

Construct Test on the Concept of Women Empowerment in Medan City

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Abstract: Women empowerment is a common concept that has been widely studied in several studies. Also several perspectives are existed in previous study have led to the importance in studying empowerment, and this article elaborated some of the existing concepts of women empowerment. From such previous studies about women empowerment, this research is particularly based from Bhattacharya *et al.* (2012) development concept of women empowerment to be tested in the context of women in Medan City, Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to examine perceptions of women empowerment based on women's perception around in Medan city. This research is cross sectional study, which used quota sampling technique to determine the amount of sample. A total of 210 women of various ages from 21 sub-districts from all over Medan became respondents in the study. The findings of the study show that the importance dimension of women empowerment in Medan City is about the knowledge capability score, which is also strengthened by facts in the search of knowledge by reading books, newspapers or magazines is the highest score compared to health and autonomy capability findings.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Health Capability, Knowledge Capability, Autonomy Capability.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the issue of women empowerment has been started since the 1980s and until now it becomes the main concern of development. Most of the narratives on empowerment focus on instrumental advantages - what women can do for development rather than what development can be done for women [1]. Empowerment is treated as the goal to be achieved by building an equity program which is launched in any region. But in the process, the path that is taken on the journey about women empowerment both personally and collectively remains hidden from the surface.

Kabeer [2] describes the concept of gender equality and women empowerment as the third goal from the eight goals of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This third objective is an intrinsic goal and is not an instrumental goal, which is explicitly judged as an end in it and is not as an instrument to achieve other goals. As an affirmation, the translation of this goal into the MDG targets is to eliminate gender differences at all levels of education within a certain time. Kabeer [2] describes some indicators for monitoring progress in achieving this goal with broader coverage which includes:

- closing gender gaps in education at all levels;

- increasing the women role in wage employment in non-agricultural sectors; and
- Increasing the proportion of seats that are held by women at the national parliament level.

Many projects and programs that support women empowerment show little if any evidence of attempts to determine what it means in its own context moreover to assess whether and how much further it has been successful [3]. As given the quarrel to be the Millennium Development Goal, 'women empowerment' can be described as the primary goal of international development. However, for some time, there are fears to become mainstream; this concept has lost most of its radical potential to challenge and to change oppressive social relations [4]. Without a clear understanding of what is meant by empowerment "institutions run the risk of simply renaming the top-down approach as part of the empowerment policy [5]".

If there are different people who are involved in the evaluation have very different understanding of the gender, occupation and position of women-whether about themselves or others due to the lack of understanding of these collective feelings, individuals are left walking directionless while continuing to

explore the meaning of 'empowerment' in the context in which the work is done.

Basically it needs the right motivation and strategy to empower woman. Women are not only seen as objects of development but must be able to be subjects even if possible to be a development actor. The hope is that women are able to escape from the shackles of backwardness, poverty and ignorance [8]. Women empowerment is needed in the hope that women get positions in accordance with their abilities and capacities, because empowerment is a concept that focuses on power.

As stated it is by Ruslan [6] that the strategy of women empowerment in Indonesia is done gradually. The most obvious example according to Ruslan is Family Planning Program/*Keluarga Berencana* (KB), in which the program seeks to provide greater opportunities for women, especially mothers and families in general, to reduce the burden in the family environment by regulating pregnancy and birth. This way encourages women to participate more in development because their productivity can be managed for other things in social and economic structures in society. Ruslan [6] asserts that women especially mothers can participate to build family, environment and develop entrepreneurship character and spirit by participating in movement of family economic empowerment.

The effort to free Indonesian women from the problem of empowerment is a must. Women empowerment is indeed a process that enables every Indonesian woman to fulfill her own choice wisely. In other words, women empowerment can be translated as an effort to improve the function and ability of women as equal partners of men in a community structure [7, 6].

Several previous studies on women empowerment that have been identified include Sedarmayanti [7] research attempt to map the dimensions of gender equality or what we call women-to-men equivalence. The important point is that the equivalence between men and women can be done in several dimensions, namely in the family, community life, and the life of the nation and the state. The research of Nainggolan [8] explains that the women empowerment in Medan city can be done by taking various efforts to improve the economic, social, cultural life of women.

Theoretical basis and the hypotheses development Concept of Women Empowerment

Empowerment terminology is a term that has been believed by a conflicting stream of neo-liberal, neo-Marxist, and Third World grassroots groups - to show whatever the user wants in his interpretation [9].

