

Critical Factors for Women's Representation in Top Management Leadership Positions in Local Government

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Abstract

This study explores the critical factors behind women's representation in upper-echelon II managerial positions in local government organizations in Indonesia, which contemporary studies rarely studied. This research interviewed 12 informants at the East Nusa Tenggara (ENT) Provincial Government in Indonesia using a qualitative approach and purposive sampling techniques. This article found eight factors that are critical in influencing women's representation in echelon II positions in local government organizations from three primary dimensions. First, a network of political proxies and representation of ethnicity and electoral areas are factors from the socio-political dimension. Second, the three factors related to the intra-organizational dimension are patriarchal culture, gender stereotypes, and masculine leadership. Lastly, academic respect, self-confidence, and domestic responsibility are three factors from the individual dimension. The practical implication of this study is that for women to be elected to echelon II positions, they need to expand their network or political connections with political party leaders affiliated with elected political officials or the family actors of elected political officials. Additionally, women must adopt masculine leadership models to be accepted by their male colleagues and adapt to a patriarchal organizational environment. Finally, women need to increase their confidence in a leadership capacity.

Keywords: *critical factors; Indonesia; local government; representation; women leadership*

INTRODUCTION

The topic of public sector leadership (PSL) has become an attractive study due to the differences in behavioural patterns displayed by administrative leaders in the public sector with their counterparts in the private sector (Mau, 2017; Orazi et al., 2013). Even so, contemporary studies of PSL at the global level are less directed at studying the relationship between the issues of female gender and PSL (Mau, 2017; Ufua et al., 2020). In contrast, most publications focused more on the issue of leadership styles for public organizations without noticing the gender dissimilarities (Groves, 2020; Rayatin, 2018).

Although only a few studies on women and PSL, several scholars have examined these two themes (e.g., Arvate et al., 2018; Lee & Park, 2021; Lindorff, 2009). However, they solely focused on the issue of women's leadership styles in the public sector managerial process. For instance, Arvate et al. (2018) exclusively investigated the influence of women's leadership on gender distinctions in public and private organizations. The study by Lee & Park (2021) was limited to the female employees' perceptions of transformational and transactional leadership styles in the Korean public sector context. Moreover, Lindorff's (2009) articles focused on the positive attitudes of female public sector managers towards high-performing HRM policies and practices.

Meanwhile, the theme of woman's leadership is not exclusively limited to leadership style and managerial process but also includes the issue of women's representation at the upper management level. However, scarcely any scholars have studied the issue, such as Eagly & Carli (2007), Heilman & Eagly (2008), and Marenga (2021). Moreover, these prior studies are limited to examining the intra-organisational barriers that women face in achieving public leadership positions in the context of western countries, such as the lack of adequate support from their organisations, the absence of coaching opportunities, and gruelling working conditions. The drawback of these studies is the need for more research that comprehensively explores the factors that influence women to

reach top positions in the public sector, such as socio-political and individual factors (Marenga, 2021; Matotoka & Odeku, 2018).

Moreover, examining the issue of women's representation in public sector leadership is important considering several studies have found that a small number of women can achieve public leadership positions (Evans & Maley, 2021; Yang et al., 2022). In addition, many studies have shown women's superiority in leadership aspects compared to men due to their feminist abilities in service and the emotional strengthening of their subordinates. These abilities can also encourage innovative behaviour for the reason that these qualities are closely related to the transformational leadership style (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Shaw et al., 2011). These limitations highlight the gaps in the theme of women's representation in public sector that needs to be filled by future research (Koburtay et al., 2019; Yadav & Yadav, 2018).

Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap on the theme of gender and PSL, particularly by focusing on investigating the critical factors influencing women's representation at the top management level in public sector organizations in non-western contexts, as recommended by previous studies (Koburtay et al., 2019; Yadav & Yadav, 2018). To fill this research gap, this study will be conducted in Indonesia as a low-middle income country in Southeast Asian Region, with the East Nusa Tenggara (ENT) Provincial Government as the study site (World Bank, 2022).

