



## Husband Support: Supporting or Inhibiting Personal Growth Initiative of Women Leaders

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### Abstract

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Various programs were developed by the company to improve the capacity of women leaders. However, on the other hand, the factor of family support, especially the husband support, has so far been neglected in scientific research related to women leaders. Therefore, this study aimed to understand the role of husband support in the personal growth of women leaders. This study used a phenomenological qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews with 6 women leaders. The results show that what motivates women leaders in their personal growth initiative is wanting to get out of their comfort zone, being challenged to become useful people, and having a clear career path. Besides, forms of support such as not complaining a lot, providing real assistance, providing solutions or information, providing emotional support, and giving space for the women to be alone or free to do things are forms of support needed by women leaders in Indonesia. Moreover, jealous husbands and husbands who forbid and demand many things are felt to inhibit the personal growth initiative of women leaders. Furthermore, the husband's dominant role so far is to support the personal growth initiative process.

## INTRODUCTION

The increasing number of women leaders in organizational management has increased broader scientific interest in several areas such as work, family, and personal life (Poelmans et al., 2008). This trend is also coupled with the blurring of gender roles, shifts in values, increased spouses with double incomes, single parents, and spousal involvement (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Therefore, organizational attention is increasing towards the quality of life of employees, one of which is women leaders by emphasizing the importance of family relationships and performance, this is because they are faced with the task of being a leader, but on the other hand, they are also faced with the role of being a good wife and also a mother dedicated to her family (Eby et al., 2005). In their duties, women leaders are also faced with challenging tasks every day; therefore, a willingness to change, an understanding of oneself, an understanding of the goals and consequences of the position, and also a willingness to learn from anywhere, not only from the school bench, are very needed (Machín-Rincón et al., 2020).

Based on the preliminary interviews, it was found that women leaders are more faced with problems that come from within, such as narrow symbolic idealization perspectives such as the desire to be a super mom, feeling impossible to be able to achieve success in both the domestic and public spheres, and also feelings of guilt for violating women's rights. Based on the phenomenon found in the preliminary study, it can be seen that women leaders experienced problems in perceiving themselves negatively. Women leaders focused more on problems in themselves, seeing from the side of their lack and weakness, such as feeling guilty and afraid of not being able to provide the best for the family and the organization.

This is contrary to what women leaders should do in which they must be competent in dealing with the problems faced. Women leaders should understand the power within themselves to accommodate the various responsibilities incumbent upon them. This means that women leaders must know the positive potential and strengths they have to be used in solving problems both externally and internally (Offermann & Foley, 2020). This is because women leaders have an important role in the organization, namely increasing company value, financial performance, economic growth, innovation, better social responsiveness, and reducing the risk of bankruptcy (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

Women leaders are faced with the challenge of continuously updating their knowledge and skills, but unfortunately, many women leaders are not confident, and they also do not recognize their abilities, their long-term personal goals, and do not understand the learning process that leads to their goals (Doornbos et al., 2004) (Hryniewicz & Vianna, 2018). Such condition of women leaders signifies a lack of optimality in self-growth. Conceptually, self-growth in Psychology is identified with the term personal growth (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Personal growth can help women leaders to formulate their life goals and understand the development of strengths to answer the challenges of work and the social environment (Andajani et al., 2016). According to (Chang et al., 2017), in carrying out their duties, women leaders need to be able to focus on personal growth. When one focuses on personal growth, that is called the personal growth initiative (Robitschek, 1998). Existing research has shown a great need for personal growth in women leaders (Mochizuki, 2014). Personal growth initiatives will help women leaders to grow in overcoming problems (readiness for change), making effective plans (planfullnes), utilizing available resources both from within and from outside (using resources), and behaving in a conscious and deliberate growth (intentional behavior) (Robitschek & Cook, 1999).

There are differences in viewing personal growth initiatives from a cultural point of view. Several studies show that personal growth initiative is strongly influenced by culture, whereas western culture is considered more individualistic so that it is more attentive to one's own needs (Heine et al., 2001); (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This can also be seen in the research of (Broome, 2018), which examined the differences in

women's leadership in western and eastern cultures. The results showed that women's leadership was more motivated by personal goals such as personal growth in Western culture. Women leaders in eastern cultures, on the other hand, pay less attention to their personal growth and focus more on the expectations of the surrounding environment (organizations, leaders, followers, and families). Eastern culture is oriented toward the collectivism theory and harmonious interdependence that expects harmony among members living in the culture. Therefore, individuals from western cultures have a higher personal growth initiative than individuals from eastern cultures (Heine et al., 2001).

