

# **WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDONESIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Indonesia, the issue of women in leadership position within public organizations, including in higher education, has been under scrutiny for a long time. Practices of patriarchal culture plays a significant role in the way people perceive women and their contribution have influenced the opportunity for female academics to assume senior leadership roles. Despite the increase in the number of well-educated women in higher education sector, it does not reflect in the number of women assuming leadership roles. This paper presents a brief historical account on higher education sector in Indonesia and then discusses women and leadership in higher education, with a special reference to State Islamic University Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

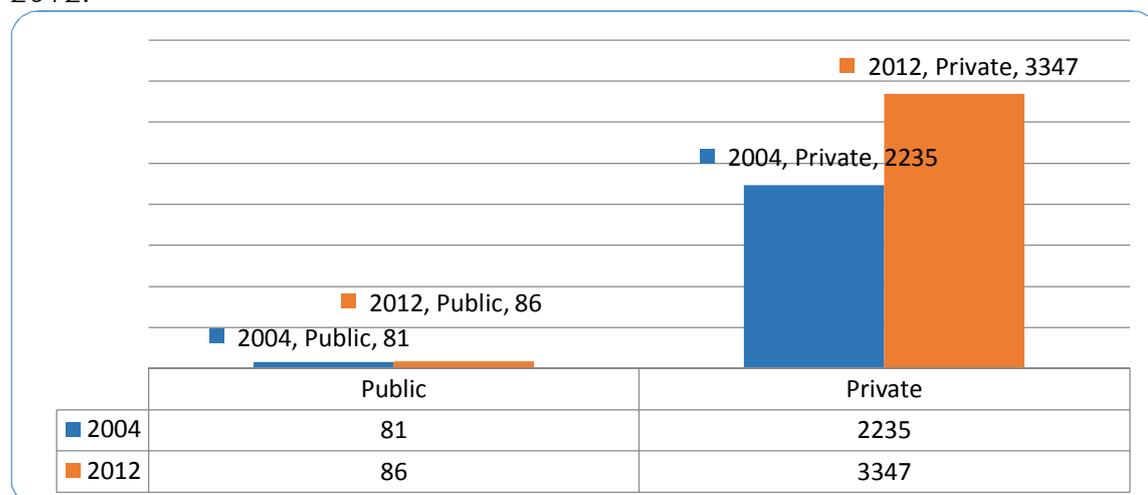
**Keywords:** women, leadership, Islamic Higher Education

## **Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia**

Before discussing the issue of women and leadership in Islamic Higher Education (IHE), I would like to provide a brief discussion on the state of HE in Indonesia in general. Contemporary Asian higher education is fundamentally influenced by its historical traditions (Altbach, 2004), and in the case of Indonesia, by its colonial ruler. "Secular higher education in Indonesia has a relatively short history. It began with the establishment by the Dutch colonialists of tertiary schools training indigenous people in medicine and engineering" (Wicaksono & Friawan, 2001, p. 159), to address the need for professional manpower to support the colonial administration. This was due to a shortage of engineers and other professionals from the Netherlands, caused by World War I (Bukhori & Malik, 2004).

Later, the Indonesian government founded Gadjah Mada University in Jogjakarta on 19 December 1949 through Government Regulation No. 23, 1949. Gadjah Mada University was established by combining several educational institutions into one. Over the years, the number of higher education institutions has increased significantly. With high economy growth, the demand for skilled workers, particularly in science and technology, has become even more important. This has led the government, through the Directorate General for Higher Education (DGHE) of the Ministry of National Education (MONE), to create a framework that standardizes the national HE system, and regulates the structure of academic programs, governance, and the roles and responsibilities of faculty members (Wicaksono & Friawan, 2001). This development, coupled with the high number of senior secondary graduates, has seen a significant increase in the numbers of universities in Indonesia as shown in the following figure.

Figure 1. The number of public and private universities in Indonesia in 2004 and 2012.



Adopted from Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2004 dan 2012.

