

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: EXAMINING LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDONESIA AND THE USA

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Abstract

This article analyses cases of women entrepreneurs' discourses about their life experiences of empowerment and their leadership communication acts that empower their female subordinates. Compilation of qualitative data fieldwork findings from Bandung, Indonesia were compared with two existing similar studies on women's entrepreneurship in the US. Despite the cultural and geographic differences of the cases, research findings were generally uniform. Most of the entrepreneurs adopted two primary empowerment approaches related to leadership communications acts: transferring social awareness to encourage self-worth and transferring skills. We generally conclude that women entrepreneurs tend to create open communication, focus on the processes of "listening and persuading," and show care for others.

Keywords: *Communication, empowerment, entrepreneur, leadership, women*

PEMERKASAAN WANITA: MENELITI KOMUNIKASI KEPIMPINAN USAHAWAN WANITA DI INDONESIA DAN AMERIKA SYARIKAT

Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis kes pengalaman kehidupan usahawan wanita ketika memperkasakan pengusaha wanita dan tindakan komunikasinya. Penelitian ini berusaha mengumpul data kualitatif hasil kajian di Bandung-Indonesia dengan dua kajian di Amerika Syarikat yang memiliki fokus kajian yang hampir sama. Walaupun ada perbezaan budaya dan geografi, dapatan kajian menunjukkan persamaan yang setara. Hampir semua informan menunjukkan dua bentuk pendekatan pemerksaan yang jelas dalam tindakan komunikasinya; penyedaran sosial untuk menghargai diri sendiri dan pemindahan kepakaran. Secara umum, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa usahawan wanita cenderung untuk melakukan komunikasi terbuka, berfokus pada proses mendengar, membujuk dan menunjukkan perhatian sesama mereka.

Kata kunci: Komunikasi, pemberdayaan, pengusaha, kepemimpinan, perempuan

INTRODUCTION

The economic crisis in East Asia began in July 1997, striking Thailand first, followed by almost all of Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea, and Hong Kong, and then China, Taiwan, and Japan (Richter, 2000; Robins, 2000). Although these countries are still in the process of recovery, their financial health is becoming better than before. By comparing the Gross National Product, the human development index, and welfare indicators of each country, Cheah (2000) concluded that Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea have successfully achieved meaningful change by closing the development gap between those countries and Western countries, represented by the US, Canada, and Australia. Such economic development often brings about valuable changes in global economics.

The phenomenon of women becoming entrepreneurs could further aid this process of economic recovery. Based on its 13th annual survey, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) estimated that 388 million entrepreneurs were actively engaged in starting and running new businesses in 2011, including an estimated 163 million women in the early stages of entrepreneurship (Kelley,

Singer, & Herrington, 2012). This latter figure may indicate that women have played and will continue to play an important role in developing current and future economic levels.

Women are also choosing to become entrepreneurs in some parts of Indonesia. The Indonesian Business Women's Association (IWAPI, 2012) noted that Indonesian women own approximately 40,000 small–medium enterprises. Of these, 85% are small businesses, 12% are medium, and 3% are large. Reports such as these suggest the importance of considering the potential role of Indonesian women in business.

Women entrepreneurs, especially those who own small and medium businesses, comprise one of many aspects that can determine the success of nation building. According to Badan Pusat Statistik Republik Indonesia (2010), the population of Indonesia is approximately 237 million people, making the 4th largest population in the world after the US (World Bank, 2011). There are an increasing number of women joining the labor force from year to year, although women's participation in the labor force is significantly lower than that of men. The labor force of women is making up only 37.9% of Indonesia's labor force in 2008, 38.23% in 2009, and 38.58% in 2010 (Kemenakertrans, 2012, p. 24).

On this matter, Lingle (2000) states entrepreneurs have played a key role in Asia's economic growth. However, Lingle (2000), and also Kerbo and Slagter (2000), predict that Asian nations will face an important problem when addressing development problems: inequality practices. Asian economical developments tend to neglect individual success because of a tradition of valuing the communal or collective. For instance, a collective value orientation tends to make individuals prioritize family. Accordingly, most Asian businesses depend on their connections with important persons. This cultural phenomenon is interesting to study, especially with respect to women entrepreneurs who must balance family and business while facing empowerment issues.