Indonesia is also included in eastern culture, where women in eastern culture are known to focus more on things outside themselves, especially the family (Hofstede, 2011). Moreover, women leaders cannot be separated in their roles in work and family (Heath, 2012). The view of gender roles traditionally still dominates that the husband determines both his wife's personal life, career, and personal growth (Prasetya, 2007); Aglosolos 2003).

Women leaders, especially in Indonesia, are sometimes unaware of their capacities as well as the surrounding environment seems not to support the development of capacities owned by women leaders (Riantoputra & Gatari, 2017). Mrs. Susi Pudjiastuti is one of the women included in the cabinet minister of President Joko Widodo and has many awards for her performance. She says the importance of personal growth in dealing with duties because women leaders face challenging tasks every day. Therefore, a willingness to change, an understanding of oneself, an understanding of the goals and consequences of the position, and a willingness to learn from anywhere, not only from the school bench, are very needed (Fasicha, 2017).

Research related to women leaders was more about the husband's role in the career development of women leaders or related to the marriage satisfaction of women leaders (Heikkinen et al., 2014). Vадnjal & Vадnjal's (2012) research regarding whether the role of the husband inhibits or supports women's careers shows that the husband's role is very important, especially emotional support (trust and empowerment) which affects women's career success. However, there was no research that discussed the husband's role in the personal growth initiative of women leaders. Research conducted by Dhanian, Suryanto, Suhariadi & Fajrianthi (2021) shows that one of the needs of millennial generation women leaders in Indonesia to develop personal growth initiatives is the husband's role. Therefore, this study examined further research regarding how women leaders need the support of husbands to develop their personal growth initiative using the phenomenological study.

## **METHOD**

This research used qualitative research, especially the phenomenological approach. Phenomenological is a study that describes the general meaning of various life experiences, concepts, or phenomena of several individuals (Creswell, 2015). The

researchers used a phenomenological approach because it aimed to see phenomena. When researchers or participants are open, they let the phenomena appear. However, whatever the participants say, the researchers should understand them from the perspective of the phenomena itself.

The participants of this study were six people approached through purposive sampling. Participants were selected based on the following characteristics: 1). Women leaders in profit companies; 2). Having a family (minimum of a husband); 3). The limitation of women leaders used in this study ranged from low management to top management; 4). Participants in this study worked in profit companies in the same field, namely manufacturing, with different ages, positions, marital status, and tenure.

Participant 1 (S1) was 37 years old, had a bachelor's degree, and worked as the HRD Manager for 6 years. Participant 2 (S2) was 36 years old, had a bachelor's degree, and worked as a financial manager. Participant 3 (S3) was 50 years old, had the educational background of SLTA (Junior High School), and worked for 14 years as a production manager. Participant 4 (S4) was 30 years old and worked as the head of HRD in a manufacturing company for 4 years. Participant 5 (S5) was 28 years old, had a bachelor's degree, and worked for 8 months as a production supervisor in a manufacturing company. Participant 6 (S6) was 38 years old, had a bachelor's degree, and worked for 10 years as the head of the general affairs section in a manufacturing company.

The data collection process in this study was conducted by informing all participants that the interview was intended for research, and previously, participants were asked to be willing to participate in this study. The researchers also explained that participation in this study was voluntary. They could stop the interview at any time and not participate any further. Interviews were conducted in different places according to agreements with participants, and some were at the participants' workplaces or their houses. The results were recorded and transcribed word for word. The type of interview conducted was a semi-structured interview.

## RESULTS

After the data was analyzed, the research results based on the research questions are as follows:

### **The motivation for personal growth initiative**

Respondents emphasized the importance of personal growth initiatives in life. Some participants indicated that they had several meanings related to the need to always grow as a person, where the need or motivation brought up several themes.

The first was useful personality. Most respondents stated that their motivation in personal growth initiative was that they wanted to be an individual that is always beneficial to the surrounding environment. *"So, if I am in a position that means I must be beneficial to others."* In this theme, respondents stated that they were motivated to always

focus and be attached to the process of personal growth because they wanted to be beneficial to others with their presence in the environment.