The latest statistic from the DGHE indicates that in 2012 there were 3433 universities, consisting of 86 public and 3347 private universities. The number of private universities jumped from 2235 in 2004 to 3347 in 2012, an increase of 1112 within an eight year period. While the number of private universities jumps considerably, the number of public universities only increases to 86 in 2012, an increase of five universities since 2004. The above numbers are specifically for one

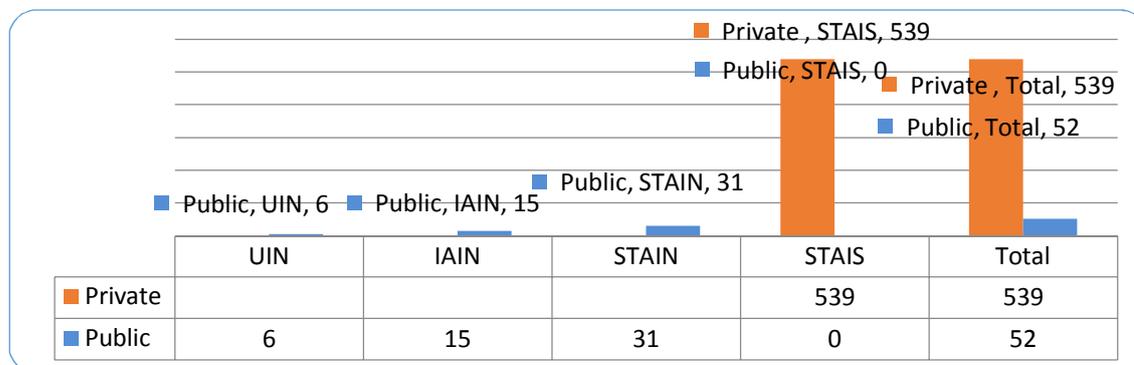
type of HEI, that of 'university' and do not count the numbers of other types such as academies, polytechnics, advanced schools, and institutes. Understandably, "the private sector has been instrumental in the development of higher education, specifically in terms of expansion" (Buchori, M., & Malik, A., 2004, p. 265). It is not surprising to see that private HEIs have the biggest share of student enrolment in the country, accounting for more than 60 per cent.

With regard to Islamic higher education, the establishment of *Akademi Dinas Ilmu Agama* (ADIA) or the Academy of Religious Sciences in 1950 in Yogyakarta, gave impetus to the birth of the Institute of Islamic Higher Learning (IAIN) in 1960 (Welch, p. 670). Later, through the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 49, 1963, dated February 25, 1963, it was transformed into the first Islamic HE, State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Yogyakarta, followed by IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta. These establishments are seen as recognition of the role and influence of Islamic education in the national development, especially in the education arena. However, unlike secular HEIs which take most of the student enrolment in the country, "modern Islamic HEIs contribute to 15 per cent of total HE enrolments nationwide" (Buchori, M., & Malik, A., 2004, p. 265).

In terms of educational structure, duration of studies, and stages of learning, "Islamic HEI resembles those of secular HEIs. IAIN graduates were, and indeed still are, considered to have the equivalent status of graduates of secular HEIs" ((Buchori, M., & Malik, A., 2004, p. 267). Since their establishment, Islamic HEIs have evolved quite significantly and recent developments have seen them move towards research based institutions. "New orientation towards research is clearly visible, not merely reflected in the building of IAIN institutionally, but also in the strengthening of education and research among IAIN intellectuals" (Buchori, M., & Malik, A., 2004, p. 267-68). One of the most important developments and achievements of Islamic HE was the conversion of IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah from institute to Islamic university with the issuance of Presidential Decree Number 31 of 2002, dated May 20, 2002. On June 21, 2004, IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta was also changed to Islamic university with the issuance of Presidential Decree Number 50. By the end of 2005, there are six State Islamic university (UIN) in Indo-

nesia. The following statistical data show the number of public and private Islamic HEIs in Indonesia in 2012.

Figure 2. The number of Islamic HEIs (IHEI) in Indonesia in 2012.