One factor influencing women's limited participation in the workforce is Indonesia's underlying patriarchal culture that places men at the center of power in the family, community, government, and religion. Indonesia's patriarchal culture expects women to follow *kodrat*, which Van Wichelen (2010, p. 16) defines as "female natural essence." To honor *kodrat*, women must prioritize domestic chores, such as raising children, cooking, washing, and cleaning the house. Although Indonesian women appear to have more options in social life since the time of President Soeharto, Indonesia's patriarchal culture still urges women to play *peran ganda* (dual role): to work in both the public sphere and the domestic sphere. In other words, women can work as long as their work does not interfere with family responsibilities. Suryakusuma (2011) also defines this situation as "State Motherism" or Ibuism.

Although gender equality in every aspect of life is the right of every human (UN, 1948), Indonesian social relations still tend to practice inequality. According to the UN (2009), to achieve gender equality and empowerment,

women need greater access to the economic public sphere. The UN identified this access as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) indicators (UN, 2003). Accordingly, UN Women prioritizes women's empowerment. Noticing a growing body of research demonstrates that women play an important role in nations' economies, UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet strongly suggests empowering women economically because they constitute half of humankind's potential workforce (UN Women, 2012). Furthermore, empowered women will not just earn an income, but will also usually give it back to their families and communities.

Although much research has focused on women's role in organizations, studies on women and their own organizations, as the owners and leaders of their own businesses is scarce. Bakers et al. (as cited in Menzies et al., 2004, p. 91) also notes that, "women entrepreneurs are rarely a topic of entrepreneurship research." Not many experts have paid attention to women entrepreneurs as empowered leaders, even if they admit that women play an important role in a nation's development.

According to Gill and Ganesh (2007), the few studies that exist on women entrepreneurs since the 1990s, explore how women start businesses, including funding, network access, and challenges to the masculinity culture, and may also consider ethnicity and the life experiences of women entrepreneurs who are non-white, non-American, and non-middle class. Other studies focus on the factors that influence women to become entrepreneurs. For example, Patterson and Mavin (2009) conducted case studies on four women entrepreneurs from North East England and found that the women decided to become entrepreneurs to escape the constraints of the glass ceiling in gendered organizations. Additionally, entrepreneurship granted them a flexibility that reduced domestic and personal tensions. Similarly, Joshi (2009) studied 150 women entrepreneurs in Sikkim, India and found most became entrepreneurs because of family business, unemployment, or economic compulsion. Only about 14% of the women became entrepreneurs because of self-determination. Yet these studies do not explore women as leaders or the question how they may empower their female subordinates.

Researchers have also failed to fully explore empowerment in the field of communication (Gill & Ganesh, 2007). The term empowerment is usually confined to development or economic studies. However, some research findings suggest empowerment studies intersect with communication process studies. For instance, Chiles and Zorn (1995) found that individuals' feelings of empowerment in organizations is positively correlated with positive verbal persuasion and positive emotional arousal.

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN BANDUNG, INDONESIA

This paper firstly draws on our case study conducted in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. Data was collected between February-November 2007 from interviews

and observations in women-owned enterprises (Sudarmanti, 2008). Respondents included 15 women entrepreneurs running various small businesses, including restaurants and cafes, cleaning services, stone design and ceramic jewellery stores, tailoring shops, salons, and bakeries. The women were ranging age from 25-55 and coming from various ethnics not only from Sunda (West Java), but also from East Java, and Bali island. They were coming from middle social class and also having different religious backgrounds (mostly Islam, Hindu, Protestant and Catholic).