The second was having a career ladder. This theme was related to the respondents' motivation to always grow because they hoped and wanted to have a clearer and better career improvement than before. *"Then, self-actualization means that it is impossible for me here to continue with a stagnant career. I feel that I am capable of many things, ideals, and hopes."* *"I have hope, at least if we are capable, we cannot stay in the same position because there are various types of higher positions, managers or general managers. I need to be in that position."*

Respondents' reports for their motivation in personal growth were associated with their desire to have a clear and more good career ladder than before. This was because they could not stagnate or only stop at one stage in their careers.

Besides, the third theme was getting out of the comfort. It motivated respondents always to grow because they did not just want to be in the same or monotonous situation every day. *"That is because being in a comfort zone, safe, and convenient is like being in one box. So, you cannot express and actualize ideas. We have already complied with the regulations of the system. That's it. Yes.... I am not the person who, em... there are mostly people like 'civil servants', they just come, work, and go home. What a bad work! So, I decided to if there is a better offer, which could increase my capacity, yes I will take it."*

In the statement above, making changes and getting out of a monotonous routine was the greatest desire of respondents to grow. Thus, respondents built their motivation to always have the opportunity to get out of their comfort zone by taking every opportunity for their personal growth.

Moreover, another theme was regarding challenges. It discussed the challenges they needed in life. This can be seen from the respondent's statement: *"I can't be like this continuously, if it's like this it will continue to be boring. Then we need a better challenge, which is a challenge for ourselves which means that if I am on the 2nd ladder, I should be able to go up to the 3rd ladder right. The view is that way."*

The statements showed that the respondents were uncomfortable with a life that contained routines every day. They needed challenges to be able to develop themselves to have a better life. Because of this, they accepted every new challenge offered to develop their abilities.

### **Husband Support supporting personal growth initiatives**

The first was no complaining. The role of the partner was very big for the respondents. They stated that the smallest role of the partner was very meaningful for their personal growth. This appears in the respondent's statement. *"No complaining, but if there is no complaint, it means that it has become support for me, hahaha."*

From this statement, it can be seen that when the husbands had no complaints against the respondents' activities, they showed tremendous support in the process of their

growth. Because when there were no complaints, they did not have many obstacles or disturbing thoughts in carrying out their activities.

The second was providing real help. The real help in the form of actions given by the husbands was very influential in the respondent's personal growth. The help appears from the following statements of the respondent: *"If I'm tired, then the one who clean and take care of the house is my husband. If not.... what.... in the morning we have breakfast and work, and yes.... That's it. It doesn't have to be a housewife who must do anything, cook, and clean the house. Yes, there is no compulsion, if he is tired, yeah it's never mind."*

From the statement above, it appears that the partner provided assistance in managing domestic work. When the respondent was exhausted, the husband understood her. This showed that the support from the partner is not only oral or spoken but also real.

The third was providing solutions or information. Another factor that respondents considered to support their personal growth initiative was regarding support in terms of providing solutions or information when the respondents experienced problems. This can be seen in the respondent's statement: *"Yes...supports, he supports, and exchanges thoughts. If he has a problem in his office, emm... tackling his subordinates or this superior...the main point is sharing information. So, we like to exchange thoughts and support each other. So, I have to take responsibility for what I do. If I hold myself accountable, I am supported. However, if he does not give permission at the beginning, I must obey him. The important thing is not to break the rules of religion like that."*

Respondents stated that in the personal growth initiative, they sometimes needed suggestions, solutions, or information to solve problems. When husbands can share ideas with the respondents, this will be very helpful for them.

Another factor was providing emotional support. Emotional support means a lot to respondents. Emotional support can be seen from the statement: *"That's the interesting thing, yes... He knows my boss and my friends well. So, there are moments when we meet together. He also understands my activities, he usually asks, "should I take or pick up? with a driver or what?" like that.... That's it... so we have an arrangement, the point is that if he already allows me my to be an HRD means that the risk of the work is blablabla. That means I can't work from 8 to 5, it can be 24 hours. If there are obstacles such as cases, I must be prepared, well, that's a risk and he understands it."*

Based on the statement that the partner understood the difficulties experienced by the respondent and wanted to get to know the work environment and activities carried out by the respondent by coming together with the respondent's friends. Moreover, being willing to comfort the respondent when experiencing problems was very meaningful support for her emotions.