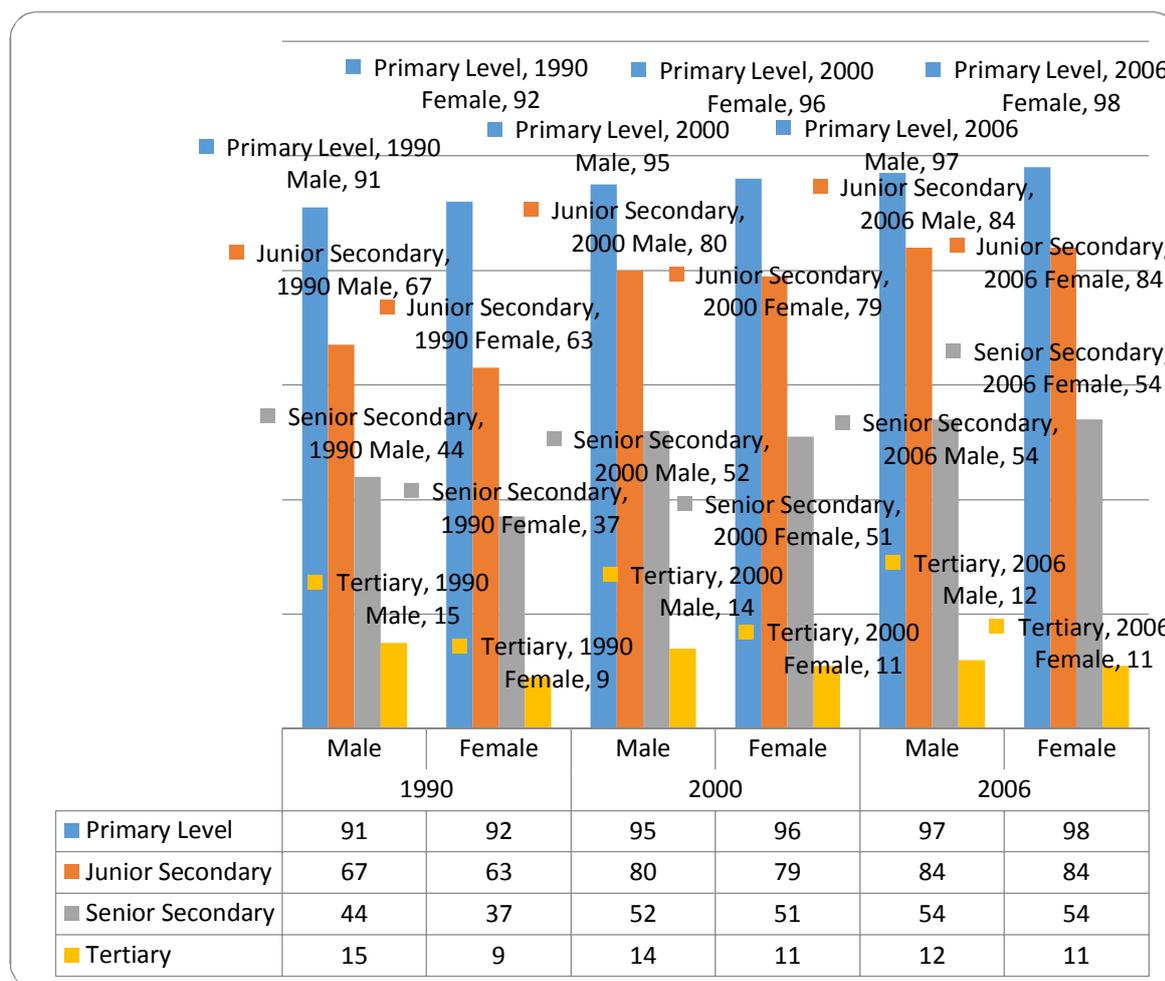
Adopted from Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Islam, Kementerian Agama, 2012.

The above statistical data show that there are 539 private Islamic HEIs, accounting for 91.8 per cent of the total Islamic HEIs, and 52 state run Islamic HEIs, accounting for 8.8 per cent of Islamic HEIs in Indonesia. Of 591 Islamic HEIs, there are 19 HE institutions in Aceh province, three state-run Islamic HEIs consisting of 1 Institute and 2 advanced schools and 16 private Islamic HEIs. These data show the extent of expansion that the private HE sector has undergone in Indonesia. As a result, the numbers of students enrolled in private Islamic HEIs are higher than those of public ones.