Bandung is the capital city of West Java, Indonesia, and famous by tourism and industry. Sundanese culture is the background of its social life. This culture is embracing parental kinship systems which takes into account both father and maternal lineages (Ekadjati, 1995). However, patriarchal culture still dominated. Besides that, small and medium industrial scale enterprises absorb a large amount of women workforce. There were sporadic cases indicating that seemed lopsided in weighing on women's roles in daily social life, such as the right of maternity leave which was not given properly, or difference in wages between male and female for the same required skill or position. Those aforementioned were the main reason for the selection of locations of this study.

Samples were taken by snowballs techniques. The first layer respondents selected based on the small and medium scale enterprises, the longest time of maintaining a business, and having 5 - 20 female workers. The selection is also considered by the willingness of respondents to be studied in our research, easily accessible, and could articulate their conscious experiences. The second layer potential respondents was chosen based on the first layers recommendation.

The purpose of this article is to compare our case study with related research findings on how women entrepreneurs communicate as leaders to empower other women. The article focuses on women's lives in terms of how this phenomenon unfolds within the female community itself, and suggests their success may empower other women to attain equality in their own social lives.

Two other case studies were used as a point of research findings comparison. Those were chosen because of their research focus which emphasized on multiple realities of women entrepreneurs' life experiences without specifying a particular category of business type, age, marital status or class status beforehand. The first was a study by Gill and Ganesh (2007) on women entrepreneurs. They interviewed 23 women entrepreneurs who belonged to the Women's Entrepreneurial Network (WNET) in a northwestern state in the US. The second was a phenomenology research Reaves (2008) conducted to analyze the characteristics of 19 successful female entrepreneurs who were members of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) in the US.

The article explores how these women communicate in challenging situations. We aim to (1) examine the subjective meaning of women entrepreneurs' discourses about their life experiences and empowerment, and (2) explore how these women use leadership communication acts to empower their female

subordinates. Before turning to the analysis, first we discuss the concepts of women's communication, leadership and empowerment in more detail.

THE COMMUNICATION ACT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Communication is a social phenomenon that produces and shares meaning. It is a kind of human instrument used to achieve specific purposes, including achieving power through sharing or exchanging a variety of symbolic meanings. Giddens (1986, p. 177) and Mulyana (2003, p. 60) build upon Weberian ideas that humans are not passive during social interactions; rather, individuals actively perceive others' symbols and react using a variety of meaningful symbols chosen, rooted in the individual's self-consciousness, a concept of Husserlian phenomenology (Atkins, 2011; Laine, 2008; Wallace & Wolf, 1986).

Women entrepreneurs construct their communication acts in building relationships with others through phenomenological processes. Phenomenology is an approach of thinking about how we can understand the meaning of the phenomenon and construct our realities (Laine, 2008; Kakkonen, 2006). The phenomenological process derives from meaning making the presence of life-world, which is seen through the lens of the subject's consciousness of people's everyday experiences (Kakkonen, 2006). These processes provide an understanding about how people see their life span from the beginning of their childhood.

Accordingly, when running a business, a woman entrepreneur will construct messages when interacting with others. She will also construct messages to lead her women subordinates and direct or control everything to meet expectations. Research suggests the importance of such message construction. For instance, in their study on 22 various businesswomen working in well-known companies or running their own small business, Werhane, Posig, Gundry, Ofstein, and Powell (2007) asked participants how they interacted with their subordinates or employees. Qualitative data demonstrated an emphasis on communication and accessibility as key factors for successful relationships.

Some researchers have also found that women use unique symbols when communicating with their female subordinates. MacGeorge, Gillihan, Samter and Clark (2003) as cited in Kunkel and Burleson's study on gender differences in supportive communication, male and female employees differ in terms of managing emotions and behaviors in working conditions. Accordingly, women require different things to support and enhance their work and lives: "Whereas intimate friendship may help women develop socially and interpersonally, women need mentoring relationships to help them develop professionally and advance their careers" (Kalbfleisch & Keyton, 1995, p. 191).

