

**Students' Attitude Towards Female Leaders in Student Organization  
Context  
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**ABSTRACT**

This research aims at investigating the attitude of students towards female leaders in student organization context, by seeing the difference between the gender of the respondents. Gender bias is frequently happened when it comes to choosing a leader. This paper tests the attitude of students in student organization context. Data has been collected from 103 respondents in online questionnaire form. Independent t-test analysis, descriptive analysis and Cronbach's Alpha were used to analyze the data.

The result showed that there is a significant difference of attitude between male and female respondents. Female respondents have more favourable attitudes than male respondents. Although in overall, students still have negative perception towards female leaders. . Further research can be conducted in this research by changing the demographics of respondents with variables which may influence differences in attitudes, such as age or working experience. Other suggestions are by changing the population so the research scope will become broader.

**Keywords:** Woman Leadership, Leadership, Gender Bias, Student Organization, Student, Attitude

**I. Introduction**

**A. Background**

University is the highest education institutes in Indonesia. Fortino (2012) stated that the primary business of higher education is the creation of prepared minds. As the highest education institutes, people hope that university can provide students with hard skills, soft skills, and knowledge that are needed to enter the workforce.

Nowadays, the competition in the workforce has become stricter because of the increasing number of graduates. In the past era, most companies would assess the knowledge of their applicants by testing and determining the intelligence of the applicant (Weber, Finley, Crawford, & Rivera, 2009). This made people think hard skills were the only thing that determined people success.

James & James (2004) in Seetha (2014), also posit that historically there was an emphasis for hard skills being the only requirement for

employment. However recent times have strongly indicated that technical skills alone cannot secure employment. Today, employers crave for managers with the critical soft skills. Educational achievement is now not the only factor that considered as important by employers. Employers have realized that soft skills are important in order to make the hard skills useful.

With this in mind, students have to learn to train their soft skills. Students cannot rely only on class materials and lecturers, but they have to find a way to train their soft skills. One of the important soft skills is leadership skills. Students are future leaders. Mc Crimmon (2010) stated that leadership can only be nurtured, not developed.

UAJY has provided various facilities that can facilitate students' soft skills development. One of them is student organizations. Student organizations facilitate students to experience the real condition of workplace. By joining student organizations, students can train their leadership, communication, and team work skills, and also many other things. Every student should be prepared to be leaders, but somehow in society there's still an invisible gap between male and female to become a leader.

Gender bias in leadership is still an interesting topic in the human resource area. From previous research, the results show that male students held less positive attitudes toward women managers than did female students (Sakalli-Ugurlu & Beydogan, 2002; Mihail, 2006). A survey done by SWA magazine (one of the leading business magazines in Indonesia) in 2005 and 2006 to employees showed that they did not have objection if women get important roles in business, including if they were lead by women managers (Tjahjono & Palupi, 2007 in Dewi & Rachmawati, 2014).

From those results, this research aims to investigate differences of student's attitude towards female leaders in UAJY student organizations based on gender difference.

#### B. Problem Statement

Based on the research background, the problem statements are:

- 1) How do the students in the context of student organization perceive female leaders?
- 2) Are there any differences on students' attitude towards female leaders in student organizations based on gender difeerences?

#### C. Research Purpose

- 1) To investigate the attitudes of students in student organizations towards female leaders
- 2) To assess possible differences in attitudes toward female leaders among students based on gender differences.

## II. Literature Review

### A. Theoretical Background

Based on Roberts & Armitage (2006), organization is an organized group of people whose particular purpose is the pursuit of profitability. Carter (2014) stated that organization is the pattern of ways in which people, too numerous to have face to face contact at all times and engaged in a wide range of tasks, relate to one another in a conscious systematic manner; for the accomplishment of mutually acceptable goals. McNamara (2015) divide organization into 2 groups, for profit organization and non profit organization.

There are two student organizations namely intra-campus student organizations and extra-campus student organizations. Based on its scope, intra-campus student organization is divided into three: Student Association (majors), Student Executive Board (faculty) and the Student Executive Board (institute/ university). There's also exist an organization that based on students' interests and talents, it called UKM (Student Activity Unit). Therefore, can be defined that intra-campus student organization is existed to accomodate student interests based on its scope, and it also have a clear source of funding (Etryastono, 2013). Based on those definitions, student organizations are considered as non profit organizations because the purpose of student organizations are to accomodate students interests, not to get profit. Leadership behavior analysis suggests that the more students are involved in student organizations the more likely they are to develop strong leadership skills and behaviors. This organizational leadership experience is different from leadership programs and can provide a distinct advantage for leadership development (Patterson, 2012).