Despite its historical importance as the early form of HEI in Indonesia, when it comes to infrastructure, the Islamic educational mainstream system falls behind its secular counterpart. From the above data, it can be seen that the total number of Islamic HEIs in 2012 is 591, accounting for less than 15 per cent of total 4024 HEIs in Indonesia, consisting both public and private HEIs from Islamic and secular mainstream systems.

While the increasing number of universities has contributed significantly to accommodate the number of students who want to pursue their studies, HEIs in Indonesia still have not been able to keep up and accommodate the growing demands as a result of increasing senior secondary graduates resulting from better access and school infrastructure throughout the country.

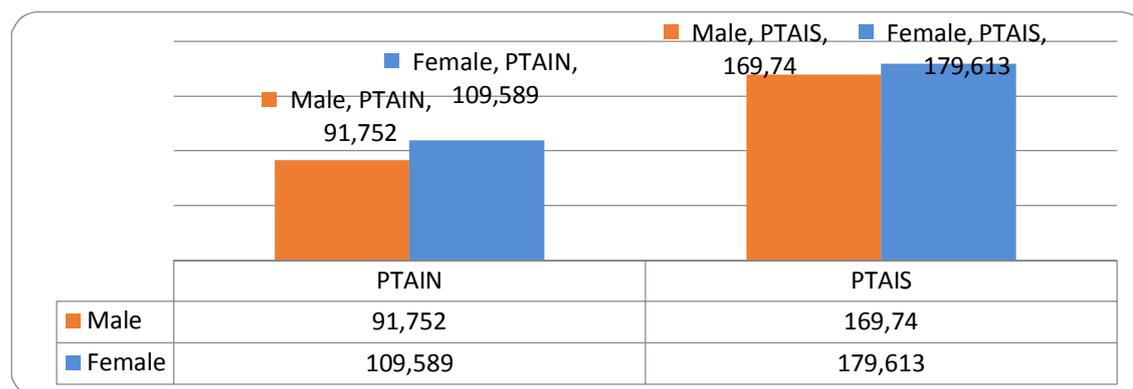
Figure 3. The enrolment rates at all levels of education in 1990, 2000, & 2006.



Adopted from Badan Pusat Statistik tahun 1990, 2000, dan 2006.

Figure 3 indicates that the enrolment rate of boys and girls at primary level in 1990, 2000, and 2006 is considerably higher compared to the rest of the education levels. At primary level, from 1990 to 2006, the female enrolment rate was in fact higher than that of males. Besides the success of educational policies and improved school infrastructure in both urban and rural areas, “a change in attitude of parents towards the importance of education for their children regardless of gender” (Wayong, 2007) has also been a major factor in this improvement. In 2010, the number of female students enrolled in Islamic HEI in Indonesia surpassed that of male students. This can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 4. The number of male and female students at IHEIs in 2010.



Adopted from Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Islam, Kementerian Agama, 2012.

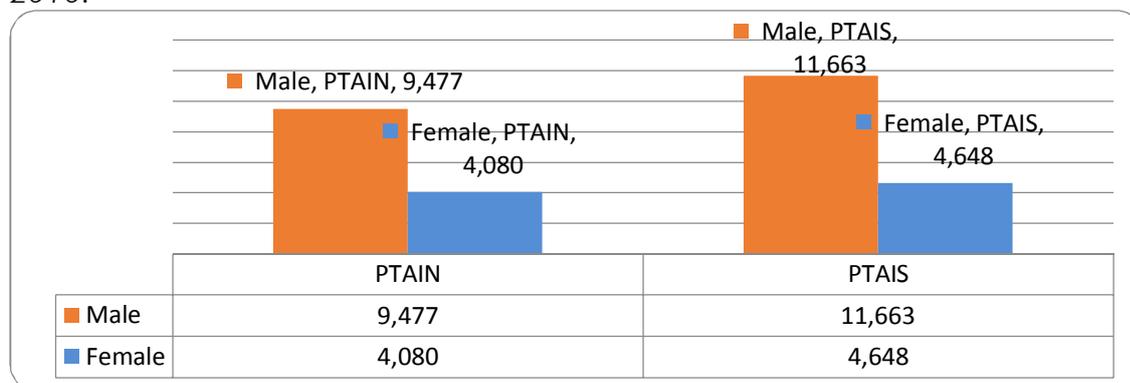
From the above figure, it is safe to conclude that perceptions of women's potential and their economic contributions to the family have changed considerably as reflected in the number of female students pursuing their HE. This can be seen in the number of women enrolling in both public Islamic higher education (PTAIN) and private Islamic higher education (PTAIS), which surpassed the number of men's enrolment.