Moreover empowerment is believed to have become one of the most elastic of many development keywords in the international world [10]. The term of empowerment was once used to describe the pioneer struggles to confront and to alter unfair and unequal power relations [1]. Empowerment has become a term that is used by corporations, global non-governmental organizations (NGOs), banks, philanthropists and development donor institutions or organizations. In the process, much of the insight from the feminist conceptual work which was undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s has been lost.

The concept of empowerment has essentially been criticized for several reasons including multiple and sometimes contradictory definitions, and then it focuses on an individual-level approach to implementing empowerment interventions and its failure to address issues that are related to patriarchal forces in a social fabric of society [11]. Nevertheless, despite the growing criticism, the implementation of empowerment programs and interventions from certain parties (government and/or NGOs) has been widespread because the concept of empowerment becomes inseparably which is linked to women welfare and has been accepted as an overall important developmental path for women [12, 13].

Empowerment as an intervention is seen as a form of strengthening community assets based on institution and changing institutional rules that govern behavior and interaction between people. Institutional change can empower community by creating new sets of rights and obligations, changing sanctions and incentives, and reducing economic and social costs. Pranarka and Moeljarto [14] describe empowerment as an effort to build an existence in the personal, family, community, or nation, government, state, and world order within the framework of a process of fair and civilized humanitarian actualization which is embodied in various life: politics, education and so on. Sastrapratedja [15] describes that the concept of empowerment itself contains three powers in it, namely power to, it is the power to do; power with, it is the power to build cooperation; and power-within, it is the power within the human person.

The concept of empowerment has a long history in social change. There is an increase of feminist and action awareness in informing early application in international development in the 1970s. Women empowerment is began to be articulated in the 1980s and 1990s as a radical approach that is related to the transformation of power relations that support women rights and greater equality between women and men [10].

Women empowerment is defined as a process that takes requirements or "resources" that can

facilitate "processes" that extend women agency or the ability to make choices, which in turn define "outcomes" that have direct implications for their prosperity [16, 17, 3]. The efforts of emphasis on women empowerment by "removing all barriers to women active participation in all areas of public and private life through the fulfillment and equality of economic, social, cultural and political decision-making." Women empowerment is considered as an integral part of the overall economic development strategy of less developed and developing countries around the world.

Literature proposes various definitions of empowerment including control in decision making [18, 19], ability to formulate strategic choices and controlling resources that are needed to achieve desired results [20, 19, 3] and having the power to achieve the desired results [12, 21]. Empowerment is also viewed as a skill, based on education and skills development, to advocate for quality of life improvement [20]. One element in quality of life improvement is the ability of a woman to make decisions and control her body, thereby improving positive health outcomes [18]. Empowerment is also a process that takes place over time [22, 2, 23]. The level of women empowerment may change throughout life as a natural process for advancing age, increasing income, or as a response to other contextual, social, political and contextual challenges and life changes [19, 24].

The participation of local communities in a project can mean the involvement of all parties to the design and implementation, or simply a consultation show which is never intended to be permitted in any change. Thus empowerment can be used to describe weak people in finding the power to help themselves, or the government in privatizing health or pensions so that it can cut taxes in order to "empower" citizens to decide whether to spend on health or pensions or even spending on conspicuous consumption. Now this seems to refer to the introduction of a belief in entrepreneurship among poor women and it is not a strong need to change, as the only problem is lack of encouragement among poor women [19].

According to Rowlands [19], women empowerment is 'a process whereby women can regulate themselves to increase their own independence, to affirm the right of independence to make choices and to control resources that will help in challenging and eliminating subordination itself'. The term means more than individual empowerment. The term has political and economic dimensions; includes about gaining confidence and the ability to know and negotiate rights, from micro to macro level - from personal (household) to the public sphere of economy and politics. Participating in identifying needs is an important part of the empowerment process. Resource

control as a means of empowerment is also important, though it is only part of a broader goal [25, 9].

The concept of empowerment is casted as a process of changing collective awareness and strength. There is an insistence that empowerment is not something that can be given by others, but also recognizes inequalities in power, by declaring the right to have rights and actions to suppress and bring structural change for greater equality [5, 25]. Batliwala [4] argues that the ever-increasing conversation about women empowerment is in danger of losing the transformative concept. This encourages a more precise understanding about the meaning of power and empowerment. By defining the power of "as control over material assets, intellectual and ideological resources" [4], this encourages the meaning of empowerment as "the process of challenging existing power relations, and gaining greater control over the sources of power" [4]. Far from being limited to local participation, participation at the grassroots level, Batliwala emphasizes the potential which is called "empowerment spiral" to mobilize larger-scale transformative political actions. The centrality of power and control over the conception of empowerment is complemented by a major focus, is not on individual self-affirmation, but structurally is about gender inequality. Empowerment in this perspective is a recurrent and fundamentally process of shifting in power relations.