This study selected Indonesia as the research context for two reasons. First, Indonesia is a country that ranks 15th out of 20 G20 countries, with merely 18 percent of women in civil service leadership compared to several other middle-income countries, such as Brazil and Mexico, where 39.4% and 35.3% respectively of the top public leadership in 2020 are occupied by women (see Table 1). Second, only a few studies in Indonesia specifically focus on women's upper echelon or executive positions (McLaren et al., 2019; Krissetyanti, 2018b, 2018a; Krissetyanti et al., 2017). Furthermore, their studies are limited in revealing intra-

Table 1. Percentage of women in senior civil service in G20 countries from 2013 to 2020

No	Country	Year				
		2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2019-2020
1	Canada	45	45.9	46.1	46.4	48.1
2	Australia	37	39.2	40.1	43.3	46.3
3	United Kingdom	35	36.2	38.7	40.1	44.7
4	South Africa	33.8	38.1	39.8	41.1	41.4
5	Brazil	32.1	33.8	35.4	37.8	39.4
6	Italy	27	28	32	30	36.2
7	Mexico	14	20.6	28.8	34	35.3
8	European Commission	20.5	27.5	32	33	34.5
9	United States	31	33.5	34	34.4	34
10	France	21.4	25	28	32	33
11	Russia	13	23.4	33	33	32.8
12	Argentina	19	27	28.8	28.8	29.6
13	Germany	13	17	21	26	27.5
14	India	7.7	14.8	15.4	17	18
15	Indonesia	8.7	16.4	16.6	17.4	18
16	China	11.5	9.1	12.6	12.6	12.6
17	Turkey	13.6	9.4	9	8.8	10.9
18	South Korea	8.6	4.8	4.6	4.7	5.5
19	Japan	2.5	1.8	3	3.5	4.9
20	Saudi Arabia	0	0	1	1.3	1.6
	Mean of all 20 countries	19.7	22.6	25	26.3	27.7

Source: *Women Leaders Index, 2020*

organizational factors to women's career advancement, such as positive self-perception, masculine culture, homo-sociability in senior leader appointments, lack of formal or informal mentoring, and the perceptions of women's careers as secondary to the husbands' careers. Thus, this reality shows the need for studies which comprehensively explore the antecedent issues (in addition to intra-organizational domains) that encourage or hinder women's career advancement to top-level public leadership positions, as this research offered.

Moreover, the study was performed in the East Nusa Tenggara (ENT) Provincial Government for two reasons. First, although

men dominate echelon II positions, several women can reach top-level leadership positions, as shown in Table 2. Second, ENT Province represents the eastern part of Indonesia, which has a unique regional characteristic in terms of ethnicity (e.g., Flores, Timor, Sumba, Sabu, Rote, Alor) and religion (e.g., Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam). ENT develops representation practices in their structural position based on social and political considerations (such as religion and ethnicity) (Sayrani, 2018). As a result, this research believes that a woman's social-political network and capital are critical in advancing her career into the top management positions. Therefore, ENT Provincial

Table 2. Number of Civil Servants in East Nusa Tenggara Province by Structural Position Level

Occupation	2021		
	Male	Female	Total
Specific functional	3400	3877	7277
Staf General Functional	3580	2645	6225
Structural	694	369	1062
4 th Echelon	447	293	740
3 rd Echelon	215	69	284
2 nd Echelon	31	6	37
1 st Echelon	1	0	1
Total	7674	6890	14564

Source: Regional Personnel Agency of East Nusa Tenggara Province, 2021

Government is a relevant and suitable context for studying women's representation in top management leadership.

In order to comprehensively investigate the critical factors behind the representation of women in top leadership positions, this study will focus on three dimensions, as shown in Figure 1. First is the socio-political dimension, which is related to a particular area's social and political factors, such as the characteristics of the political environment and intersections of social and political phenomena (Meier, 2019; Yu & Jennings, 2021). Second, the intra-organizational dimension refers to critical determinants of women's career progress at the institutional level, such as organizational culture and leadership perceptions (Chigudu, 2021; Hentschel et al., 2019). Lastly, the individual dimensions. Scholars stated that internal factors of women themselves are causing obstacles to their career advancement towards leadership or management positions, such as perception, courage or workload from multiple roles (Peterson, 2019; Zubiri-Esnaola et al., 2021).

This research delivers three contributions to the PSL literature. First, this study comprehensively identifies the multiple factors that play a critical role in women's representation in top-level leadership positions in the Indonesian local government. Second, this research was conducted in the context of

Indonesia as a middle-low-income country in the South East Asian region. Third, this analysis is applied to ENT local government, which performs representation practices in their leadership position based on its social and political context. Therefore, this study argues that these critical factors come from not only the intra-organizational dimension but also the socio-political and individual domains.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological strategy to investigate the issue of women's representation in public sector leadership. Two considerations underlie the selection. First, the qualitative method was utilized in this study in order to examine profound phenomena of women's leadership in upper echelon II management positions in the ENT Provincial Government organization. Second, phenomenological strategies are applied since this research identify the nature of the human experience of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). This phenomenon is representative of women's leadership in local government organizations.