The same trend can be seen in Aceh. Statistical data in 2009 also show that the number of women enrolled in HE in Aceh was higher than that of men. The number of men going to university in 2009 in Aceh province was 15,420. On the other hand, the number of women going to university was 21,420. This was a clear indicator of the paradigm shift in the value of girls with regard to education. It indicates changing perceptions within Acehnese society about women and their contributions in society. This is quite a remarkable achievement for a strong Islamic patriarchal society like Aceh. Some of the early opinions which regard women as less valuable compared to men and do not need higher education have slowly given ways to new attitudes towards women's potential.

This progress has definitely been a positive and promising development in improving the opportunity of women getting recognition in the work force. While this progress has had positive impacts on women's role and status and has improved the number of women working in the public sector, as mentioned earlier, it does not necessarily enhance the number of women in leadership roles in the public domain,

including in the higher education sector. As a matter of fact, there is still a significant gap between male and female academics in the HE sector. The following figure shows the number male and female lecturers in IHEs in Indonesia in 2010.

Figure 5. The number of male and female lecturers at public and private IHEs in 2010.



Adopted from Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Islam, Kementerian Agama, 2012.

From the above data, it is clear that female academics only constitute less than half of all academics in public IHEs. Female academics constituted about 30% (4.080) of the total 13,557 academics in public IHEs in 2010. This number is even lower in private IHEs which make up only 28.5% (4.648) of the total academics. What this means is that despite the increase in the number of female students and graduates over the years, it does not necessarily mean the increase in the number of female academics in the HE sector.

One of the reasons contributing to this situation can be linked to the requirements needed to apply for lecturer position. The government, realizing the importance of improving human resources and as part of the ongoing effort to improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia introduced Law Number 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers. With issuance of this Law, to qualify as lecturer at higher education institutions, one must have an accredited post graduate degree in his/her field of expertise. Article 46 of the Law stipulates that those having completed master’s degree level are qualified to teach at undergraduate level, and those having doctoral degree are qualified to teach at both under-graduate and post graduate levels. Undoubtedly, with the increased academic credential needed to apply for lecturer positions, it becomes even more important for both male and female aca-

demics to pursue post-graduate level study. Failing to comply with this Law leads to administrative sanctions that could relegate their lecturer status to administrative staff.

### **Women in leadership in Indonesia**

The issue of women's involvement in the public domain is not a new theme in Indonesia. As a matter of fact, Indonesian women have been taking part in the struggle for independence and in Indonesian national development process. The Indonesian government has been working to improve women's role and status through a gender equality agenda. Progress made in the education sector, for example, has been one of significant factors in addressing the problem of gender disparity in the public domain in Indonesia. Positive impacts can be seen in the increasing number of women who manage to pursue their tertiary education over the years. A number of legal products in relation to gender equality initiatives have been put in place in order to improve the state of gender relations. As a result, there has been a steady increase in the number of women working in the public domain. Nevertheless, despite the increase in the number of working women and in the improvement of the status of women in society, the gender gap between men and women in public domains persists. This is particularly true in the area of public leadership roles, including in the higher education sector. In a similar vein, Murniati (2012, p. 2) asserts that "gender disparity tends to be wider in leadership positions".

