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## Women's Leadership in Southeast Asia: Examining the Authentic Leadership Implementation Potency

### Abstract

Rapid economic growth in Asia has helped reduce gender inequality in several countries, especially those in Southeast Asia. This has led, among many other things, to the fact that women have higher opportunities to become leaders. Yet, in Southeast Asia the biggest challenge that remains is the tendency of "untrained" women in public leadership. Then the birth of women needs to get strategic support from the current system of leadership culture, that good life for women is the main pillar of women's leadership requirements. This paper discusses the opportunities present for preparing Southeast Asian women to become future leaders from a number of authentic leader characteristics that they have. By using the content analysis method, the preliminary findings of this study is the existence of better gender relations, accompanied by the resilience and pragmatism of today's location communities, bringing Southeast Asian women to a promising future leadership role. A number of characteristics of authentic leaders that have become the basis of women's identity are actually the main capital to be prepared further through a number of educational efforts, assistance and training in order to increase knowledge, insight, organizational skills and self-confidence. Next, women leaders must be made. Women's willingness and ability to adapt and develop stronger skills in the areas of emotional intelligence, empowerment, and power of influence place them in a strong position to use these advantages to propel them forward in leadership roles. Southeast Asian countries, especially those with a low human development index, have to begin to open up the need for a state led by women leaders who have the potential to represent a number of authentic leadership criteria to respond to the crisis of public confidence in the country's leadership.

### Keywords:

Women leadership; gender gap; authentic leadership

## Introduction

Over the past two decades, rapid economic growth throughout Asia has helped reduce gender disparities in many countries. However, there is still plenty of room for improvement, especially in government. Asia, more than any other region, has the highest number of female heads of state. But most are due to family or dynastic relations, not due to gender equality. Linda K. Richter in 1990-1991 through her research on the political emergence of women leaders in South and Southeast Asia found that one of the factors that was instrumental in the emergence of women leaders (such as Benazir Bhutto, Indira Gandhi, Corazon Aquino, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Aung San Suu Kyi dan Sheik Hasina Wajed) was familial ties, namely the influence of male relatives (whether father, father-in-law or brother) who are influential and powerful politicians, who facilitate a female politician to build and achieve certain political leadership roles (Richter, 1991).

Some Asian countries with the highest human development index also tend to have the lowest gender equality and low levels of female labor participation. That means investment in human development for women has not been efficiently utilized. Moreover, there are several conditions that make Asian women tend to stay only in a domestic role. First, culture influences the way a woman can maintain her ambition and motivation. In many cases, women do all the work but they will be the representative of the head who usually is a man. With low or stigmatized cultural values playing a non-traditional leadership role, women often become neglected or left behind. Second the importance of policy in the organization. Do they support women? Is there empowerment, mentoring, and support for women whose leadership paths tend to be different from that of men? The third factor is women's own motivation. Do they work in fields that make them feel alive and excited (K. Lane, 2015)?

There is a lot of correlation between more gender diversity teams and better problem-solving, governance, and profitability. Women, for example, are better present when they are in their perseverance helping change dynamics for the better (K. Lane, 2015). Asia is a very diverse place, but what can some Asian countries learn about the diversity of more developed countries, and vice versa? Singapore, Korea and Japan are more developed, and have very high human development indexes, but they do not always succeed in women's leadership. This is different, however, in some developing countries. Lane's (2015) research found that in the Philippines, women are culturally strong so that their voices are heard and they are active leaders in almost all fields. But of course, there are other emerging markets with low human development and high gender inequality. There is a culture that greatly underestimates girls and women, and India is an example, with very high levels of violence against women and the continued traditional gendered expectations. Women must convey their vision going forward, and it must be different for each government, so that they see their women as the single largest untapped asset (K. Lane, 2015).