This article applied a purposive sampling technique and semi-structured interviews with 12 informants from five categories (see Table 3): (1) female heads of

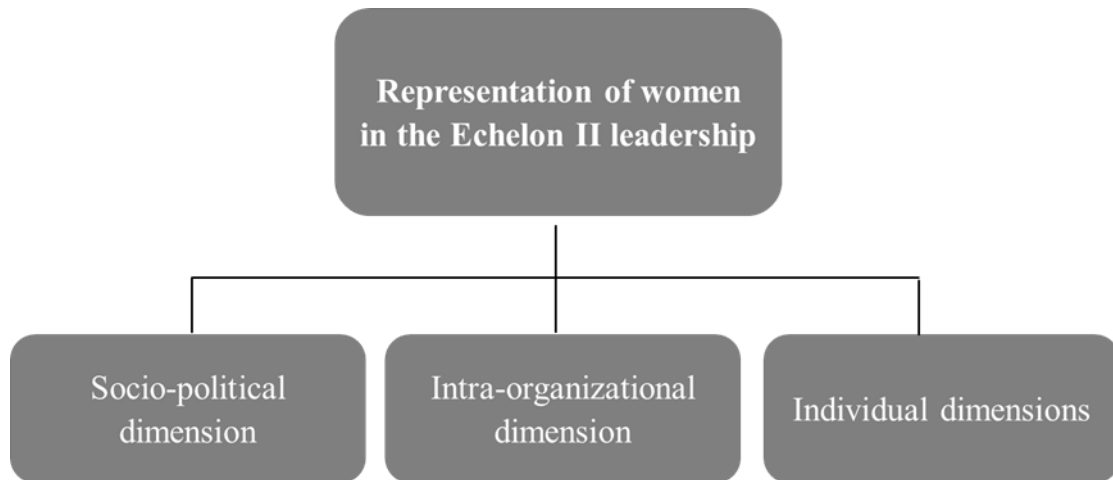


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

agencies/bureaus/departments; (2) position and rank advisory committee team; (3) Assessor at Assessment Center of regional employment agency; (4) members of the Governor's expert staff; and (5) academics. The interview process is conducted face-to-face or online using Zoom and WhatsApp applications until they reach data saturation which lasts approximately 45-60 minutes.

Participant recruitment was conducted through face-to-face, phone, and social networking sites. After the participant agreed to participate in the study performed with Zoom or WhatsApp, we arranged the time of the interview. Ethical issues are considered the same in online and face-to-face interviews. Researchers obtain informed consent online, by email, or by published forms. All participants are fully conscious of audio or video recordings using a separate recorder or computer-based recording software and then transcribing, following prior studies (Fox et al., 2007; Janghorban et al., 2014). The use of online interview in this study allows participants to exit the interview process in disconcerting circumstances by clicking a button, thus, causing an increased probability in the absentee rate and rescheduling of interviews compared with face-to-face relationships (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

Moreover, this online interview process has advantages and disadvantages (Latkovikj & Popovska, 2020). The ad-

vantages of using the online interview process are that we can reduce financial expenses (e.g., transportation and accommodation and paper wasted) and avoid Covid-19 transmission by minimizing face-to-face interaction (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Dodds & Hess, 2021). However, the disadvantage is that we also faced an unstable internet signal and the informant's lack of internet access fees. To solve this issue, we purchased mobile internet packages for each informant and ensured the internet connection was stable.

Furthermore, there are four main considerations in selecting informants. First, they are members of the Advisory Committee of Positions and Ranks. Second, those who have a role in determining the direction of recruitment and promotion policies for echelon II positions. Third, the female actors who have succeeded in occupying echelon II positions. Fourth, female actors who have participated in the process of recruitment and promotion to echelon II positions, as presented in Table 3.