Women continue to land jobs that are traditionally identified as females' jobs, and are usually referred to as pink collar work. This term is used to refer to women-dominated jobs and professions including childcare, cleaning, nursing, secretarial work, teaching and waitressing. This is surprising considering the fact that a number of researchers have stressed the importance of having female qualities in the management of organisations (Eagly & Carli, 2003). In a similar tone, Connell points out that "gender equality is now a widely accepted goal in public administration" (Connell, 2006, p. 837), and that "one of the main goals of Western feminism has been to open the top levels of public administration and politics to women" (Connell, 2006, p. 837).

Despite the realization of women's positive contribution to organisations when appointed to leadership roles, the trend still shows that the number of women occupying lower-level management positions persists (Eagly & Carli, 2006), while the number of women assuming leadership roles remains limited. In Indonesia, statistical data show that the majority of women are working in the sector that traditionally belongs to women's area of expertise such as early childhood education, and clerical and administrative work, and that they mostly occupy lower level positions. Understandably, when it comes to working in area that traditionally belongs to men, women's representation is even lower.

The steady increase in the number of working women is not necessarily reflected in the number of women holding leadership roles as most of them only occupy lower level management and an administrative type of work. A similar phenomenon can also be seen, for example, in the lack of women in the political arena in Indonesia. The following table shows the proportion of members of the National House of People Representatives from 1955 until 2009.

*Table 1. Composition of members of House of Representative 1955-2009*

Year of General Election	Male	%	Female	%	Male + Female	Total %
1955	256	94,12	16	5,88	272	100
1971	429	93,26	31	6,74	460	100
1977	423	91,96	37	6,74	460	100
1982	418	90,87	42	9,13	460	100
1987	441	88,20	59	11,80	500	100
1992	438	87,60	62	12,40	500	100
1997	442	88,40	58	11,60	500	100
1999	456	91,20	44	8,80	500	100
2004	485	88,18	65	11,82	550	100
2009	460	82,14	100	17,86	560	100

Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia, 2010, p. 51

It is clear from the above statistical data that while there has been a gradual increase over the years in the number of women appointed to the House of People

Representative, the number of women sitting in the parliament is considerably lower than that of men. With women being under-represented in the national political arena, it will be difficult for them to influence and create meaningful changes in areas that are important to their welfare, such as gender mainstreaming policies, gender sensitive budgets, et cetera. It is fair to say that with a limited voice in the male dominated parliament, formulating gender equality and equity programs in the national development agenda would be a huge undertaking. In addition, it would be difficult for women to assume leadership roles in a male dominated area such as politics. The lack of women in leadership positions can also be observed from the number of women who occupy top echelon positions in government institutions in Indonesia. The following table shows the composition of civil servants in Indonesia in December 2005.

Table 2. The number of civil servants based on echelon in December 2005

No	Rank	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1	Echelon I	582	90,23	63	9,77	645
2	Echelon II	10500	93,29	755	6,71	11255
3	Echelon III	47887	86,44	7509	13,56	55396
4	Echelon IV	167217	77,91	47422	22,09	214639
5	Echelon V	10793	77,68	3102	22,32	13895
6	Special Functional	924939	48,71	973986	51,29	1898925
<b>Total</b>		1161918	58,57	1032837	41,43	2194755

*Badan Kepegawaian Negara, 2005*

It can be seen from the table that in 2005, the number of women occupying top echelon position (echelon I) in Indonesia was 63, which only makes up 9,77 per cent of the total top echelon positions in the country. The percentage of women in the echelon II position is even worse. Out of 11.255 echelon II positions, there were only 755 women who managed to land the second most senior position that civil servants can achieve during their careers. This only constitutes 6,71 per cent of the total number of civil servants in this rank. These two top echelons are the most senior echelons. Those who want to apply for senior leadership roles where decisions on

strategic development policies are executed must have these two top echelons. Not surprisingly, the number of women who manage to assume leadership roles is significantly lower than men. Understandably, it is difficult for women to penetrate and influence the male dominated policy making process as they are mostly excluded from the decision-making process.