Based on Hogan & Curphy (1994) in Yarrish, Zula, & Davis (2010), leadership is about persuading other people to stop with their personal concerns and pursue a common goal that is imperative for the groups' welfare. Robbins & Judge (2013) define leadership as the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of a vision or set of goals. In order to be a good leader, one must become trusted by other members of the organizations. Trust is a psychological state that exists when you agree to make yourself vulnerable to another because you have positive expectations about how things are going to turn out. Even though you are not completely in control of the situation, you are willing to take a chance that the other person will come through you. (Robbins&Judge, 2013). An organization won't be able to run well if there is no trust between the leaders and the subordinates. Trust is the key to a success organization.

According to (Vinnicombe, 2003) in (Yarrish, Zula, & Davis, 2010), men and women have individual value orientations, with this, men and women must require different leadership development approaches. (Eagly, 1991) in (Yarrish, Zula, & Davis, 2010) mentioned that a consequential meta-analysis of the development of leaders in 58 studies of groups initially without leaders showed that men frequently emerge as leaders more often than women. Although more often, Barbuto J. F. (2007) in Yarrish, Zula, &

Davis (2010) stated that women at times have been found to emerge as the facilitator which contributes to interpersonal relations and morale.

Buhler (2001) posited that for decades the business world placed a great deal of value on traditionally masculine traits for managers. With the increase number of women in the workforce for the past two to three decades, more attention has been given to the traditionally feminine characteristics. Although Indonesia is considered to have moderate feminine culture dimension, empirical evidence shows that work environment tends to be masculine culture. Furthermore, within masculine culture (patriarchic culture) women suffer from greater resistance from their male colleagues (Hofstede, 1995 in Sumarto & Permanasari, 2013). This resistance may take a form of “glass ceiling” as the barrier against upward mobility of female career. Therefore, the motivation of women to lead is lower than that of men (Sumarto & Permanasari, 2013).

Regan & Fazio (1977) in Fazio, Zanna, & Cooper (1978) suggested that the manner in which an attitude is formed acts as a crucial determinant of attitude-behavior consistency. In a pair of investigations they found that attitudes formed through direct behavioral experience with an attitude object were more predictive of subsequent behavior than attitudes formed through more indirect means. Example, subjects who had been given an opportunity to work examples of a variety of novel puzzles (direct experience) behaved much more consistently with their expressed attitudes toward those puzzles than subjects who were merely presented the examples by the experimenter (indirect experience). This is why this research only used respondents that are experienced on being led by female, and joining student organizations.

Based on Hensley (2009), there are 10 differences between men’s and women’s brain. Which is on human relationships, brain works, mathematical ability, reaction to stress, language, emotion, brain size, pain, spatial ability, and susceptibility to disorders.

#### B. Hypothesis Development

Previous study by Mihail (2006) found that female students’ attitudes were significantly more favourable than those of the male students. The gender difference that existed in the study was expected, since in studies using the WAMS instrument, female respondents tended consistently to provide higher scores than did males. (Owen and Todor, 1993; Tomkiewicz et al., 2004; Cortis and Cassar, 2005 in Mihail, 2006). Therefore, this study put forward a hypotheses:

H1: There is a difference in attitude towards female leaders between male and female respondents in the context of UAJY student organization.

### III. Research Methodology

This research is done in the area of Atma Jaya University of Yogyakarta (UAJY), Indonesia. UAJY has 11 regular bachelor programs (law, management, accounting, economic development, sociology,

communication studies, civil engineering, informatics engineering, architecture, biology, industrial engineering), 4 international bachelor programs (international business management program, international financial accounting program, international industrial engineering program, civil engineering international undergraduate program), and also has 5 post graduate programs (law, economics, civil engineering, informatics engineering, and architecture). Within UAJY, there are more than 50 student organizations exist in the form of student activity units (UKM), communities, and student institution (BEM, Senat, HM, PERSMA).

The population of this study are UAJY students who have experience of joining one of student organizations in UAJY. Purposive sampling is chose to done this research. The respondents for this study must be UAJY students who still active at the first semester of academic year 2014/2015, having experience joining one of students' organization in UAJY (student activity units/ UKM, students institution, or student communities), and having experience on being led by female.

This research will be a quantitative research. All quantitative data was collected from the research participants through a self administered questionnaire. The questionnaire used is Women as Managers Scale (Peters, Terborg, & Ternor, 1974) and a brief question about the participant's demographic background. This questionnaire translated to Indonesian to make the participants understand the questions better. The questionnaire was made in Google Form (online questionnaire), in order to make the distribution easier. The questionnaire was distributed to student organizations' members through various student organizations' group chat by sharing the questionnaire's link there.

All respondents were asked to react to a set of demographic questions and questions from Women as Managers Scale (Terborg, Peters, Ilgen, & Smith, 1977). The demographic questions consisted of 4 items. The first, second, and third item is to make sure that the participants are suitable with the sample requirements. The fourth question are demographic questions about gender.