Dimension of Women Empowerment

This section discusses issues relating to the quantification of empowerment level on group members [19]. Two aspects are the identification of the components or dimensions of women empowerment, and measurement of women empowerment level based on the selected components. While the identification of women empowerment components is specific, the second issue is largely methodological. Kabeer [17] offers a useful empowerment definition: "Expanding the capacity of people to make strategic life choices in contexts whereby these abilities are previously rejected by them." Further Kabeer [17] has described empowerment as a portable process in terms of change in three dimensions that are interconnected - resources, which shape the conditions in which choice is made, the agent, which is the heart of the process in which choice is made; and the achievement, is the result of this choice.

Malhotra *et al.* [3] shows how much of the literature considers resources and agencies (in various forms and by various names, such as control, awareness, sound, power) as the two most common components of empowerment. Some studies have treated resources not as empowerment, but as catalysts for empowerment or conditions in which empowerment may occur. Among the various concepts

and terms in the literature on empowerment, the "agent" may be the closest to capturing what the majority of authors mean: the ability to make strategic choices and decisions that influence important life outcomes. According to Malhotra *et al.* [3], women empowerment needs to be done in the following dimensions: economic, social, cultural, family or interpersonal, legal, political, and psychological. However, within each dimension, there is a range of sub-domains in which women can be empowered. Another thing that indicates that the empowerment component which is used in different research is the specific country and the context is specific. With this background, the effort to combine the components of women empowerment in subsequent studies includes: partner interaction, political awareness, legal awareness, political participation, domestic decision-making, freedom of movement, and self-esteem.

Hypothesis

Based on the above description, the focus of this study is to reveal and to understand the perception of women in Medan city for women empowerment which is divided into three things, namely health achievement, educational achievement, and autonomy achievement. The research hypothesis which is proposed is as follow:

- H1 Achievement of health is important in reflecting the women empowerment in Medan City.
- H2 Achievement of education is important in reflecting the women empowerment in Medan City.
- H3 Achievement of autonomy is important in reflecting the women empowerment in Medan City.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is conducted in Medan City with target population is the adult women in all area of Medan City. Since the number of women is not known

with certainty and there is not any data source that can accurately provide such information, it is not possible to investigate entirely. The sampling technique in this study is quota sampling. This technique is done because of the consideration that the sample is taken based on the goal of all women who have been categorized as adults in Medan City that is taken based on the district where she lived. The quota which is set is 10 adult women from each district in Medan City. Based on the assumptions, the sampling size is planned for 210 adult women from 21 districts in Medan City.

Although some previous studies have examined the dimensions of women empowerment, specifically in this study it is adopted a construct measurement that is developed by Bhattacharya *et al.* [26]. The instrument which is developed by Bhattacharya *et al.* [26] that is tested in this study consists of three dimensions, namely (1) achievement in health (mean = 3.374, SD = 3.487), (2) achievement in education (mean = 3.332, SD = 3.370) , and (3) achievement in autonomy (mean = 2.993, SD = 3.021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on table 1 it can be seen that the majority of female respondents in the scope of Medan City who become respondents in this study are having high school education level (as many as 105 people or 50.0 percent of the total sample research). In contrast, the smallest number of respondents are customers with a Diploma degree (17 or 8.1 percent of respondents), while the rest have Bachelor education background (88 people or 41.9 percent of respondents). While it is viewed from the aspect of respondent age with age category between 30-39 years, it has the highest number (100 people or equal to 47.6 percent) than other respondents. A total of 73 people or 34.8 percent of respondents are women with age category 21 - 29 years, and 37 people or 17.6 percent of respondents are women with age range 40-49 years.