What can be concluded from the above table is that as the levels of rank decrease, the number of women holding positions in these levels increases. Still, the number of women in lower level echelons is lower than that of men. These figures clearly describe gender disparities within government institutions with regard to women in senior leadership roles. Lubis, in addressing the phenomenon of lack of women in leadership roles in education sector in Indonesia argues that:

...the gender gap in the field of education and politics has had a greater effect on the leadership role of women in society than perhaps any other factors. To a great degree, gender gap hinders expanded roles of leadership and restricts the empowerment of women in leading and participating in organizations (2002, p. 43).

The above quotation suggests that the lack of leadership roles for women is the result of gender disparity existing in society which is then reflected in women's opportunity in the public domain. Connell argues that "around the world and in most spheres of public sector activity, women remain seriously underrepresented in positions of political and administrative authority" (Connell, 2006, p. 837). As mentioned earlier, in the Indonesian political arena, which can be regarded as a representation of women's actualization and involvement in public sphere, a considerable gender gap still exists in the composition of members of the House of People Representative (DPR) which, according to Lubis, affects women's political bargaining when it comes to the gender sensitive policy decision-making process.

In a similar vein, Robinson suggests that "Indonesian women legislators and activists have identified the increasing representation of women in the national and provincial legislatures as an important goal, both for its symbolic value and because they feel it gives women an opportunity to influence government policies that impact them" (Robinson, 2009, p. 158). Women's right advocates in Indonesia, who have been working towards increasing women's political representation since the first

general election was held in 1955, understand “the necessity of increasing women’s participation in development programmes to realize the officially sanctioned goal of gender equity (*kemitrasejajaran*)” (Robinson, 2009, p. 158). To be able to influence gender sensitive development policies and to push agenda that are close to women is important to increase women’s political participation.

With limited voices in determining decision-making in the formulation of development policies, it is unlikely the issues that are important to women will get appropriate attention and resources. In the efforts to improve women’s representation in both political and public realms, in the run-up to the 2004 general election, the government adopted a new measure by instigating that political parties must have a 30 per cent seat allocation for women as their candidates. Despite the varying degree of successful implementations within political parties: “the discourse about the need for increased political participation of women reached a new level of prominence” (Wayong, 2007, p. 48). This measure was seen as a positive and promising step in closing the gap between male and female parliamentarians. Whether this affirmative action will lead to an increase, the number of women assuming senior leadership roles in the public domain in Indonesia remains to be seen.

### **Female Leadership in Higher Education Institution**

The increase in women’s enrolment rates in higher education in Indonesia has also improved women’s status and their opportunity to contribute in the public domain. This improvement indicates a shift in society with regard to the women’s value and contribution. It shows the changing cultural values concerning women. This achievement is critical in bringing about a new wave of educated young women who will later form work forces in Indonesia. Education represents an important life opportunity for women and men, and a vital social and economic resource for societies (Subrahmanian, 2005), p. 401). There is no doubt that “rising levels of female education, along with increasing urbanization, have made for rising levels of female participation in the kinds of work that takes them outside of households” (Jones, 2009, p. 15). “Gender parity indicators can signal whether social forces maybe shifting to allow greater access of girls to schooling, enabling them to catch

up with boys in an important dimension of life opportunity" (Subrahmanian, 2005, p. 402).

The issue of women and leadership in higher education in Indonesia is complicated. When it comes to gender inequality in universities, limited research on women and leadership in the context of Indonesian higher education has been conducted, making it difficult to provide comprehensive evidence on the issue. What makes it worse, is that "the areas of gender, higher education, and development have rarely intersected, leading to silence in terms of policy, literature, and research" (Morley, 2005, p. 2009). In a similar tone, Toma's, Lavie, Duran, & Guillamon argue that:

In the case of educational organisations, gender studies have experienced considerably less development and only in the last decade have we seen a certain systematization in the analysis of relationships between gender, power and organisational culture. (2010, p. 487).

