

# **STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS FEMALE LEADERS IN STUDENT ORGANIZATION CONTEXT**

## **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background to the Research**

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. Buhler (2001), stated that hard skills are emphasized on the technical skills necessary to effectively perform within the organization, while soft skills tend to be more generic in nature. In other words, soft skills are skills key to effective performance across all job categories.

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. Even now, most parents are still having this perception. Most parents will scold their children if they get bad score in

class, or if they failed at test. They strongly relate this failure with children's future success. Many parents also send their children to take extension course to increase their academic grades.

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. Buhler (2001) said that soft skills are key skills to effective performance across all job categories, and these soft skills have come to play an even more crucial role in management positions in today's environment.

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. McCrimmon (2010), stated that leadership can only be nurtured, not developed.

Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta 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.

Historically, Stelter (2002) stated that a "good" leader has always been conveyed with the impression of masculinity and the belief that men make better leaders than women. Based on Carli & Eagly (2001), in 1972, women who held a managerial and/or administrative position were only 18% in the United States; in 2002 the percentage had risen to 46% (Catalyst, 2009). Despite the underrepresentation of females throughout the upper levels of the workforce, this standard has more or less contributed to the increase of females in a managerial position and a remedy for segregation within the professional ladder.

The results of previous research show that male students held less positive attitudes toward women managers than did female students (Sakalli-Ugurlu & Beydogan, 2002; Mihail, 2006). From these conditions, this research aims to investigate differences of student's attitude towards female leaders in UAJY student organizations based on gender difference.

## **1.2. Research Problem**

In a recent Gallup Poll survey, the question was asked "If you were taking a new job and had your choice of a boss, would you prefer to work

for a man or a woman?" the results shown that forty-five percent of men and fifty percent of women chose a male boss (Connerley, Mecham, & Strauss, 2008 in Catalyst, 2009).

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).

These findings inspired this research to know how the attitude of students in student organizations towards female leaders is.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Research**

This research has 2 main purposes. First, is to investigate the attitudes of students in student organizations towards female leaders.

Second, is to assess possible differences in attitudes toward female leaders among students based on gender differences.

Bias gender in leadership is naturally happened in our community, this research want to know do students who have experience of joining student organization in UAJY still have the same attitude or not towards female leaders.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

- 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 differences?

#### **1.5. Significance of the Research**

One of the goals of higher education is to prepare graduates (future leaders) for the professional world (Cress, 2001) in (Patterson, 2012). UAJY can use the result of this research to develop a better program for students' leadership training, and also improve education about gender equality, which means that UAJY can increase male students' respect towards female leaders and increase female students' self esteem on their leadership skill.

The challenges that organizations face today are remarkable and likely to increase in scope and complexity. To prosper, let alone survive, organizations must excel at both planning and execution; they must be nimble, visionary and get maximum benefit from their resources - all of their resources, including human resources and including women. Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller (2003) stated that by failing to maximize the potential of their female employees, organizations lose in two ways. First, they do not fully benefit from the unique talent and perspective that women can impart. Secondly, organizations get a poor return on their

investment by driving out those that they have spent time and money training. The result of this research can be used for business organization to increase the effectiveness of their human resource. By knowing the facts of students' attitude towards female leaders, business organizations can develop a better system to pursue gender equality in workplace.

#### **1.6. Delimitations and Limitations**

This research only investigate UAJY students' who have experience of joining one of student organizations in UAJY and still registered as active students of UAJY in first semester of 2015. Therefore, the result of this research cannot be generalized to UAJY/ Indonesian students or students in general.

This research only investigate gender as the demographic factors to be relate to students' attitude towards female leaders. This research also does not question about the job performance, commitment, and job satisfaction related to the leader's gender.

#### **1.7. Outline of the Study**

Chapter I aim to provide insights for the research area by briefly discussing the background, research problems and questions, purpose of the study, delimitation and limitation, and the outline of the research. Chapter II aims to provide relevant concepts and detailed literature reviews about student organization, leadership, gender differences in

leadership, and other related subjects. It also aims to develop research hypothesis based on the research topic. Chapter III aims to explain in detail the conceptual framework and the methods which will be employed for data collection and analysis. Chapter IV aims to illustrate the data analysis and discussions. In Chapter V, it is to discuss findings and limitations, draw conclusion, and make suggestions for future research.

