

REPORT SUMMARY

REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACY:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN PROMOTING EQUALITY
WITHIN SENIOR EXECUTIVE POSITIONS
IN GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES

Report Summary¹

“Representative Bureaucracy: Challenges and Opportunities in Promoting Equality within Senior Executive Positions in Government Ministries”

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1. Introduction

Women’s representation in the bureaucratic structure of Indonesia’s ministries is reflected in their total numbers and particularly in their presence in high-level leadership positions. Data shows an increase in the number of female civil servants over the last few years, however only a few women occupy structural positions, especially in the upper echelons or high-level leadership positions (Krissetyanti, 2018). The research specifically focuses on the ministerial bureaucracy with the aim of deepening the discussion on women’s representation in the government bureaucracy under the authority of ministerial offices. Representation of women in high-level leadership positions in ministries is important to see because it reflects commitment to the principles of equality and diversity of elements in the bureaucracy.

A representative bureaucracy, by its nature, has a greater chance to have the advantage and capacity to accommodate and solve various kinds of social problems. This is the main argument of a number of proponents of the theory of representative bureaucracy (Selden, 1997; Hinderla & Young, 1998; Ballard, 2015). Representation of women in the bureaucracy, especially in high-level positions in government ministries is required not only apropos of justice and access to opportunities, but also in the accuracy of the roles and functions of the bureaucracy required to supervise, produce, and implement national regulations, particularly those related to issues of welfare, such as those with regard to health, education, and safety and security of women’s groups.

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2. Background

Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus (*Aparatur Sipil Negara* –ASN) presents new arrangements in ASN's governance, covering four areas (Cakra Wikara Indonesia, 2018). First, the application of a merit-based system that rewards qualifications, competence, and performance measures in the recruitment and promotion of ASN. Second, changes in the grouping of types of positions. The old term echelon is no longer used and three categories of positions are now used instead, which include Senior Executive Position (*Jabatan Pimpinan Tinggi* –JPT); Functional Position (*Jabatan Fungsional* –JF); and Administrative Position (*Jabatan Administratif* –JA). Third, the establishment of a new institution, namely the State Civil Apparatus Commission (*Komisi Aparatur Sipil Negara* –KASN). The commission is tasked with supervising the implementation of the ASN bureaucracy work ethics, implementing the merit system, implementing ASN management in various ministries/state institutions, and supervising the entire process of recruiting people to fill high-level structural positions. Fourth, the establishment of an open promotion mechanism to senior executive services positions. The open and competitive selection process conducted by the KASN is expected to provide greater opportunities for various parties to compete for high-level leadership positions.

The recruitment mechanism to fill the JPT positions involves an open and competitive process that adheres to the principles of meritocracy. The merit-based system applied is based on qualifications, competence, and performance irrespective of political affiliation, race, color, religion, origin, gender, marital status, age, or disabilities. Thus, the bureaucracy is expected to become more professional, capability-based and representative because it closes the space for discrimination. Official data from the National Civil Service Agency (*Badan Kepegawaian Negara* –BKN) shows that the average number of female ASN tends to increase in the 2014-2020 period. In 2014, the average number of female ASN in 34 ministries reached 37.18%. In 2015, it increased to 40.21%. It then decreased in 2016, albeit not significantly, to 40.14%. Furthermore, the average number of female ASN has respectively increased every year from 2017 to 2020 to 40.31%, 40.82%, 41.98%, and 42.44%. Overall, the average number of female ASN in 34 Ministries in the 2014-2020 period reached 40.70%.

However, the average number of female ASN occupying the JPT (both at intermediate/*madya* and primary/*pratama* levels) in 34 ministries indicates a deep gap in gender equality. The average number of female ASN occupying the JPT is very low and fluctuated from 2014 to 2020. In the period between 2014 and 2020, the average number of female ASN every year was 21.17%, 18.64%, 17.83%, 19.26%, 18.28%, 19.24%, and 20.05% respectively. In the same period, the average number of women at JPT level (at intermediate and primary levels) in ministries was only 19.06%. For the intermediary level of JPT position, the average number of female ASN is 16.04%, and it is 19.54% for the primary level. This alludes that the higher the position, the lower the percentage of female ASN.

3. The Main Problem

The representation of female ASN at the JPT level is the unit of analysis in this research. Official BKN data shows that during the 2014-2020 period only in 1 (one) out of the 34 ministries that the average percentage of women at the JPT level was higher than that of male ASN; namely the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA). In addition, CWI identified a number of ministries that have fairly good representation of women in JPT positions, namely those that are above the national average figure or higher than 19.06%. This is an interesting fact because as it turns out there are still 15 ministries that have fairly good representation of women in the JPT position. Within this frame of reference, CWI seeks to dig more deeply into the experiences of women who have successfully occupied high-level leadership positions and to find out what factors have been recognized as challenges and opportunities for career advancement of female ASN. Furthermore, this research also wants to see what impact the presence of women in JPT position has on internal governance in the ministry.

Within the above framework, three main research questions were formulated, namely:

1. What drives a ministry to have good representation of women in the Senior Executive Services positions (JPT) in the ministry's bureaucracy?
2. Do ministries with good representation of women in the JPT positions produce gender-responsive internal policies?

3. What are the obstacles and challenges faced by women in filling the Senior Executive Positions (JPT) in ministries?

4. Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach and the primary data collection process is targeted at 5 ministries, namely the Ministry of Health (*Kemenkes*); Ministry of Empowerment of State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform (*KemenPAN-RB*); Ministry of National Planning and Development / National Development Planning Agency (*Bappenas*); Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises (*KemenkopUKM*); Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration (*Kemendes-PDRT*). The process of determining the ministries was carried out purposively with certain criteria, namely quantitatively (four ministries with a percentage of women occupying the JPT position that is above the national average, and one ministry, namely *Kemendes-PDRT*, which a significant increasing trend). The selection of the five ministries also took into account the main tasks and concentrations of relevant issues.