COMMUNICATION AND STANDPOINT THEORY

In *Theories of Human Communication*, Littlejohn (2002, p. 89) states that,

“Standpoint theories focus on how the circumstances of an individual’s life affect how that individual understands and constructs a social world.” Women have multiple identities and unique standpoints based on race, class, gender, and sexuality that can overlap and intersect. These multiple identities influence how women interpret and construct their unique life experiences and a standpoint perspective provides additional research guiding principles for helping to better understand female perspectives.

Accordingly, Leitch and Hill (2006) note that women entrepreneurs do not share one uniform point of view. They represent multiple realities that reflect heterogeneous characteristics. For instance, Hunter and Boyd (2004) found that compared to white women entrepreneurs, the minority women in their study were older, less educated, have more children, less inclined to be married, having smaller firms, fewer employees, less time in business operation, and lower earnings. When a woman entrepreneur leads female subordinates, she will communicate with them according to her subjective interpretation of her past life experiences, which will influence how she guides her subordinates to do what she wants. In the case of an Indonesian entrepreneur, patriarchal culture, which she has lived in since childhood, will affect how she views her life in the future and determine her courses of action.

DEFINING WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP

Kim and Mauborgne (as cited in Dubrin, 1995, p. 2) define leadership as the “ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organizational goals.” Northouse (2001, p. 3) defines it as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.” According to Bennis (as cited in Hughes, Ginner, Curphy, 2002, p. 7), “Leadership is the process by which an agent induces a subordinate to behave in a desired manner.” In sum, leadership is the process of articulating a vision of goals and encouraging followers to act in such a way as to achieve those goals.

Kolb indicates that a leader’s life experiences play an important role in acts of leadership, stating, “People learn more from their experiences when they spend time thinking about them. Leadership development is enhanced when the experience involves three different processes: action, observation, and reflection” (as cited in Hughes, Ginnett, Curphy, 2002, pp. 49-50). Leadership is a spiral of experience, beginning with observing day to day events, reflecting on those events, and then determining and producing leadership communication acts accordingly.

To be a leader, one cannot simply possess certain cognitive and affective traits; one must possess abilities to construct and maintain social environments. According to Hosking and Morley (as cited in McKenna, 2000, p. 357),

A skillful leader is one who can construct and maintain social order, underpinned by systems of power and values. Within this

framework, the skillful leader is likely to be very knowledgeable about environment that governs his or her work, and is adept at interpreting information and making decisions on the basis of an analysis of that information.

When leading her female subordinates, a woman entrepreneur will articulate her life experiences and empowerment experiences.

Many people now accept female leaders, but, in practice, their authority is still questioned (Connel, 2006). Kaul (2012) found that only a few women journalists who have reached top management. Gallup survey in 22 countries found that respondents consistently expressed a preference for a male boss, rather than a female boss (Powell, 2011). Young (2011) argues that while women can be more effective leaders than men, whether women can influence other women still needs to be analyzed further. Likewise a female leader will often face contradictory negative stereotypes. As Lips (2003, p. 461) explains,

Woman in a position of power is measured against two contradictory sets of stereotypical expectations: the tough, assertive, ambitious, take-charge standard associated with leadership and the warm, expressive, accommodating, “nice” standard associated with femininity.

People will not support a woman who leads firmly and assertively, because her behavior is too powerful or stereotypically perceived as masculine (Northouse, 2001, p 223-224). Conversely, people will not consider a woman as a good leader if she leads expressively and warmly, because they will perceive powerless.

Power itself relates to the concept of strong versus weak. The haves will always fall into the strong category and the have-nots will always fall into the weak. Women who have the money to run a business are the strongest, not only in terms of having money, but also in terms of having the power to lead. Such female entrepreneurs can lead female subordinates. Women on the other side of the binary, who work for the enterprise or as employees, are subordinate and categorized as weak – the have-nots in terms of money and the power to lead.