As Lojzer (2015) argues, by nature, leaders need to be decision makers at all levels and have the confidence to push forward on issues that are sometimes difficult in order to achieve the greater good of the larger organization. Leaders are not only born, leaders are made, but crafting leadership requires the right building blocks: the development of good emotions, mentoring, learning, opportunities, support and adaptability. There are many elements that influence the development of leaders including the willingness to be trained, relational influences, environment influences, and socioeconomic and emotional development. The vast difference between the female brain and the male brain both in the structure and neurochemistry provides opportunities for women to further develop

their strengths in leadership, because they tend to do well in the areas that are currently seen as the most important leadership skills of our time (Lojzer, 2015). However, their willingness and ability to adapt and develop stronger skills in the area of emotional intelligence, empowerment and the power of influence place them in a strong position to use these advantages to push them forward in leadership (Lojzer, 2015).

The research question of this paper is: "Do Southeast Asian women who possess a number of authentic leader characteristics have the potential and opportunity to be prepared as future leaders in their countries according to the development of social life and human development in Southeast Asia today?" Authentic leadership concept and colonialism as Southeast Asian women leadership background are the focus of observed micro phenomena, while women leadership is the focus of the macro phenomena being studied.

## **Methods**

This qualitative descriptive study explains the problem through the data analysis and the secondary data collection, as well as reporting the results. Data collection for this study was carried out using literature and document studies as a source of research data. So that the type of data used is secondary data. The validity and reliability of the data has been tested with a content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) that explains and analyzes data from research results that have been read and summarized from various written data sources (document analysis). Data interpretation is then analyzed through deductive methods, which attempt to apply theories that are relevant to the phenomenon, formulate conclusions from the data (Silverman, 2005), and then present the results.

## **Results and Discussion**

Southeast Asia is a regional region with the largest population in the world. Eleven countries in Southeast Asia have a population of more

than 660 million people, equivalent to 8.59% of the world's total population. Despite major linguistic and cultural differences, this region is characterized by a relatively favorable position of women compared to neighboring countries in East or South Asia.

Several factors show that women's position in Southeast Asia are better than that in East or South Asia: traditionally, kinship is tracked through both maternal and paternal lines; a daughter is not a financial burden due to the widespread practice of bridal prices; married couples often live together or near the wife's parents; women have an important role in traditional rituals; their labor is very important in agriculture, and they dominate the local market. But over time, the rise of centralized countries and the spread of imported philosophies and religions (Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity) became increasingly privileged to men and emphasized the subordination of women. Although such influences are not seen amongst the elite, the strength of local traditions is always a moderate force (Andaya, 2019).

Mosse (2007) stated that gender as a social construction that has been socialized since birth has turned out to have contributed to inequalities and the manifestations of inequalities affecting development policy, planning and implementations, bureaucratic decision making mechanisms, epistemology and research methods as well as the evaluation and implementation of development projects. Therefore, the problem lies not with women, but in the ideology, systems and structures that originated from gender inequalities. Then what becomes the goal of women's activities or programs is not just to answer practical needs or change the conditions of women, but also to protect women's strategic needs, namely to fight for changes in the position of women, including opposing hegemony and against the discourse of gender ideology that has taken root in women's and men's beliefs. The

steps that needs to be done for women's strategic needs is through empowerment and changing gender structures, which are called Gender and Development or "GAD" (Mosse, 2007).

### **Women in Southeast Asia during Colonialism and its Current Progress**

Gender inequality is motivated by colonialism. A lot of writings on psychology, politics, the economy, and the history of colonialism shows its relationship to gender inequalities. In Latin America, direct colonial rule by Spain and Portugal lasted for about three centuries, ending at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. India experienced 250 years of colonial history and colonialism in Africa and much of Southeast Asia countries continued for at least a century (Mosse, 2007).

Europeans first arrived in Southeast Asia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with a primary interest in trade, while missionaries came on merchant ships in the hopes of spreading Christianity. Portuguese was the first European power to open trade routes to Southeast Asia, by conquering the Sultanate of Malacca in 1515. The Dutch followed it and took over in 1641 while Spain colonized the Philippines since the 1560s. The Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) or the Association of East Indies Companies, which acted on behalf of the Dutch, established the city of Batavia (now Jakarta) as the center of trade and expanded to other areas followed later by the British via British East India Company, expanding their empire in Penang. In 1819, the British established Singapore as a trade center in order to compete with the Netherlands. From the 1850s onwards colonialism increased in Southeast Asia until the 1890s, when the entire Southeast Asia region was under European control, except for Siam (Thailand).