Table-1: Characteristics of Research Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Education		
High School	105	50,0
Diploma	17	8,1
Bachelor	88	41,9
Total	210	100
Age		
21 - 29 years	73	34,8
30 - 39 years	100	47,6
40 - 49 years	37	17,6
Total	210	100
Marital Status		
Not Married	97	34,8
Married	113	47,6
Total	210	100

Source: SPSS Output in Frequency Distribution on; Characteristics of Research Respondents (2018)

While the validity test results of each indicator on the variable, the correlation coefficient which is obtained from the calculation result of correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) is that all of it has r_{count} which is greater than 0.3. It can be concluded that all indicators in each construct for the variables that are observed in this study are valid. While the reliability test results show the value of the reliability coefficient on Cronbach's Alpha for achievement in health ($\alpha =$

0.713), achievement in education ($\alpha = 0.733$), and achievement in autonomy ($\alpha = 0.845$) The results show that all constructs that are observed and tested in the research model have Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.60, so this shows the conclusion that the research instrument has met the criteria of reliability, Coefficient of factor weight for indicator on the dimension of women empowerment can be seen in table 2 below:

Table-2: Coefficient of Weight Factor for Indicator in Dimension of Women Empowerment

Construct	Item	Coefficient of Factor Weight	Mean
Achievement in Health	Have a good level of health	0,584	3,45
	Not easily got disease	0,689	3,14
	Able to take good care of herself	0,793	3,41
	Feel comfortable with self-condition	0,697	3,54
	Able to rest and or to sleep adequately	0,640	3,33
Achievement in Education	Able to finish the education which I pursue	0,616	3,29
	Have the highest score in education	0,740	3,25
	Able to read and write well	0,665	3,36
	Have time to read newspapers/magazines/books	0,665	3,32
	Frequently read newspapers/magazines/books	0,741	3,44
	Able to complete the education which is pursued	0,730	3,29
Achievement in Autonomy	Able to make decisions autonomously	0,842	3,14
	Able to get approval from others for decision making	0,889	2,93
	Able to make decisions after careful consideration	0,891	2,91

The results that are indicated in Table 2 indicate the coefficient value of factor weight and variance for each dimension: (1) achievement in health (range from 0.584 to 0.793), then (2) achievement in education (range from 0.616 to 0.741) 3) achievement in autonomy (range from 0.842 up to 0.891). The overall result of loading factor for each indicator in the

dimension of women empowerment is significant ($p < 0.01$).

The dimension of achievement in health is most reflected by $X_{1,3}$ indicator, able to take good care of herself ($\lambda = 0.793$). While the lowest indicator in reflecting the dimension of achievement in health is $X_{1,1}$, have a good level of health ($\lambda = 0.582$). The

dimension of achievement in education is most reflected by $X_{2,5}$ indicator, frequently read newspaper or magazine or book ($\lambda = 0.741$). While the lowest indicator in reflecting the dimension of achievement in education is $X_{2,1}$, have a good level of health ($\lambda = 0.616$). The dimension of achievement in autonomy is

most reflected by $X_{3,3}$ indicator, that is able to make decision after careful consideration ($\lambda = 0.891$). While the lowest indicator in reflecting the dimension of achievement in autonomy is $X_{3,1}$, that is indicator of able to make decision autonomously ($\lambda = 0.842$).

Table-3: Coefficient of Factor Weight and Mean for Dimension of Women Empowerment

Dimensions	Coefficient of Factor Weight	t-Statistic	Description	Mean
Achievement in Health	0.843	24.933	Significant	3.374
Achievement in Education	0.885	41.206	Significant	3.332
Achievement in Autonomy	0.826	27.182	Significant	2.993

Source: Output of Factor Analysis (2018)

As it is indicated in table 2 for the coefficient test result of factor weight on the dimension of women empowerment, the t-statistic value which exceeds the critical value of 1.96 is stated significant and vice versa. Overall, the t-statistic value of all dimensions for women empowerment variables in table 2 shows significant values. This is evidenced by the t-statistic value which is greater than the critical value of 1.96. It can be concluded that the achievement in health, the achievement in education, and the achievement in autonomy are important things in reflecting on women empowerment. According to the perception of women in Medan City, the most important thing in reflecting women empowerment is the achievement in education. While the highest thing that is felt by the women in Medan city is about the achievement in health. Based on table 3 above then it is conducted the proofing hypothesis which is as follows: H1 Achievement in health is important in reflecting the women empowerment in Medan City.

The coefficient of factor weight at achievement in health on women empowerment is found to be significant at 0.843. The coefficient of factor weight is categorized significant at the 0.05 level because the t-statistic value is greater than 1.96 i.e. 24.933. Based on the findings, Hypothesis 1 in this study is accepted. The results prove that achievement in health is an important reflection of women empowerment.

H2 Achievement in education is important in reflecting the women empowerment in Medan City.