Lull (2007, p. 46) defines power as, “(1) the capacity to act and accomplish something; (2) the ability to exercise control over individual or group self-interest; (3) the capacity to influence others; and (4) in certain circumstances, the will and capacity to command or control others.” Many researchers have found that women view power differently. Harper and Hirokawa (1988) conclude that males are more likely to use power than female leaders to persuade their subordinates within the workplace context. According to Pearson and Cooks (1995, p. 336), “For women to ‘find’ themselves to value their identity as women meant that they had power and control over their lives.” For women, power concerns self-identity or self-consciousness. Power is rooted in how a woman values her own experiences. Furthermore, Tannen found that, “Women use the

language of relationship, whereas men use the language of status and hierarchy.” (as cited in Pearson & Cooks, 1995, p. 337).

DEFINING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Melkote and Steeves (2001, p. 37) defined empowerment as a “Process in which individual and organization gain control and mastery over social economic conditions, over democratic participation in their communities and over their own stories.” According to Daft (2005, p. 315), “Empowerment refers to power sharing, the delegations of power or authority to subordinates in the organization.” Likewise, Page and Czuba (as cited in Warth & Koparanova, 2012, p. 5) defined empowerment as a “Multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important.” Empowerment concerns how each individual uses power to lead either their own self or others.

In particular, women's empowerment has five major components:

Women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. (UNDP, 2008)

In other words, women should be empowered to define their presence meaningfully in society. This study therefore connects with both economic potential and the ability of each individual to find his or her creative aspects.

DISCUSSION

The three case studies on women entrepreneurs we draw on, were conducted in different times and places, and are derived from different disciplines, including communications science and economics. There are three studies which have similar focus on female entrepreneur as members of NAWBO in the US (Reaves, 2008), members of WNET in a northwestern state in the US (Gill and Ganesh, 2007), and some of them which are categorized on small and medium enterprises in Bandung–Indonesia (Sudarmanti, 2008). Respondents were drawn from the snowball technique without specifying a particular category of business type, age, marital status or class status beforehand. All three studies drew on a feminist research perspective which emphasized on multiple realities of women's lives involved. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to uncover the discourse of women entrepreneurs's life experiences in relation to their leadership acts and empowerment.

With respect to terminology used in the study, we apply Gill and Ganesh's

(2007) distinction between women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial women. The term women entrepreneurs refers to women who have their own businesses, whereas entrepreneurial women refers to the quality of entrepreneurship that women possess. Preference was also given to women subordinates, because respondents rarely used the terms workers, labor, or employee. Instead, they referred to subordinates as “people who work with me” or “people who helped me” or “a helper.”

In our discussion of the research findings in the three studies, we question (1) how in their discourse, women entrepreneurs express how they feel empowered; (2) how they empower their female subordinates.

WHAT DO WOMEN FEEL ABOUT BEING EMPOWERED AS ENTREPRENEURS?

According to the case study we carried out in Bandung, Indonesia, some respondents felt empowered as entrepreneurs because of the personal income they earned. They did not have to rely on their husbands to obtain what they wanted and desired. Besides financial independence, they also felt they were able to overcome ensnaring discrimination.

While other respondents shared that, as women, they were not obligated to complete higher education and could not choose anything freely for their own lives, even though they were not young anymore. Their fathers made decisions for them that they had to follow. This was also the case for married respondents, as their husbands are held responsible and made decisions for their lives.

Being an entrepreneur also made the women feel more able to be loving and caring with their families, as they balanced their care for their children and husbands while pursuing their personal happiness. Finally, most were enlivened by support from their relatives, close friends, and peer groups. They felt fully encouraged to find their confidence doing something they were unlikely to achieve before.

Gill and Ganesh (2007) presented similar findings in their study of 23 women entrepreneurs who belonged to the Women’s Entrepreneurial Network (WNET) in a northwestern state in the US. Women entrepreneurs felt empowered by being entrepreneurs in four ways. Firstly, entrepreneurship framed challenges as mental stimulation for self-fulfillment as both a housewife and an entrepreneur. Secondly, the respondents found self-determination and saw something valuable to pursue in life. Thirdly, entrepreneurship equated to heroic individualism: living in a violent and competitive world, fighting for survival, and facing challenges. And fourthly, being an entrepreneur often engendered support from friends and communities.