The interview results were analysed using the content analysis technique. To code the data from the interview process, this study employed NVivo 12 software to facilitate categorizing data similarities or interrelationships into concepts as the first order, themes as the second, and aggregate dimensions as the third order, following pri-

Table 3. Research Informants

Category	Position	Informants
Female government actors in echelon II positions	Regional Secretary	1 informant
	Head of Department of Cooperative, Labour, Transmigration, and SMEs	1 informant
	Assistant for Government and People's Welfare	1 informant
Non-female government actors in echelon II positions	Head of Social Service	1 informant
	Head of General Bureau	1 informant
	Head of the Bureau of Public Procurement	1 informant
Female government employee	Former candidates for echelon II positions	2 informants
Assessment Center regional employment agency	Assessor	2 informants
ENT Governor's Expert Staff Academic	ENT Governor's Expert Staff	1 informant
	Lecturer with area and expertise in social and political science	1 informant
Total		12 informants

or studies (e.g., Nadia et al., 2020; Pradana et al., 2022). Lastly, this study triangulated the data to ensure the research results' reliability by comparing the informants' responses with other sources to find consistency and similarity in responses to the phenomena examined by this study (Creswell, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study found eight factors affecting the women's representation in reaching upper management positions in echelon II. These factors will be categorized into three main dimensions: the socio-political dimension, the intra-organizational dimension, and the individual dimension (see Figure 2).

Socio-political dimension

The socio-political dimensions in this study are factors stemming from the situation, connections, or networks of female actors with the political environment that plays a vital role in influencing the representation of women in upper-level management positions in Echelon II in the East Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government. The results of this study found two primary factors emanating from the socio-political domain as the rationality behind the decision to elect a wom-

an to occupy an echelon II top management position, namely (1) proxy networks of political actors and (2) representation of ethnicity and particular electoral areas.

This study found that the political proxy network is one of the prominent factors that is considered as most contributing to every woman's success in being elected to top management positions of the provincial government. This political network reflects the political connections that a female official has, which becomes her social capital in providing added value or competitive advantage in the competition for echelon II positions (Fowler et al., 2011; Lee, 2019). Informants stated that several individual women were successfully elected as heads of departments since one of their family members was part of the political affiliation of the currently elected Governor, political networks with the incumbent Governor's families, or the heads of political parties affiliated with the incumbent Governor, thus enabling them to gain the trust of regional heads. In addition, several echelon II female officials have family members who work as political party actors or are involved in the current regional head's Success Team, such as the Assistant for Government and People's Welfare and Head of the Department of Youth and Sports

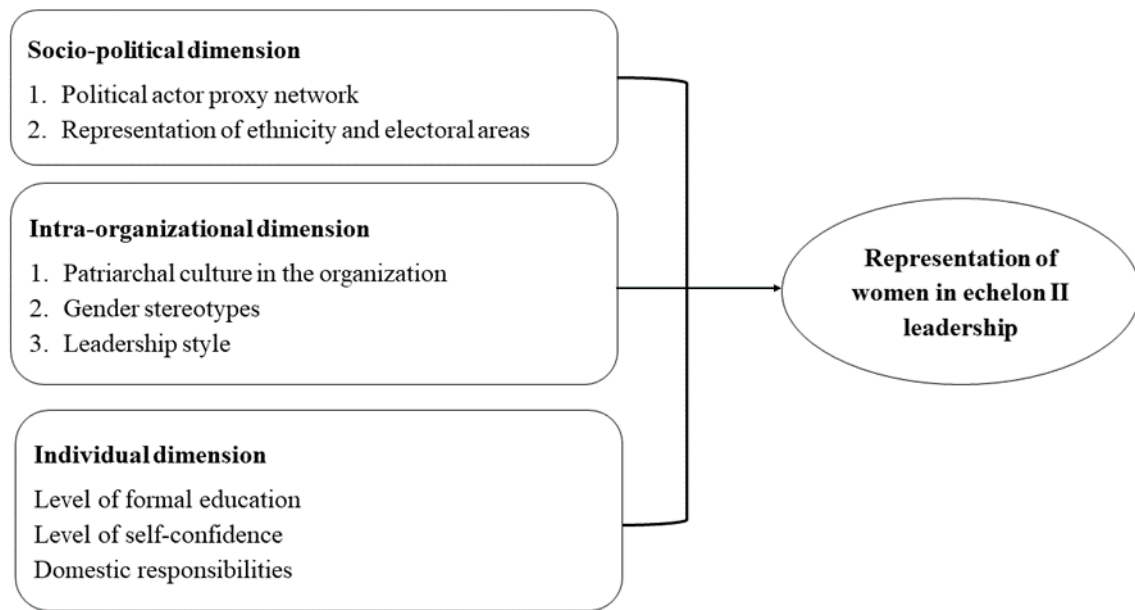


Figure 2. Critical factors influencing women's representation in echelon II leadership of local government organizations