Colonial rule had a real impact on Southeast Asia, especially on women's leadership. The colonial powers did indeed benefit greatly from the natural resources and the large market of

Southeast Asia, but they also developed this region with varying degrees of development. Trade in agricultural, mining, and export-based economies was growing rapidly and substantial demographic changes were also occurring regarding the increase in labor demand through migration, especially from India and China.

European colonialism often recruited women as low-paid laborers on plantations (tea, sugar, tobacco, rubber) and in processing factories, while men were positioned as the head of the household (Andaya, 2019). This condition then drives the acceptance of boys more so than the acceptance of girls.

But at the end of World War II, European colonialism in Southeast Asia ended. Countries in Southeast Asia were also developing with the characteristics of high economic growth in most of the member countries and the increasingly close regional integration. Singapore, Brunei, and Malaysia have traditionally experienced high growth and are generally considered to be the more developed countries in the region. Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines can be considered middle-income countries in Southeast Asia, while Vietnam has also experienced rapid economic growth in recent times. Some countries that are still lagging behind in growth are Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and the newly independent East Timor.

The economic position of Southeast Asian women is not easy to generalize because of the development disparities that occur between countries (Andaya, 2019). However, ongoing acceptance of the idea that a woman can generate and control her own income is always there, even though women receive lower wages than men for the same job and the choice of work for unskilled workers is not much.

Since the issue of women became an important part of the global political and social agenda in the 1960s, the question of whether legal discussion about women can be held as a

group is still an important question today. In any country at that time, the differences between individual women were determined by their social background, class, education, ethnicity and age (Mosse, 2007). According to the African National Congress (ANC) (Mosse, 2007), the oppression experienced by women lies in its position which includes three layers: as a member of an oppressed nation in the land of its birth; as a member of the working class or peasant who does not own land; and as a women subject to discrimination in marriage, the right to wealth and access towards service.

Even since the mid-1960s, when the countries of Southeast Asia turned to export-oriented economies, the involvement of women as factory workers became increasingly important. Because of that, women also became more active in the labor movement. Even as domestic workers abroad, women have an important role in the national economy (Andaya, 2019).

Later, the existence of women in Southeast Asia is even stronger. The independence of the countries in Southeast Asia including in terms of gender equality, (except for Laos and Vietnam) was done through the participation in the signing of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on December 18, 1979 and promoting gender equality. But in Vietnam, Andaya (2019) said it is difficult to change preferences for boys due to Confucius strong legacy.

Women's access to education is even better. Many women complete junior high school, more likely to seek vocational skills and academic qualifications, including to tertiary institutions (Lim, 2014). With the exception of Cambodia and Laos, the number of women processed for post-secondary training has also increased. In Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines there are more female graduates than men, while in Vietnam and Indonesia the ratio is more balanced (Andaya, 2019). However, although more and

more women have graduated from various levels of education who have successfully entered the workforce available, the number of women in top-level positions in companies does not necessarily increase (Lim, 2014).

But the expansion in education has contributed to the blossoming of female-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) since the 1980s, which have given the knowledge and organization skills that equip them to argue for issues. The number of women holding public office has also increased, especially at the regional government level. In recent years, the Philippines is the Southeast Asian country that has the highest representation of women in national government with an increase of more than 10% (Andaya, 2019). Even though when they enter the political arena, women are often marginalized by the dominating position of men. For the legislative arena, global statistics for board seats held by women in Asia are still far below the average in Europe and the United States (Lim, 2014), which is below the 12% figure; for Southeast Asia the highest percentage is in Indonesia (11.6%) (Dieleman, Ibrahim, & Qian, 2013). A side from that, in the executive arena, the highest political office achieved by women in Southeast Asia, such as presidential positions in the Philippines and Indonesia, is still motivated by familial ties, partly because they are daughters or wives of well-known influential men. It is different from the President in Vietnam, who despite having a long reputation in the field of organization can take office due to the death of the previous president, where she previously served as vice president.