It has been argued that organisational culture within the higher education sector is highly gendered. Indication of men's superiority in HEIs is emblematic of patriarchal culture characters, as it is in many other public institutions in Indonesia. Similarly, Ramsay and Parker assert that "the history of organisation and administration clearly indicates that men not women were the key actors in the shaping of organisational structures" (Ramsay, K., & Parker, M, p. 260). As such, in addition to resistance towards gender equality which is considered culturally offensive in the context of public organisations in Indonesia, changes in attitude, if any, towards gender relations are limited, as officials themselves have not fully understood the competitive advantage gender equality has on an organisation's effectiveness and productivity.

Despite the increase in the number of women studying at higher education level, this has not always been accompanied by a change in the qualitative dimensions of the outcomes of education (Gunawardena, C., Rasanayagam, Y., Leitan, T., Bulumulle, K., & Dort, A.V, 2006). Not many women occupy senior leadership roles

in higher education Indonesia. The same trend can be observed at State Islamic University Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh.

Table 3. Female lecturers at five faculties based on their sex from 1966 – 2006 at IAIN Ar-Raniry

Faculty	1966		1976		1986		1996		2006	
	Male	Female								
Islamic Law	4	0	19	2	21	1	31	5	46	6
Islamic Education	5	1	32	3	36	4	61	18	79	29
Islamic Communication	0	0	12	0	18	1	23	1	29	7
Islamic Theology	4	0	14	0	21	1	27	5	32	6
Islamic Arts	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	2	22	9
Total	13	1	77	5	96	7	155	31	208	57
Total F + M	14		82		103		186		265	

Adopted from Buku Statistik IAIN Ar-Raniry 1996-2006.

Table 4. The number of lecturers based on Faculty and gender at IAIN Ar-Raniry in 2011.

No	Work Unit	Male	Female	Total
1	Islamic Law Faculty	55	6	61
2	Islamic Education Faculty	84	33	117
3	Islamic Theology Faculty	33	6	39
4	Islamic Communication Faculty	38	9	47
5	Islamic Arts Faculty	22	11	33
	Total	232	65	297

Adopted from IAIN Ar-Raniry website (<http://www.ar-raniry.ac.id/?content=datadosen>, accessed on 12/10/12)

The above tables clearly indicate the disparity between male and female academics in the five faculties at IAIN Ar-Raniry from 1966 to 2006. The fact that female academics only make up of 21.5 per cent of the total lecturers in five faculties at IAIN Ar-Raniry in 2006 provides a clear indication of the degree of male domina-

tion in the composition of academics at the university. Since 2006, there was a slight increase in the percentage of female academics at IAIN Ar-Raniry, from 21.50 % to 21, 88% in 2011.

Table 5. The number of administrative staff based on work unit and gender at IAIN Ar-Raniry in 2011.

No	Work Unit	Male	Female	Total
1	Bureau Academic and Finance	92	29	121
2	Islamic Law Faculty	15	8	23
3	Islamic Education Faculty	24	24	48
4	Islamic Theology Faculty	14	7	21
5	Islamic Communication Faculty	13	7	20
6	Islamic Arts Faculty	10	7	17
	Total	168	82	250

Adopted from: IAIN Ar-Raniry website (<http://www.ar-raniry.ac.id/?content=datastaff>, accessed on 12/10/12)

The above table shows the gap between male and female administrative staff and lecturers at IAIN Ar-Raniry. Female administrative staffs make up only 32.8 per cent of the total staff. Undoubtedly, this situation indicates that IAIN Ar-Raniry is still a male dominated organisation. It confirms that the culture of public organisations, in this case Islamic higher education, in Indonesia is very much influenced by values of patriarchal cultures. Not surprisingly, the culture of public organisations in Indonesia, including in the higher education sector, has privileged men over women.

## CONCLUSION

Despite increasing number of women with advance degree of academic qualification, not many of them manage to assume senior leadership roles in public sector, including in higher education. The shift in cultural perception of women's status has not materialized in the way public organizations perceive women's contribution. When it comes to organisational culture within the higher education sector, many have argued that it is highly gendered. All these lead to the limited opportunity for women to move up the ladder of leadership.

In the context of Aceh, further investigation on how Islamic values institutionalized in the form of Islamic Law affects the way people perceive women's potential in relation to assuming leadership roles. This is intriguing because Islam plays a very important part in the lives of Acenese.

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