. The quick survey was carried out on 8 March 2021 using an electronic questionnaire via Google Forms to 35 Indonesian women's diaspora in Germany and who were participated in an online dialogue entitled "International Woman's Day: Gender Equality for Indonesian Women" that held by PERMIF e.V. (Persatuan Masyarakat Indonesia Frankfurt - the unity of the Indonesian people in Frankfurt and its surroundings) (6).

The questionnaire assessed the characteristics of Indonesian women's diaspora who attended the online dialogue including age, occupation, education, citizenship, information sources related to gender equality and women's emancipation, and other questions that assessed their understanding of various issues related to gender equality and emancipation of women in Indonesia (details in Table 1 and Table 2). We compiled a questionnaire based on several tools used to assess gender equality (7).

The inclusion criteria of participants were Indonesian women's diaspora, that is, Indonesian women living abroad consisting of Indonesian women's citizens, and foreigners related to Indonesia, such as children of Indonesian citizens, former Indonesian citizens, and children of former Indonesian citizens) (8), in Germany. The univariate analysis was done using SPSS to assess various factors characteristics of their understanding of gender equality, women's emancipation, the reformers of national women's emancipation in Indonesia, the preservation of Indonesia's culture in terms of gender equality and women's emancipation, feminism movement, and the readiness to work in European countries such as Germany. Informed consent was agreed by all study participants – they were agreed to participate by submitting the answers of the questionnaire.

## 3. RESULT

All data summarized from the survey are provided in the table below.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of respondents

Variables	n=35	%
Age		
≤ 24 years old	1	3.1
≥ 25 years old	31	96.9
Mean	39.57 years old	
Occupation		
Private employees	15	42.9
Entrepreneurs	1	2.9
Professionals	12	34.3
Housewives	6	17.1

Government employees	1	2.9
Education		
Senior high school or less	1	2.9
Diploma	4	11.4
Bachelor degree	14	40.0
Master degree	14	40.0
PhD	1	2.9
Citizenship		
Indonesians	33	94.3
Germans/others	2	5.7
Information resources		
Formal education	19	51.4
Books, magazines	22	59.5
Websites	21	56.8
Seminars	11	29.7
This online dialogue	0	0
All medias	19	51.4

Table 1 shows that 96.9% participants were in adult age and the mean of age is 39.57 years old. Participants' occupation varies with the majority of them in private employees and professionals as much as 42.9% and 34.3%, respectively. Among all participants, bachelor and master degrees of educational level contribute a higher percentage than other degrees, that is, 40% for each degree level. Participants' citizenship is mostly Indonesian (94.3%) and only 5.7% who are Germans. More than half participants received information regarding gender equality and women's emancipation from formal education (51.4%), books or magazines (59.5%), and websites (56.8%) while only 29.7 participants got information sources from seminars.

**Table 2.** General description of knowledge in gender equality

Variables	n=35	%
The definition of gender equality and women's emancipation		
All rights and obligations of women, that are equal to men, guaranteed by law, state and religion	33	94.3
On several important things, men should still take precedence	2	5.7
The meaning of gender equality and women's emancipation		
As a form of cooperation between men and women in carrying out life as well as being partners, who have the same high position and have the same rights without any differences in seeing the two	33	94
	2	5.7

Disagree with above statement		
<hr/>		
Women's emancipation figure in		
Indonesia	33	94.3
RA Kartini	2	5.7
No idea		
<hr/>		
Feminism		
Good	23	65.7
Bad	5	14.3
No idea	7	20.0
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Areas to boost of gender roles in		
Indonesia	2	5.7
Social and community	3	8.6
Productivity	4	11.4
Education	26	74.3
All areas		
<hr/>		
Gender equality, women's emancipation and Indonesian culture		
Agree	31	88.6
Disagree	4	11.4
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Readiness of Indonesian women to working in Germany or EU		
Ready	26	74.3
Not ready	9	25.7

Table 2 shows that 94.3% participants agreed that gender equality and women's emancipation were defined as all rights and obligations of women that are equal to men, guaranteed by law, state and religion. Only 5.7% participants argued that, in several important things, men should still take precedence.

Regarding the meaning of gender equality and women's emancipation, 94.3% agreed that it is as a form of cooperation between men and women in carrying out life as well as being partners who have the same high position and have the same rights without any difference in seeing the two. Only 5.7% participants disagreed with that meaning.

Almost all participants (94.3%) concurred with RA Kartini as a figure of women's emancipation in Indonesia. 65.7% participants considered that the feminism movement to increase gender equality and emancipation of women, that is believed echoed by the Western culture, was something good, while 14.3% thought that feminism is a bad thing and 20% of participants have no idea regarding feminism.