### **Husband Support inhibiting personal growth initiatives**

The first was jealousy. The husband's role sometimes can also indirectly affect the respondent's personal growth initiative. The respondents stated that their husband's

jealousy made them sometimes refuse offers or opportunities for personal growth, as seen in the respondents' statements. *"If it's a job problem too...., it's just the job. What I'm worried about is that I will often go to the city, my husband will be jealous, I am afraid that he has negative thinking."*

The statement showed that the respondent rejected the activities offered even though these activities supported her growth. The respondent kept her husband's feelings from jealousy and avoided problems.

The second was prohibition. Prohibition was considered to inhibit or limit the wishes of the respondents, as seen in the respondent's statement, *"My husband forbids me to take work or tasks that demand me to leave the city because I am not allowed being far from home and family, I feel sometimes constrained by these prohibitions."*

The statement above showed that the respondent was constrained by the prohibition given by the husband in participating in some activities desired by the respondent. Because of these prohibitions, the respondent's movement becomes limited in the process of personal growth.

### **Husband support inhibits or supports personal growth initiatives?**

Based on the six participants of women leaders, there were several roles supporting and inhibiting the process of personal growth. However, the husband's role in personal growth was quite supportive because the benefits or support that respondents received were felt more than the roles inhibiting their personal growth. Based on each aspect of the personal growth initiative, the results are as follows:

Readiness for change: refers to the ability of women leaders to identify or create situations with the potential to promote personal growth. This can be seen in the respondent's statement, *"Feeling that if there was a problem, I was like, this is what I want, be quick. Now, it is like, "Oh, what kind of problem-solving of everything..., like this, or like that.... It is all thanks to my husband that makes me turn out good"*. Based on the statement, it was known that the husband's role, including understanding and providing trust and solutions in every decision, made a women leader confident in the decisions taken.

Planfulness: refers to an individual's ability to set strategies to facilitate his or her personal development. This can be seen in the respondent's statement, *"When I want to make decisions or plan something related to my career or personal problems, I always tell stories and beg for my husband's permission. Luckily, my husband is a supportive person who always gives advice on what I should do"*. Based on the statement, it was known that in planning the respondents' personal growth process, the respondents always communicate to their husbands in every decision they will take.

Using resources: refers to the use of personal and external resources (e.g., help from others) to promote personal growth. This can be seen in the respondent's statement, *"If I come home late because there is an office need or whatever, my husband always*

*helps to handle home needs, such as helping children learn, making food at home too."* Based on the statement, it showed the husband's role in providing real help, such as replacing certain tasks related to domestic tasks, including providing advice and solutions.

Intentional behavior: refers to evaluating personal disposition and motivation to achieve the goals set for personal change. This can be seen in the respondent's statement, *"My husband never forbid whatever my decision, he always says that if I am happy, he is also happy"* The results of the interview showed that the husbands had provided freedom for the women leaders to work.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicated that the motivation in women leaders' personal growth initiative involves several things, including that they have the will to stay attached and focus on their personal growth because they want to be useful persons, want to have a good career ladder, want to get out of the comfort zone because they want to improve their abilities by accepting various challenges. This expands the findings of previous research (Dhanian et al., 2021), where the research results define personal growth initiatives as positive and negative feelings without involving deep feelings related to motivation in the process of the personal growth initiative.

The husband's role quite contributes to the planning process, such as providing assistance if needed and being a person who gives emotional strength when her wife experience problems in the process of personal growth. This is in line with the theory of personal growth initiative (Umandap & Teh, 2020); (Oosterwijk, 2018), wherein they only focused on personal to stimulate personal growth initiative, while women leaders' lives cannot be separated from the role of family, organization, and society to support their self-development (Hoare & Gell, 2009).