Source: Data Analysis

(Informants 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10), as stated below:

“So for Echelon II positions, the primary consideration is politics apart from competence. For example, there are several female top-leader positions because their family members are part of the current Governor's political network. That is the connection.” (Informant 6)

Scholars argue that the essence of this network as one of the strategies for women to overcome the invisible barriers or a glass ceiling of masculinity and patriarchy (Lansford et al., 2010; Laud et al., 2013). Through this network, women can use their interpersonal skills, build relationships, and harness them for future career advancement (Hurst et al., 2018b; Kumra, 2010). Agency theory also explains that the regional head, as a principal of bureaucrats, has authority in the recruitment and placement of public officials. Thus, someone who wants to climb the hierarchical ladder must be able to gain his trust through the political network (Frederickson et al., 2016; Wahiyudin, 2014). In the end, public administrators with a broad political network capacity will more often interact with their political principals. Thus it will make him more easily develop a trust-based emotional relationship with the

political official, which is the key in attaining managerial leadership ranks (Schillemans, 2013; Yu & Jennings, 2021).

Another theme related to the socio-political dimension is the ethnic representation and the electoral area. This factor is crucial in determining echelon II positions, both for women and men. Informants stated that several echelon II female officials were elected due to considerations relating to ethnicity or representing specific electoral areas, in addition to considerations of competence, performance, or other political connections. They added that this consideration is not unique due to, demographically, the people of ENT are divided into two big ethnic groups and an electoral geographic area that contributes to the accomplishment of the regional head to attain his position. Also, informants stated that the application of aspect for regional and ethnic representation aims to fulfil the principle of justice for certain regions or ethnicities as an instrument to maintain social stability in the ENT community (Informants 8 and 9). Thus, it is not surprising that such considerations are part of the recruitment process for echelon II officials, even though these are not regulated formally (Informants 6, 7, 8, and 9), as stated below:

“Let us share experiences, sir. You already know and feel together; going to the top Leaders is not enough, just brains and work. There are other considerations; we can feel that, in general, we must have a political network. Even better if we are of noble descent or our husband or wife or, for example, if someone has a family that is also a political figure in a specific district, and the votes from that district are essential for the victory of regional heads, then he or she will automatically be selected in echelon II position even if we have a few drawbacks for other things.” (Informan 8)

This phenomenon can be explained by the theory of bureaucratic representation. This theory outlines that the configuration of public managers in the bureaucracy, particularly at the top level positions, must represent the plurality of social structures in society; thus, the administrative arrangements reflect the social character of the nation (Meier, 2019; Nielsen & Wolf, 2001). By representing the class plurality of social structures, this theory explains that the bureaucracy can employ individuals with a commitment to fulfilling the interests of various groups, classes, and occupations or across sections of society, thereby its policy outcomes will reflect the needs and interests of all groups (Dhillon & Meier, 2022; Headley et al., 2021). Referring to the theory of bureaucratic representation, ownership of social capital representing an ethnicity or electoral area in the context of a pluralistic society can contribute positively to women's careers in public organizations. Thus, this finding complements the earlier study conducted by Sayrani (2018) that the aspect of ethnicity and regional representation plays a crucial role in not only the career advancement of men but also women in achieving echelon II upper management positions in the ENT Provincial Government, which has a high level of community diversity both in terms of ethnicity and religion.

Intra-organizational dimension

The second dimension is intra-organization. This study found that the factors originating from the internal dimensions of the bureaucracy were the dominance of patriarchal culture in the bureaucracy and

gender stereotypes related to women's domestic orientation and leadership skills. Regarding the dominance of patriarchal culture, the informants explained that most female public employees experienced a negative cultural influence from the dominance of patriarchal culture, which increased men's bargaining position to be more superior to women. The consequence of this patriarchal culture is that female civil servants are perceived as unsuitable for certain types of positions or not very appropriate to lead specific departments that are seen as dominant with masculinity elements (Informants 3, 7, and 8).