The coefficient of factor weight at achievement in education on women empowerment is found to be significant at 0.885. The coefficient of factor weight is categorized significant at the 0.05 level because the t-statistic value is greater than 1.96 i.e. 41.206. Based on the findings, Hypothesis 2 in this study is accepted. The results prove that achievement in education is an important reflection of women empowerment.

H3 Achievement in autonomy is important in reflecting women empowerment in Medan City

The coefficient of factor weight at achievement in autonomy on women empowerment is found to be significant at 0.826. The coefficient of factor weight is categorized significant at the 0.05 level because the t-statistic value is greater than 1.96 i.e. 27.182. Based on the findings, Hypothesis 3 in this study is accepted. The results prove that achievement in autonomy is an important reflection of women empowerment.

It is not reasonable to assume that the necessary improvements to women empowerment can be done solely because they are oriented to sell women workers without seeking a collective gifting service for women capacity building and rewarding for women responsibilities in reproductive activities. This study has raised some important points about the concepts and results of women empowerment. Keep in mind that empowerment size which is globally defined for women are less useful than is contextually defined or situational ones. It appears that greater empowerment is not always equivalent to a positive outcome. As a result, the social context and life situation of women can be assumed to give different results about what is perceived about empowerment. There are situations in which women can manifest behaviors that indicate enhanced empowerment and anything else that they cannot otherwise do, the consequences may be negative.

Several previous concepts and studies have made it clear that one of the areas that are targeted by some women empowerment interventions is women health as this is a key factor in ensuring the health of new children and prospective pregnancies and families as a whole. However, findings on perceptual outcomes of empowerment on the dimensions of achievement in health are not the most important so that the results that are presented in conclusions are not very convincing. The findings on the relation between women empowerment and health that is presented in the literature may be more related to the context of women change and their need to be better educated and well educated. This reflects the different periods in women lives rather than the results that are contrary to previous research.

In the case which is presented here, women empowerment is increased or more accepted when a woman performs her traditional role but by not letting go of or ignoring her need to be educated and well educated. Therefore, for the parties that are concerned with women empowerment in Medan City, education is the most important thing. This may be caused to the women beliefs in Medan City that education will provide new knowledge that enables women to build capacity and capability in the domestic (family) sector or in the real sector (community, social and economic).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research analysis and discussion, it can be drawn some conclusions as follows:

- The achievement in health as the important thing in women empowerment in Medan city is most indicated by the ability of women in taking good care of them-selves. Even so, based on the facts in the field that the highest thing that women feel is the importance of having a good level of health. This is assumed because the majority of women who become respondents in this study are married.
- The achievement in education as the important thing in women empowerment in Medan city is most indicated by the frequency of women reading newspapers/magazines/books. This is reinforced by the facts in the field as the highest thing that women feel in Medan City. From all dimensions of women empowerment, achievement in education is the most consistent in women perception in Medan City. The majority of women in Medan city perceive reading newspapers, magazines, and books is the most important and is the most often done to improve the empowerment of their capacity as women, regardless of their married or single status.
- The achievement in autonomy as the important thing in women empowerment in Medan City is most indicated by the ability to make decisions after careful consideration. But based on the facts in the field, the highest thing that women feel in the achievement in autonomy is about the ability to make decisions autonomously without being influenced by any party.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

This study uses cross-sectional design. The data is taken from one time and is not longitudinal. Limitations of this study may possibly limit the causal interpretation of the study results. In addition to the research design, other limitations in the form of self-reported questionnaires have the potential to cause a bias statement due to the subjectivity of the respondents. In addition to the fact that the same person perceives the construct in dimension of women empowerment can be a potential source of common method variance. So, further research is expected to

use a longitudinal design to capture the diversity of phenomena which is potentially occurring over time.

SUGGESTION

Other important things that can be suggested are interested parties are expected to develop positive and appropriate interventions in reducing the potential impact of women empowerment resistance, thus supporting the efforts to improve women capacity and capabilities. This effort is also expected to assist women in fulfilling the obligations of women (who work) in work and in the family more effectively.

Further research is expected to test the model on different or more diverse sample characteristics. Further research is expected to examine and test other factors that are not found in this research model, especially from developing the concept of women empowerment which may consist of other dimensions that are not found in this research model. In addition, further research may be possible to examine the constructs of women empowerment in a causality model, such as reviewing antecedents and outcomes of women empowerment, so as to enrich the phenomenon of the results that are related to the concept of women empowerment.

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