In general, political representation is not an adequate action to reflect the empowerment of women and gender equality in countries in the Pacific Asia region, (Waring, 2011), but more specifically in Southeast Asia, the opportunities for developing women's engagement still depend on democracy and gender responsive governance. Although Southeast Asia has economic, political

and cultural diversity, the size of the human development of countries in the region is said to be good (Andaya, 2019). Improved gender relations, including the resilience and pragmatism of local communities today, bring Southeast Asian women to a promising future.

### **Characteristics of Women in Southeast Asia**

Women are relatively under-represented in the jobs with the greatest growth in the next five years, such as in computers and mathematics, because the trend of job automation due to the pace of Industrial Revolution 4.0 will crush the need for administrative work that was the land for female labor (World Economic Forum, 2017). In 2017, the WEF reported in the Global Gender Gap Report for countries in the Southeast Asia region that joined ASEAN, that the top ranked gender equality was achieved by the Philippines, followed by Laos in the second rank, Singapore in the third rank, Vietnam in fourth, Thailand in fifth, Indonesia in sixth along with Myanmar, Cambodia is ranked seventh, Brunei Darussalam is ranked eighth, and Malaysia is ranked last.

Whereas in 2018, the WEF reported in the Global Gender Gap Report for countries in the Southeast Asia region that joined ASEAN, the top ranked gender equality was still achieved by the Philippines, followed by Laos, which remained in the second place, Singapore which was still ranked third, Thailand in the fourth rank, while Vietnam was in the fifth rank, Indonesia remained sixth, Myanmar remained seventh, Brunei Darussalam remained eighth, Cambodia dropped to ninth, and Malaysia still ranked last as the previous year (Okutsu, 2018).

The Philippines is the only region of Southeast Asia, even on the Asian continent, which is ranked in the top 10 globally for gender equality (Majalah CSR.id, 2018). In the Philippines, educational attainment achieves perfect scores on parity and equality. The country has also succeeded in achieving health and survival. This

shows that the Philippines had succeeded in encouraging women's participation in the sector. However, the Philippines still needs to struggle to encourage women's participation in other sectors, namely in the achievement of participation and economic opportunities and the achievement of political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2017).

In 2018, the Philippines came first in Asia in the World Economic Forum's latest gender equality rating, while the region's largest economies, including Japan and South Korea, remained far below the global average. The Global Gender Gap Index 2018 ranks 149 countries on health, education, economic and political indicators, including wage equality, educational attainment and representation in national government. Global gender equality rankings of the top 10 countries in 2018 shows that the Philippines was ranked the highest in Asia at 8th, climbing two spots from 2017. It showed improvements in economic factors, with increased wage quality and women's income. The Philippine's gender gap is fully closed in the educational attainment sub index. Its performance is also relatively high for political empowerment, positioned at 13<sup>th</sup> in the global ranking. According to the World Bank, 30% of seats in its parliament were held by women in 2017, which in the past has had two female presidents (Okutsu, 2018).

This condition is extraordinary in the Philippines's achievements related to the struggle for gender equality for women. Considering that in 1987 to 1992, the Philippines was in a bad condition where more than half of the population lived below the poverty threshold due to the arrears of Marcos government debt to 483 foreign banks, the World Bank, and IMF (Mosse, 2007). Filipinos are victims who bear the burden of debt payments through a variety of ways, including higher taxation, especially indirect taxes on basic goods and services and economic diversion into export-oriented industries, garments, electronics

and food processing that have an impact on wages and worker welfare.

Next in the Asian ranking is Laos at 26<sup>th</sup>, spiking up by 38 spots from 2017. But for Southeast Asian countries, Laos is still in the second rank. The rise was largely due to improved data availability to determine some indicators, including estimated earned income and professional and technical workers. The country also showed progress in female education levels (Okutsu, 2018).