Primary data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with 10 (ten) resource persons; 2 (two) resource persons (from JPT of Intermediate and Primary levels) from each target ministry. In-depth interviews were carried out during October – December 2020. Given the Covid-19 pandemic situation, interviews were conducted online via Zoom application.

5. Summary of Research Findings

The findings of the research concerning representative bureaucracy in the five target ministries can be summarized as follows:

5.1. Leaders play a key role in encouraging the fulfillment of the principle of equality that opens up better opportunities for women's representation in senior executive JPT positions.

The five ministries in this research reached a fairly good percentage of women's representation in the JPT on account of three supporting factors. *First*, leaders with perspective on equality play a strong role. *Second*, there is an institutional appreciation

of the capabilities and competencies of female ASN. *Third*, there is recognition and fulfillment of the unique needs of female ASN in the light of harmonizing performance with domestic responsibilities.

In addition, there are specific findings that contribute differently to the representation of women in the JPT. The Ministry of Health, for instance, recognizes specific characteristics of health issues associated with women as having the role of care and assistance for families. The ministry supports it by providing quality child day care facilities that are widely used by female ASN. At the Ministry of National Development Planning/*Bappenas*, the implementation of flexible work arrangements since before the pandemic and encouragement to study through scholarships are incentives for women.

5.2. Problems faced by female ASN in treading the career path in bureaucracy is hidden in the private spaces that it requires a perspective on equality to discern it.

The reluctance of a number of female ASNs to pursue their careers to executive positions needs to be understood as a consequence of their fear of not being able to fulfill their domestic and public/workplace responsibilities. Various obstacles and challenges are still faced by women to achieve senior executive positions in the ministry. *First*, the double burden experienced by women. This creates difficulty for women who have to share between public and domestic responsibilities in their households. *Second*, the consideration of prioritizing family and children makes female ASN abandon the idea of or delay pursuing a career as a high-ranking official. Leadership position demands more responsibilities and working time, so female ASNs often require permission and agreement from their husbands before deciding to take on a high-ranking position. *Third*, assignments to distant locations as well as high-intensity business trips make it difficult for women because they need support from their husbands regarding the division of household responsibilities. *Fourth*, the subjectivity of leaders who have a gender-biased view in filling certain positions or ranks.

5.3. Availability and utilization of gender-disaggregated data is the foundation for promoting equality.

The availability and use of gender-disaggregated data varies across ministries. The five ministries in this research have already had gender-disaggregated data, but their use tends to be limited to internal personnel needs. The preparation of a gender responsive budget is one indicator of a minimum use of gender-disaggregated data. This research

found that only the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs has used the Gender Analysis Pathway (GAP) and has a Gender Budget Statement (GBS) in budgeting. A separate study is required to explore the barriers faced by government ministries in developing and utilizing gender-disaggregated data.

5.4 Gender responsive policy formulation is needed to fulfill the commitment to the principle of equality and this can be done in congruence with the meritocracy principle and ASN professionalism.

The study reveals that the presence of women in senior executive positions in the five ministries in this study has succeeded in encouraging the organization's internal governance to be more sensitive to the unique needs of women. Ministries with better representation of women at the JPT level have the potential to produce gender-responsive internal policies, while limited understanding of 'gender', among others, by considering it as a synonym for 'women', can be an obstacle. The formulation of gender responsive policies is often considered as violating the principles of meritocracy and professionalism of ASN in view of the fact that it seems as if there is preferential treatment for female ASN. Understanding and acknowledging the invisible barriers faced by female ASN is an initial requirement for the formulation of gender responsive policies. The weak interpretation of the term 'gender responsive' as an effort to adhere to the principles of equality is a major challenge in the series of gender responsive policy formulation processes.

5.5 Policy innovations that accommodate harmony between the fulfillment of public/workplace and domestic responsibilities are a necessity.

This research also finds that flexible working arrangements (FWA) are beginning to be discussed in a number of ministries and tend to be associated with attempts to respond to women's specific barriers. Performance measures based on attendance and punctuality are barriers for women. Female ASN are still faced with norms/values to share attention on work and family matters, so FWA is one of the avenues to overcome these obstacles. Since the pandemic, conversation on FWA has expanded and is linked to cross-gender interests. Work-life balance is the foundation of FWA and is now a necessity for everyone regardless of gender.

6. Recommendation

1. The initial step in promoting equality at the JPT level can be taken by recognizing a series of invisible barriers faced by female ASN. As a response to these invisible barriers, Ministries needs to develop innovative policies or programs that accommodate the fulfillment of domestic responsibilities in the workplace.
2. Encourage the implementation of a flexible working arrangement (FWA) with results-based performance assessments instead of on attendance. This is necessary to overcome the barriers for women, who have to share the burden of public and private responsibilities
3. Encourage leaders in top positions to have perspective on equality through various educational and training programs.
4. Encourage the provision of gender-disaggregated data and its use as a basis for formulating and making gender-responsive policies.
5. Encourage the use of disaggregated data for gender responsive budgeting.
6. Encourage the inclusion of indicators for increasing women's representation as decision makers (Senior Executive Positions) in executive institutions in the national targets of the National Medium Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional* -RPJMN) as contained in the Attachment to Presidential Decree Number 59 of 2017 concerning Implementation of the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. Currently, the 2020-2024 RPJMN no longer contains indicators of increasing women's representation as decision makers in executive institutions as a measure of development achievement.

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