The WAMS questionnaire was created in the 1970s and its aim has been to facilitate the exploration of personal and organizational data to sex-based stereotypes concerning women in management. The WAMS questionnaire consisted of eleven items worded to favourably describe women as managers and ten items worded unfavourably. Using a Likert-scale format from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), scale scores were obtained by summing all 21 statements. The negatively worded items were reverse scored so that high scale score was associated with a favourable attitude toward women as managers. Therefore, the possible score ranges from 21 (highly unfavourable attitude) to 147 (highly favourable).

For the data analysis, this research will use independent t-test. The analysis will be done using SPSS 17. Independent t-test is used to know is there any difference between two sample groups which is not related. If there

is difference, which one is the higher. Data that used on this analysis usually has interval or ratio scale (Suryantoro, 2014).

#### IV. Data Analysis and Discussion

From 128 questionnaires, there is 103 questionnaires that meet the criteria to be analyzed in this research. 25 questionnaires are discarded because these respondents do not meet the sample criterias.

First, the researcher checks the validity and the reliability of each variable. To know whether the variables are valid or not, the researcher compares “corrected item-total correlation” with the result from r-table ( $N = 103$  and  $\alpha = 0,05$ , equal to 0.194). Variables are valid if the result of “corrected item-total correlation”  $> 0.194$ . The result is the score of all corrected item-total correlation are more than r-table, so that all of them are valid.

Then, the researcher checks whether the questionnaire is reliable, by comparing the value of coefficient alpha from the calculation to the coefficient alpha from the table. Then, the variable is considered as reliable if  $\alpha > 0.60$  (Ghozali, 2011). The result is the value of Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.852, which is more than 0.60. Due to Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha$ )  $> 0.60$ , it can be concluded that all questionnaire items for variable are reliable.

To answer the hypotheses, the researcher uses independent t-test. From the independent t-test analysis with gender as the independent variable, the significance value is 0.01, which is  $< 0.05$ . This means that students’ attitude has significant difference based on the gender of respondents. We also can conclude that female respondents have higher score on the WAMS questionnaire which means that their attitude towards female leaders are more favourable than male respondents, since the mean score for female is 77.65 and for male is 68.37.

From the descriptive analysis of WAMS score, concluded that the maximum score in this study is 105, and the minimum score is 32. The mean score is 73.23, which means that in general, students’ attitude towards female leaders are less unfavourable. The highest score in this study is 105 which fall to less favourable, and the lowest is 32 which fall to highly unfavourable. From this result, we can see that 53.4% students have negative attitudes (less unfavourable, unfavourable, highly unfavourable) towards female leaders, 39.8% students have neutral attitude towards female leaders, and 6.8% students have positive attitudes (less favourable, favourable, and highly favourable) towards female leaders.

Female students found to have higher score than male students. Gender of respondents was found has significant effect towards total score of WAMS (sig.=0.001). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

#### V. Conclusions

##### A. Conclusions

The purpose of this research is to obtain a clear understanding about the students’ attitude especially for students who have experience of joining

student organizations in UAJY (student activity units/ UKM, student institution, or student communities). This research focused on the difference of students' attitude towards female leaders based on their gender.

This study shows that most students have unfavourable attitude towards female leaders. This means that students in UAJY still have negative perception towards female leaders. Female respondents are having higher score than male respondents. This means that female students have better perception towards female leaders rather than male respondents. It is proven that gender has significant impact on students' attitude. Then, it is answering hypothesis 1 that stated gender difference does affect students' attitude towards female leaders.

#### B. Managerial Implications and Suggestions

From the mean score, we can conclude that students do not believe that women is ambitious and competitive enough in the business world. Students also do not believe that women can be assertive and aggressive in business situations that demand it. UAJY and all the student organizations within should give more chance for women to lead and support them with all they need in order to show and practice their leadership skill, so that they can prove to other students that women also capable on being a good leader.