Additionally, some respondents in Reaves’s research (2008), female entrepreneurs who were members of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) in the US, mentioned that starting a business was a way of escaping the boredom and routine of working in offices. Other

respondents stated that being an entrepreneur forced them to be more creative and daring. For instance, some women used their own money as capital, while others found support from relatives or institutions. Entrepreneurship also helped respondents find passion and entertainment.

ARE THERE ANY LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION ACTS THAT EMPOWER WOMEN SUBORDINATES?

This article's second aim is to explore how women entrepreneurs in the three studies empower their women subordinates by interpreting and articulating their experiences of being empowered and transmitting or spreading their perceptions. With respect to this aim, our Indonesian research respondents recognized that they really had to know what to do when dealing with their women subordinates (Sudarmanti, 2008). These constructions depended on how they interpreted daily life experiences and their nature or position as a woman. However, the respondents had several different social backgrounds. Patriarchal culture and local knowledge (Sundanese culture) colored some respondents' bargaining relationships with their female subordinates. For instance, Sundanese socio-culture teaches women to always take care of each other (Sudarmanti, 2008). Therefore the women seemed more sensitive with female subordinates, and were more comfortable giving tasks to the women.

Respondents also reported that their female subordinates were slower to receive orders and complete tasks than men (Sudarmanti, 2008). Therefore, they had to direct their female subordinates patiently step by step. Though the men were more nimble and quick to understand, they often expressed doubts regarding requests, displaying a tendency to resist the women entrepreneurs' leadership. Female subordinates often did not have clear job descriptions and each entrepreneur assigned duties and responsibilities based on personal considerations.

Almost none of the respondents realized that dealing with women's empowerment would create a dilemma of self-interest. However, the respondents' awareness of the prevailing values in their surrounding environments did influence their approach to their female subordinates.

On the other hand, Gill and Ganesh (2007) found some differences between women entrepreneurs' interpretation of entrepreneurship discourses and actual experience. Their respondents gained a sense of empowerment by achieving self-efficacy and feeling able to take action. However, Gill and Ganesh's respondents often used "we" when framing their experiences. They framed their management styles in term of family relationships, which create a supportive and fun environment. This may illustrate that they felt empowerment was a collective movement. Many also received support from more informal groups, colleagues, relatives, or friends. Such condition was also reflected in our Indonesian case study.

Likewise, Reaves (2008) found respondents used a wide range of vocabulary

to describe their leadership style. Most mentioned that their leadership styles involved a relaxed, flexible approach and that they treated people personally. They also developed their communication skills, especially listening skills, because they really wanted to accommodate other ideas. When these women led their women subordinates, they tried to be open to other ideas, collaborative, generous, and caring, especially with women and children. Some respondents also let their women subordinates travel back and forth between home and work to care for their children, even though it was sometimes inconvenient. Reaves's (2008) respondents were acting as instructors for their subordinates and were willing to educate them. Beyond earning an income, the women were happy to help others by encouraging and supporting them according to their needs. They also realized that such actions would ultimately benefit them. They felt blessed if their subordinates liked to work with them and were able to stay for a long time.

Despite the geographic and cultural differences of these three studies, we argue that the results are indicating similar findings. Although there are indisputable differences between Indonesia and the US, women entrepreneurs from both countries demonstrate prevailing similarities in their leadership communication acts in relation to the issue of women's empowerment. Cultural differences do not significantly determine leadership communication acts. In all three researches, the interaction between women entrepreneurs and their female subordinates involve the exchange of meaningful symbols that provide a social order formed from the dialectic understanding process between each entrepreneur's self and her social world.

The women entrepreneurs approach empowerment as the ability to "find" themselves, meaning they have power and control over their lives. Being an entrepreneur allows each woman to find confidence within a patriarchal culture. The entrepreneurs also demonstrate their potential to influence social change and economic order, as they were taking care of their businesses from the beginning and were receptive to change.