For Singapore, as the Southeast Asian country ranked third in the achievement of gender equality, although the educational attainment is higher than the achievement in other sectors, the achievement of political empowerment is still low. Women still hold less board positions than their Asian counterparts. This is despite the high literacy rate of women (94%) and the almost equal number of women present at universities with men (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012). In achieving economic participation and opportunities, there is a significant increase in the participation of the female workforce and continuing its current trend of approaching equality in technical and professional workers (Majalah CSR.id, 2018). Many women in Singapore cite the need for a better work/family balance as an excuse to leave their jobs. The only differentiating factor here compared to other Asian countries is that women choose to leave the workforce not because of community pressure or cultural norms, but because they voluntarily leave their jobs (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012). Singapore's achievements in health and survival in the WEF report also enhance equality in the healthy life expectancy of its citizens (Majalah CSR.id, 2018).

Singapore, in the Global Gender Gap Index 2018 is at 67<sup>th</sup>, which was one of the countries with the smallest gender gaps in the fast growing artificial intelligence talent pool. In research conducted by the WEF and LinkedIn, female representation in Singapore's AI talent pool was 28%, higher than the global representation of 23% (Okutsu, 2018).

For Vietnam, although gender equality for women in achieving political empowerment has decreased from pre-2017 conditions, (Majalah CSR.id, 2018), the achievement in the education sector has improved as indicated by the absence of gender differences in the enrollment of secondary and tertiary education. The space for women to enter politics is still limited by gender, and male domination is very strong. Although in 2018 the President of Vietnam is a woman, but in the Vietnamese government system the country does not have a single ruler because it adheres to a four pillar system: President, Prime Minister, Chairman of the Communist Party and Chairman of the National Council. The President has more roles in ceremonial tasks. Then the President is not accountable to the public so the election of a female president in Vietnam is considered not to improve the condition of most women in Vietnam in political empowerment, particularly in state institutions (Tirto.id, 2018). In the Global Gender Gap Index 2018 Vietnam fell eight spot to 77<sup>th</sup> from 69<sup>th</sup> at 2017 (Okutsu, 2018).

In Thailand, which ranked fifth in gender quality according to the WEF report, it is known that women were given equal rights for the first time in the 1997 constitution. However, stereotypes and prejudice against women are still widespread. Even with female school enrollment ratios higher than men by around 10%, the work and wages earned by women still suffer from discrimination (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012). However, in the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2018 Thailand climbed the ranking to 73<sup>rd</sup>, narrowing the gender gap for educational attainment (Okutsu, 2018).

In Indonesia, women make up more than half of the country's workforce, with many taking part-time jobs or working in family businesses. Gender diversity has not been a widely recognized problem and many women stay home to take care of their families (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012). The absence of an increase in participation and

economic opportunities in Indonesia results in the still weak position of women in the labor market. The level of Female Labor Force Participation or the percentage of female population aged over 15 years who constitute the labor force tends to remain in the 50% range, while the female population over the age of 15 years is greater than the male population of the same age (Azmi, Ismail, & Basir, 2012). This shows that Indonesian women did not experience growth in the labor market. The gender wage gap in Indonesia is also still high (World Economic Forum, 2017). It is noted that the estimated income earned by men is \$15,536, while for women it is only \$7,632 (Azmi, Ismail, & Basir, 2012). This is also the case in political empowerment. Women's representation in political exchanges from the 1999 general election to 2014 is still minimal, even though the potential is large because the achievements of Indonesian women in education actually exceeds men: 51% for women and 49% for men (Azmi, Ismail, & Basir, 2012). That's way in the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2018 Indonesia fell one spot, to 85<sup>th</sup> from 84<sup>th</sup> in 2017 (Okutsu, 2018).