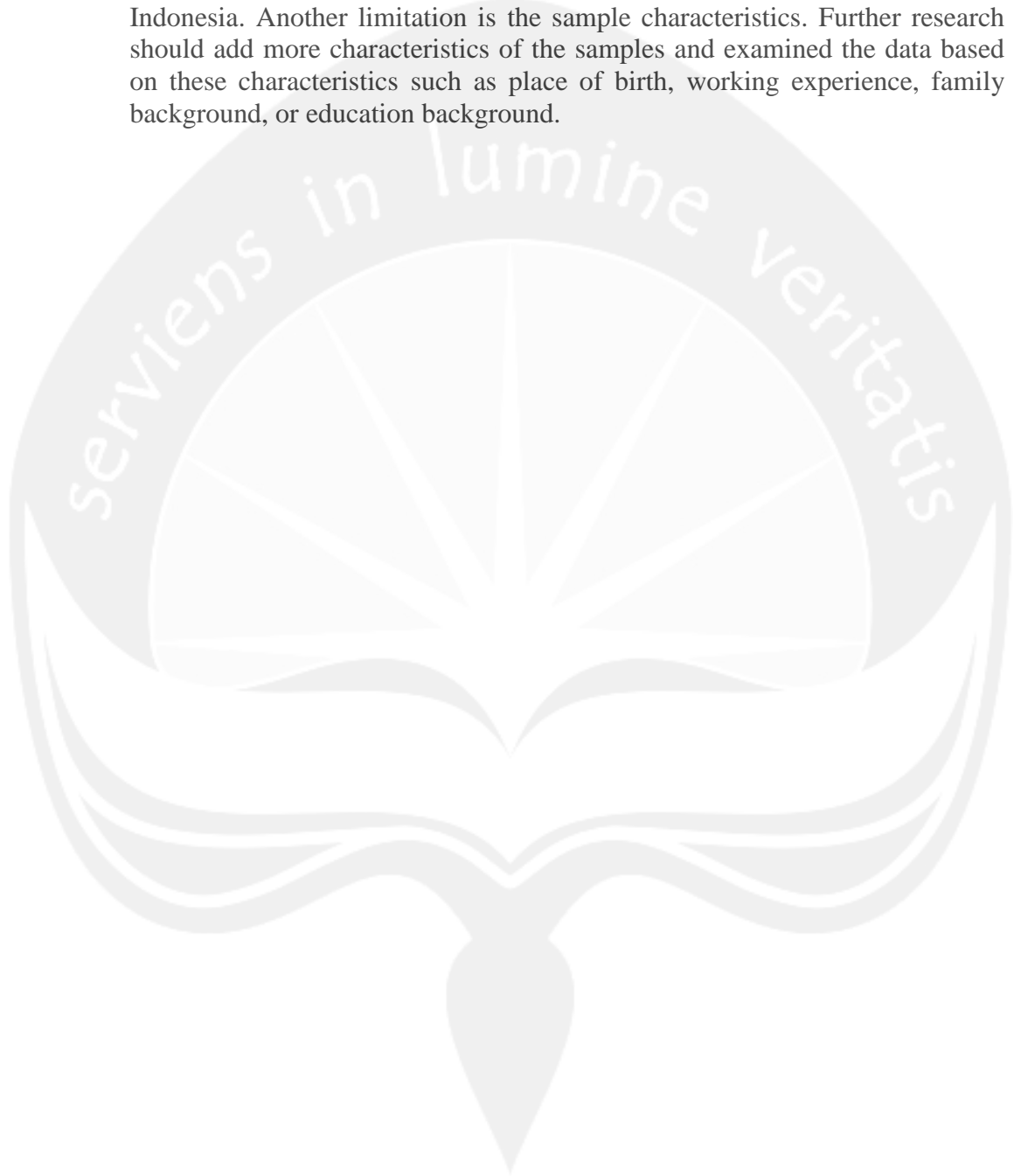
Students do not believe that women can give good contribution to organization's overall goals. They believe that men are better on learning mathematical and mechanical skills rather than women. UAJY and all the student organizations within should give knowledge and understanding about gender equality. It is better to start making gender equality as one of the university culture so that women will not be underestimated in the university area. This can be done by making "women as leaders" as a mandatory material on the moral/ civic classes for the start. Later, university also can start a new mandatory class about woman as leaders, or making a mandatory seminar or talkshow about it to make sure every students understand and aware about this issue.

Students believe that women will allow their emotions to influenced their managerial behavior. They also believe that housewife are a better mother rather than working woman. UAJY can invite famous female leaders which also a mother, to come to UAJY and give public lecture or seminar about leadership. They will be able to give the students new perspective about feminity and leadership. Students will be able to see that although women are more emotional than men, and although they have responsibilty of becoming a mother, women are still capable of being a good leader.

#### C. Limitation of the Research

There are some limitations in this research. A major limitation of the current study lies in the respondents used. This research is only use 103 respondents who are students of UAJY, having experience of joining one of students' organizations inside the university, and experienced on being led by female. Further research may explore other segments in order to provide

broader knowledge about students' attitude. This research only done on the area of Yogyakarta, and only on UAJY, because the online questionnaires are only spread off in this area. It might be useful if further research can find the respondents on broader area such as the entire universities in Yogyakarta or Indonesia. Another limitation is the sample characteristics. Further research should add more characteristics of the samples and examined the data based on these characteristics such as place of birth, working experience, family background, or education background.





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