The majority of respondents (74.3%) saw that the four gender roles in Indonesia, including productive role, reproductive role, social and community role, and the role of

achieving education, are still needed to boost and fight for. The highest number of participants were 88.6% women agreed that in gender equality and women's emancipation in Indonesia, it cannot leave behind the Indonesian culture.

Lastly, 74.3% participants agreed that Indonesian women are ready to compete globally as professionals and workers in European countries, Germany in particular. In contrast, 25.7% participants opted for disagreement with the statement.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to depict a general description of the understanding of gender equality in Indonesia by Indonesian women's diaspora in Germany. Gender equality does not mean that men and women become the same; only that men and women have equal rights and opportunities to fulfil their potency (9) so that both men and women can fully participate as equal partners in life (10). In line with the above statements, 94.3% participants in this study defined gender equality as the equal rights and obligations of men and women that are guaranteed by law, state and religion, as a form of cooperation between both men and women in carrying out life as well as being partners, who have the same high position and have the same rights without any differences in seeing the two. Gender equality in Indonesia is regulated, one of which is Law Number 39 of 1999, article 1, paragraph 1 concerning Human Rights, where men and women are seen as Almighty God's creatures which must be respected, upheld and protected by the state, law, and government (11). Noting that the majority of Indonesians are Muslim, it is worth considering how Islam views gender equality. In general, Islam views men and women in the same position, has the same obligations and rights as His servants, both are creations of Allah who are equally obliged to worship Him, and are equally promised rewards and threats of torment (12). The Prophet Muhammad, The Messenger of Allah, also sought to achieve equality for both and women (13).

Indonesia has experienced an improvement in gender equality in some areas such as health, education, work opportunities, voice and government agencies, and legislation, but challenges remain (2). Gender inequality is an injustice issue that is still happening to many women in Indonesia (14). Inequality persists in some issues related to health access, education, economic opportunities, access to legal justice, and influential decision making (2). Seventy-four percent of the participants in this study also claimed that all four gender roles in Indonesia, i.e., getting higher education roles, productive role, reproductive role, and social and community role, are still needed to boost. Related to the education role, an inequality can be clearly seen in the net enrollment rate (APM) and average school length (RLS) from elementary school to senior high school where female students were lower (2). The inequality in this fundamental role spreads to the problem related to other gender roles, especially productive and reproductive roles. The productive role can be defined as the role of earning a living or in other words, it relates to workforce. In the labor force sector, a low

level of education leads to the low quality of female workers in the formal sector and therefore dominates them in the informal sector such as domestics helpers, which is vulnerable because it has not been protected by the labor legislation (2). Moreover, in large cities in Indonesia, women have more access to higher education and expect to work afterwards, but the culture still perceives them as dependents of their husbands who are viewed as the primary breadwinners (15). Whereas, the reproductive role means the role of caring for and fostering a family, especially with a partner and child, and is associated with domestic tasks to maintain the continuity of the family (16). Low education level can be an indirect factor to high maternal mortality rates (17). Lastly, a social role refers to the role of building relationships with other relatives and communities. Women and men carry out these three roles, but, generally in Indonesia, reproductive and social roles are mostly carried out by women even though these two roles rarely earn money and take more time, for instance, in the profession of housewives or volunteers.

Sixty-six percent of the participants considered that feminism is a good movement. Although the ideas and thoughts of feminism are assumed rooted in Western society and culture (18), it is believed that the feminism movement can help women to achieve equality in fundamental areas of human rights such as health, education, and economy (19). On the other hand, 14.3% and 20% of participants opted for bad and have no idea, respectively, whether feminism is a good movement to boost gender equality and women's emancipation. It may be because the term feminist is less likely to appeal to working-class women (20), noting that participants' occupation in this study varies with the majority of them in private employees (42.9%) and professionals (34.3%).

Ninety-four percent of the participants agreed that Raden Ajeng (R.A.) Kartini is the prominent icon of women's emancipation in Indonesia. A noteworthy fact is that there were other women figures who were highly prominent in struggling for access to education, which included Maria Walanda Maramis (1827-1942), Dewi Sartika (1884-1947), Nyi. H. Achmad Dahlan, and Rohana Kudus (1884-1972) (18). However, the feminism movements in Indonesia were getting more popular because of Kartini's letters that were addressed to her Dutch friends, such as Mrs. Abendanon, Mrs. Ovink-Soer, Stella, etc) (18). A book titled *Door Duisternis Tot Licht* (1911) was then published as a compilation of Kartini's letters (21). Ikhsano and Inkiriwang (2015) also considered Kartini as an initiator of the feminism movement - more popular with the term "women's emancipation", in Indonesia (14). Her main struggling was particularly for women equality in education, against the highly ranked Javanese system which set people in equality (superior-inferior relationships), and against what she perceived as oppressive Javanese traditions (e.g., forced to do early marriage – young women are married by their parents without consent) (22).