In Myanmar, as in Vietnam, gender differences in enrollment in secondary and tertiary education have been abolished. In addition to increasing the role of women in the technical and professional fields by closing the gap completely, Myanmar began to approach the achievement of gender equality in the total participation of its workplace (Majalah CSR. id, 2018). This shows the achievement of good gender equality in the education sector as well as the achievement of participation and economic opportunities for women in Myanmar, although in achieving political empowerment, women are still under-represented at the legislative level and senior officials. In the health and survival sector gender equality also has not been well achieved. Like Indonesia, in the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2018 Myanmar also fell to 88<sup>th</sup> from 83<sup>rd</sup> (Okutsu, 2018).

In Cambodia, the country's government has reduced overall gender disparity (World Economic Forum, 2017). Cambodian women are said to be in increased empowerment in the political and economic fields, also in greater opportunities to access tertiary education (Majalah CSR.id, 2018). In the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2018, Cambodia moved up six spots to 93<sup>rd</sup> from 99<sup>th</sup> (Okutsu, 2018).

In Malaysia, gender equality is reported to be lowest compared to other Southeast Asian countries. In the education sector achievement, women accounted for 68% of the total state university enrollments in the 2013/2014 academic year and were well represented at the junior enterprise level in Malaysia (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012). However, this number has decreased from middle management to upper management because women live at home due to the lack of good and affordable childcare facilities. The government has tried to set quotas and measures to support gender diversity in the workplace. In the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2018, Malaysia moved up to 101<sup>st</sup>, recording greater representation of women in its parliament (Okutsu, 2018).

Thus, in Southeast Asia the achievement of gender equality in every country stands out in the achievement of the education sector. However, achievement in economic participation and opportunities as well as achievements in political empowerment, are still low. Women still tend to limit themselves and are reluctant to promote themselves in the work environment, including being a leader (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012). Women in Southeast Asia tend to choose to stay close to home because of the responsibility of their domestic roles. Women tend to reject jobs that keep them away from home (Gerintya, 2018). This confirms that women in Southeast Asia generally maintain domestic commitments before further engaging in other activities (public). Being very concerned about the welfare of the group or



family, even at the expense of individuals, the traditional Asian values still underlie the modern behavior of Southeast Asian women today.

Okutsu said that Asia has a long way to go to achieve gender equality, as the report predicted it would take 70 years for South Asia to fully close the gap at its current rate, while the figure extends much longer for East Asia and the Pacific region at 171 years. When Asia's largest economies such as South Korea, Japan, China and India were among the lowest ranking G20 countries below the top 100 with scoring lower than the global average, Southeast Asian countries were largely in the middle and lower range of the ranking (Okutsu, 2018).

The McKinsey study in April 2018 (Gerintya, 2018) states that there is a link between the welfare and progress of women in the world of work with economic development. That is, if Southeast Asian countries want to be more prosperous, then their level of gender equality must be increased. Overall, gender equality was led by smaller European countries, with Iceland, Norway, and Sweden as the top scoring nations. The global gender gap narrowed slightly during these past two years, with progress for income equality and representation of women in leadership roles (Okutsu, 2018).

From the description about the characteristics of women in Southeast Asia above, it is clear that Southeast Asia needs better environmental support for providing opportunities for women to contribute in the public sphere.

### **The Relevance of Authentic Leadership Concepts to the Success of Women in Southeast Asia**

Environmental changes indicate that within a country or region, a social system network requires an interpersonal approach from an authentic leader to formal and informal small groups in an open system. Authentic leadership

will transmit a value system to followers in order to improve quality (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leaders will influence their followers on the organization they lead as a dynamic, complex and sometimes unpredictable social system. Hence, the concept of authentic leaders is in line with traditional Asian values (including Southeast Asia), where a collectivist or family oriented culture is seen as a sign of rebellion and seen as a quite negative way of functioning in society.

The authentic picture of a leader in his/her interactions with followers is to instill the value of honesty as positive modeling that has implications for followers to do the same. It does not impose something unilaterally, but builds the expected value system in a developing culture together (Komariah, Sudarsyah, & Achmad K, 2018). Authentic leadership influences followers through: 1) the existence of a set of values that must be inherent in themselves and used as values that must be transformed into followers into shared values, 2) effective and emphatic ways of communication about their vision and programs and in their efforts to solve problems related to work and relationships between humans, 3) giving examples as the most essential characteristic of authenticity, 4) followers develop perceptions about the value system owned by their leaders as a result of direct or indirect relationships of leadership, 5) followers undergo changes according to the vision and mission of the organization.