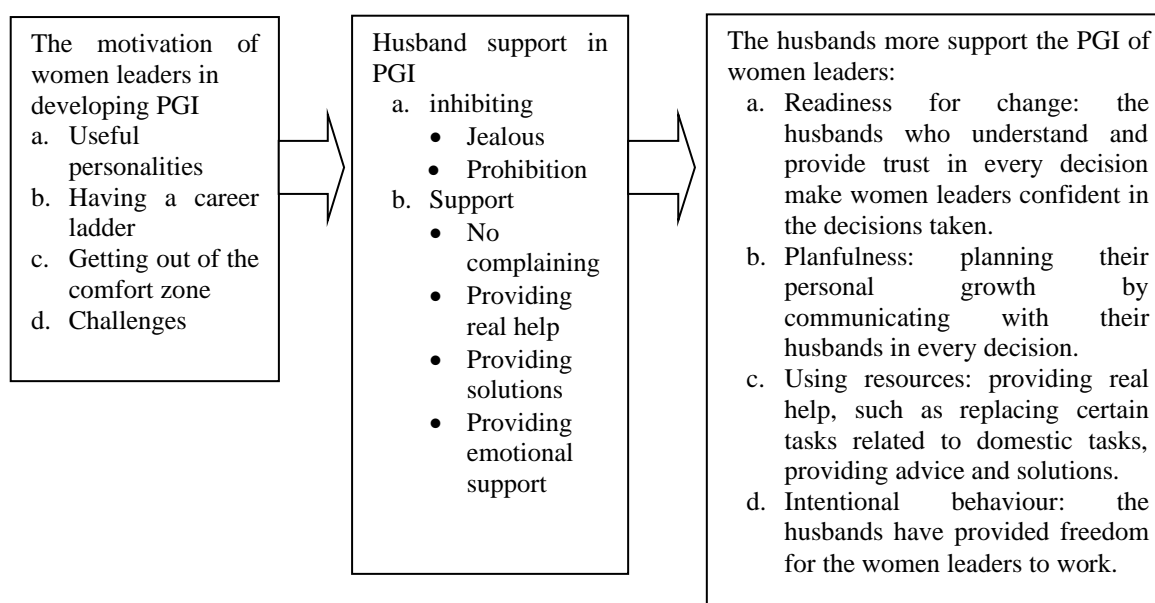
Besides, the role perceived as the inhibiting factor is the sense of jealousy that makes women leaders limited in devising their own growth plans, limited in some of the activities they participate in, and rejecting many offers even though they support their personal growth process. In addition to jealousy, the prohibition of husbands makes their space limited.

This study showed that women leaders stated that there were dynamics in the process of self-growth, but the dominant role of the partner more supports the process of personal growth. The results of this study indicated that personal growth initiative consists of aspects of planfulness. In this aspect, women leaders plan their personal growth process by communicating to husbands about every decision they will take. Culturally, in Indonesia, they implement collectivism theory (Hofstede, et al, 2010) which values the purpose and harmony of the community (family) over the needs of individuals. This makes women leaders ask their husbands for permission for every decision taken.



Besides, based on the aspect of readiness for change, women leaders stated that they knew what they wanted so that they were always ready, focusing on every challenge that had to be overcome. Then, another aspect is using resources where the role of the husbands was very needed in providing real help whenever there were difficulties that women leaders experienced, such as replacing certain tasks, giving suggestions, entertaining, providing solutions, giving praise, and most importantly no complaining. Therefore, according to women leaders, no complaining was the greatest form of support in their personal growth initiative (PGI) process. Moreover, related to intentional behavior, the husbands have provided freedom for the women leaders to work.

More simply, it can be seen in the chart below:



One of the most important implications of this study is that in developing the personal growth initiative, it is influenced by personal factors and cultural values that also provide enough roles and formal and informal support that also contribute to personal growth (Hammond & Zimmerman, 2012). Previous literature has explored external support, namely support from organizations for the personal growth of women leaders ((Brian) Joo et al., 2020). Besides, research conducted by (Riantoputra & Gatari, 2017) suggests that in the development, women leaders are like a tree that requires several supports, one of which is providing opportunities to have experiences and providing trust from various sides. So that in the development of personal growth initiative, the organization not only focuses on one side of work but also begins to think about development programs that involve family elements to support the needs of women leaders who will later return to the organization.

This study has some limitations, such as using the qualitative approach, which means that findings cannot be generalized to all women leaders. Furthermore, the types of companies in this study are limited to profit companies, especially manufacturing

companies. As a result, this may limit the range and type of women leaders included in this study.

## **CONCLUSION**

The current study provides an empirical description of the husbands' support in the process of personal growth initiatives of women leaders. Forms of support that women leaders in Indonesia need include no complaining about what they have done, providing real help such as taking or picking them up, helping them in doing household chores that they have not had time to do, providing solutions or information related to problems that they are experiencing, providing emotional support and strengthening mental when experiencing problems, and giving space for them to be alone or free to do something. Conversely, jealous husbands and husbands who forbid and demand many things are felt to inhibit the personal growth initiative of women leaders.

This study can be used as a reference source in organizations concerning the development of the role of women leaders and their association with family and job. Organizations can use this study in designing interventions about family relationships in leadership development programs for women. However, this research has limitations on the number of participants so that further research can involve more participants to get a broader description.

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