Improvement to narrow the gender gap in education is continuing even though challenging continues to exist (1). In terms of getting higher education roles, it is commonly known that many young women, particularly in developing countries, are not allowed to reach higher education (23). In Indonesia, many girls are not allowed to go to school or are allowed to only reach elementary school and then are pushed to get early married by their parents (24). Millions of Indonesian girls, especially in rural areas, are victims of early marriage (before 18 years old every year (23) (25), since their parents do not want to or cannot raise their daughters for a long period, usually due to economic concerns – higher education for women is considered "as a sunk cost" since women are expected to take care of husband and child rather than enter the workforce (26). As a country where part of the population is Muslim (27), Indonesia is seen unequal in the field of education by some world's gender activists because Islamic teaching is considered not providing space for women in education – the teaching is viewed too masculine and sides with men (7).

Indonesia adopted a patriarchal society and taking care of the family, especially child care, is considered the main responsibility of the mother (28). This idea also seems to be constructed politically by Indonesian state policy when it was established Dharma Wanita, one of the largest women's community organizations in Indonesia (29), which were closely controlled by the state (18). This organization was founded in 1974 with the initiative of the First Lady and consisted of the wives of civil servants of The Republic of Indonesia, ABRI (Indonesian Armed Forces), and BUMN (Indonesian state-owned enterprises) employees (29). The vision of Dharma Wanita seems to limit the nature and position of Indonesian women only as wives and housewives (30), and the organization itself has an intimate relationship and conforms with Korpri (Republic of Indonesia Civil Servants Corp) which has "a parallel hierarchical structure with the hierarchy of husbands' position" (18). A combination of above-mentioned Indonesian culture, misunderstanding religious commentaries, and principles which propagandized by the state, resulting in a gendered expectation that Indonesian women are a primary caregiver of family – including other domestic services (28). 88.6% participants in this study support the idea that Indonesian women must not leave the Indonesian culture regarding gender equality and women's emancipation. It can be interpreted that the majority of participants support Indonesian women to reach higher education, engage in the workforce by not leaving Indonesian culture where women's main role is a mother and wife.

Seventy-four of the participants were confident that Indonesian women are ready to globally compete as professionals and workers in European countries such as Germany. There are at least four factors indicating work readiness, including personal characteristics factors (resilience, adaptability, and personal development), the organizational acumen factor (comprising of motivation, maturity, organizational awareness, personal development,

and attitude to work), work competence factor (consisting of technical focus, motivation, and problem solving), and the social intelligence factor (interpersonal orientation and adaptability) (31). International workers, people who migrate from one country to another with an intention to be employed, may have high motivations to move to other countries such as changing economic status or achieving more experience to support professional development (32). Specifically for Indonesians in Germany, the main motivations of migration have always been for employment and education, and many of Indonesian students stayed and competent to work as professionals such as medical doctors, nurses, engineers or managers and they are generally felt integrated in Germany (3). Many Indonesian women who came to Germany due to personal relationships and marriage are well educated prior to their emigration (3). Noting that all participants in this study are Indonesian women's diaspora, who are highly educated (mostly bachelor's and master's graduates, as many as 40% of each) and had easy access to resources regarding women's equality and emancipation through online and offline sources of information such as books or magazines (59.5%) and websites (56.8%), professionals (34.3%), and private employees (42.9%), it is likely that the majority of them (74.3%) argued that Indonesian women are ready to work in European countries, Germany in particular.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Most participants understand that both men and women have equal obligations and rights and are a partner in life instead of seeing both men and women are the same. RA Kartini is considered as a figure of women's emancipation in Indonesia who fought for education equality for women as well as men. The four gender roles in Indonesia, including social and community, productive, reproductive, and education roles, are a need to boost and consider in the gender equality movement in Indonesia. Lastly, most participants believed that Indonesian women are capable to work globally by not leaving the Indonesian culture.

## LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The limitation of this study is that it assessed the understanding of women's diaspora in Germany by measuring the number of respondents who attended the online dialogue. Further research is needed to conduct a qualitative study by Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews to explore the insights of Indonesian Diaspora women in Europe.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors express our appreciation for everyone who supports and helps so that this article can be completed properly.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors have no conflict of interest of any commercial or financial relationships regarding the publication material.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

SW: concept, data analysis, writing, and discussion. DN: concept and data provision. TA: concept and results interpretation. IR: concept, data analysis, writing. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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