When viewed from a number of authentic leadership reflections, women who have good self awareness, relationship, self discipline and transparency in providing role models in their family and social environment, as well as communication skills, (all of which are honed daily with the various burdens of responsibilities in the domestic and public sphere) have enormous potential to develop authentic leadership.

What is needed today is an authentic leader, the type of leader who has high integrity and, is

committed to developing the organization where she is affiliated. We need leaders who have a strong determination to realize the organization is useful, not only for all people specifically, but also for the wider community (George, 2003). Although women's leadership in Southeast Asia still faces obstacles from traditional Asian values that remain to limit women's progress in promoting themselves in the work environment, even for modern Asian women, the opportunity to prepare women as authentic leaders as one of the women's movements is one of the more pressing needs.

Decisions about one's work are still understood as individual choices rather than as a consequence of the existing political power structure (Weeks, 2011). Whereas one's choices for work are determined by various political economic conditions, such as a flexible labor market, access to education, and the loss of living space in the village due to land acquisition for infrastructure development (Akram-Lodhi, Kay, & Borras, 2012), (Standing, 1999). For women, the choice of work is largely undemocratically determined by the women themselves because women are still deemed responsible for social reproduction work in the household and family. "Women's work" is then defined as a natural thing for women (Fraser, 2017). Hence, women in Southeast Asia tend to choose to remain close to home because of the responsibility for their domestic role. Women will tend to reject jobs that keep them away from the home (Gerintya, 2018). This confirms that Southeast Asian women generally maintain domestic commitments before engaging in public activities, unlike men who are constructed socially and culturally as responsible for production work in the public domain (Fraser, 2017).

The formation of women's work that places women in social reproductive areas in the household or family rather than as production work, results in women tending to be seen as

having no leadership skill, being unable to lead, unable make a decision for the organization and not be able to have public responsibilities.

So with the variety of economic, political, and cultural diversity, as well as the development of state democracy, the opportunities for developing Southeast Asian women's involvement depend on gender responsive governance. Southeast Asian women who have authentic leadership characteristics become the basic capital to become leaders in the future. The capacity of women in Southeast Asia and a democratic system needs to be constantly developed in order to continue encouraging women's empowerment in various fields, which is done by increasing literacy and providing training in the skills and abilities of women's organizations (Tambiah, 2003). Even the experience of women in various parts of the world, especially in developing nations, shows that women can be empowered in fields other than just economics (McEwan, 2001). And don't forget, gender-sensitive legislation is also a priority that can succeed in the formation of future women leaders.

## **Conclusion**

The achievement of gender equality in every country in Southeast Asia is now prominent and stands out in the achievement of the education sector. However, achievement in economic participation and opportunities as well as achievements in political empowerment are still quite low. Women still tend to limit themselves and are reluctant to promote themselves in the work environment, including being a leader. Women in Southeast Asia see a domestic role as more important than a public role due to a strong commitment to family responsibilities. Women's behavior shows that they tend to be very concerned about the welfare of the group or family even at the expense of individuals. This is deeply traditional Asian value that still underlies the modern behavior of Southeast Asian women today.

In Southeast Asia, opportunities for developing women's involvement still depend on democracy and gender responsive governance. The existence of better gender relations, accompanied by the resilience and pragmatism of today's location communities, brings Southeast Asian women to a promising future. A number of characteristics of authentic leaders that have become the basis of women's identities are actually the main capital to be prepared further through a number of educational efforts, assistance and training in order to increase knowledge, insight, organizational skills, and self-confidence. Therefore, women will be able to become authentic leaders who can take part in various aspects that are not only limited to men. Gender equality will be increasingly realized if the state supports it through various gender responsive legislation and its implementation on sustainability.

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