The women's experiences in a patriarchal culture also motivate them to treat their female subordinates carefully. The entrepreneurs communicate in such a way as to make their subordinates feel comfortable and confident – conditions necessary for helping women develop self-awareness and self-confidence. They also train their subordinates to meet expectations, indicating that the women entrepreneurs share power to help subordinates develop the capacity to accomplish things on their own (Lull, 2007).

The women entrepreneurs were also very knowledgeable about their social environments. For example, the women entrepreneurs in Reaves (2008) study provided women workers flexibility to work according to their individual capacity. Likewise, Sundanese entrepreneurs in Indonesia would not ask their women subordinates to lift anything heavy or rough, because culturally such jobs were performed by men.

Although the women entrepreneurs of this study use smooth and unimposing

communication to express their expectations, they always aim to control the given situation. They wanted to lead their female subordinates to be faithful and to support the business in solidarity. Bakar and Mustaffa (2008) also mentioned it in their research conclusion that superior-subordinate communication behavior plays an important role in affecting the quality of their relationship and also group commitment. Without support from others, women entrepreneurs felt a loss of power. However, Lull (2007) assumed that there is an indication that women also practice inequality discourses in terms of using others to pursue individual goals.

The findings here support previous research finding (Sudarmanti, 2008) that women entrepreneurs will employ two empowerment approaches in their leadership communication: transferring social awareness to encourage self-worth and transferring skills. Firstly, transferring social awareness to encourage self-worth encourages women's empowerment. In this approach, women entrepreneurs act as mentors and role models for other women, especially their female subordinates, in terms of demonstrating that a woman can achieve happiness in her own way. Secondly, transferring skills encourages women to upgrade their competencies. Women entrepreneurs can teach and train other women to be more creative and develop additional skills to earn money.

Overall, we can conclude from these three cases (Reaves, 2008; Sudarmanti, 2008; Gill & Ganesh, 2007), that the women entrepreneurs' leadership communication acts focused on (1) creating open communication, (2) highlighting the processes of "listening and persuading," and (3) showing they have a caring character. Those are frequent ways that women usually do to reduce ambiguity while conveying messages to subordinates. Oluga (2010) suggests that semantic interpretations should be applied in order to have appropriate desired response or feedback.

CONCLUSION

Firstly, open communication usually occurs in informal situations. Informal activities provide opportunities for women entrepreneurs to know more about their female subordinates, as well as their trustworthiness. The participating entrepreneurs tried to make their subordinates content working with them. It was assumed that if female subordinates were well-treated, they would feel their existence was acknowledged and they would then perform at their best.

Secondly, listening is not the same as hearing. Sometimes female subordinates were not direct. Women entrepreneurs had to grasp what their women subordinates really wanted. They had to be ready to persuade subordinates to accept solutions based on the women's capabilities and competencies.

Finally, women entrepreneurs always strive to help their female subordinates become more skilled and able to complete tasks in line with expectations and profitability goals. Face-to-face communication was more effective and created opportunities for building emotional bonds.

In addition, it must be noted that many Western agencies are trying to develop women's rights in Indonesia. However, many Indonesian women are involved in developing their own kind of a women's movement. In her study of religion, politics, and gender in Muslim populations, Van Wichelen (2010) found many Indonesians felt "feminist movement" was related to westernization and would bring radical change incompatible with local culture and prevailing religion. Instead, most women who were working toward gender equality preferred to call themselves a "gender activist" or "woman activist, rather than a "feminist" (Van Wichelen, 2010). Additional research is needed to explore and gain more information about this kind of phenomenon, and in what way it may impact women's empowerment and leadership in the workplace.

Furthermore, it must be reminded that the studies compared were conducted in several different places. Neither the uniqueness of the researches' local cultures, nor the degree of empowerment have been further explored. Likewise, further study is necessary to identify what kinds of communication patterns are appropriate for further empowering women across cultures and communities globally.

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