Furthermore, the interviewees explained that the patriarchal culture firmly embedded in the behaviour of civil servants in the ENT Provincial Government have obstructed women in developing and advancing their careers to the level of echelon II public managers. Interestingly, this culture was not found when we interviewed male informants. On the other hand, these male informants stated that the patriarchal culture benefits them since it provides a competitive advantage compared to their co-workers. In addition, these male informants explained that men do not have psychological barriers caused by patriarchal culture when they apply for a job selection process, especially for high-echelon II leadership positions. They believed men can occupy positions in any department or agency (Informants 2, 3, 6, 9, and 10), as stated below:

“I think the paternalistic culture is still solid in the NTT Provincial Government, and this has become an inhibiting factor so that it provides little opportunity for women to compete in certain positions, for example, the head of the Satpol PP or the Public Works Service or certain positions still occupied by the perception that only man can have them.” (Informant 10)

Scholars such as Berkery et al. (2013) and Chigudu (2021) explain that the emergence of a patriarchal culture at the organizational level is driven by the domination of men in a leadership positions within the organization, and this has been going on for decades. Thereby, the characteristics of male leadership have been institutionalized and taken for granted by organization members,

making it challenging for women to reverse this institutional culture (Fitzgerald, 2020). In addition, Matsa and Miller (2011) state that patriarchal hegemony is also induced by the fact that a small number of women hold key top leadership positions in public organizations, as is the case in the ENT Provincial Government bureaucracy, where barely 18.42% of echelon II positions are filled by women. Thus, the prominence of patriarchal culture makes it problematic for women to increase their representation in leadership roles (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010).

Furthermore, concerning gender stereotyping factors, this study discovered that gender bias among public administrators regarding women is one of the factors behind the disparity in the number of women who succeed in achieving echelon II leadership positions. Stereotypes are interpreted as generalizations or assumptions that people make about the characteristics of all group members based on an image of what people in the group have in common (Heilman & Eagly, 2008). The results of the study uncovered that this gender stereotype factor includes two aspects, namely the perception that (1) women are more family oriented; and (2) lacking in leadership skills.

First, related to the stereotype that women are more oriented towards family or domestic responsibilities rather than working in the office, which reduces women's bargaining power in competing with their male colleagues for top management positions. The informants stated that the obstacle that could hinder women from moving up to the top level was the dominant view developing within the internal public administrators that women are mostly considered as performing inefficiently in the workplace as the organization considered women to have a family orientation. However, this presumption does not apply to male employees, leading to a growing assumption that women are more susceptible to decreased performance when there are problems with their families. Consequently, this stereotype yields great losses for women since it reduces the value of women's competitiveness to be elected at the top management level (Informants 2, 3, 7, and 8), as stated below:

"There is a general view that women are more oriented towards their family than the office, so if a child is sick, their husband is sick, or something else, a woman can be excused from coming to the office or going home early. It is common, and the leadership understands that. However, the negative is that, in the end, it develops the notion that women, from a performance perspective, are not their primary focus but their family. Hence, if you want to be promoted, it sometimes has to be seen correctly, lest you take care of the family more from the office when you get a position." (Informant 7)

Second, this study discovered that the presence of gender stereotypes that women are less qualified in leadership position has negatively contributed to women's possibility of being selected to top management positions in local government. Informants stated that finding women with good leadership skills is challenging compared to their male colleagues. Women tend to wait for directives rather than carry the initiative to initiate or organize the assignment their colleagues do. In addition, women are generally judged by their male leaders that they are less competent to manage the work behaviour of their male subordinates. Thus, a few number of women can demonstrate the leadership qualities expected by bureaucratic leaders.

Therefore, the presence of gender stereotypes in the organization is an obstacle to women's career advancement in achieving echelon II positions. The challenges that women face due to gender stereotypes occur since women are generally viewed negatively when adopting male leadership characteristics. In addition, prejudice against women leaders also ensues due to inconsistencies between characteristics associated with female gender stereotypes and those associated with typical masculine leadership in organizations (Hentschel et al., 2019). This finding was confirmed by a prior study which found that most female managers believe that to be successful, they must perform male leadership characteristics (Berkery et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the glass ceiling theory also explains the presence of gender stereotypes at the institutional level of local gov-

ernment organizations as an obstacle to women's representation in echelon II positions (Downes et al., 2014; Nixdorff & Rosen, 2010). Scholars argued that the glass ceiling was clear enough to see but very difficult to penetrate for women and minorities (Srivastava et al., 2020). This theory states that certain gender biases and stereotypes can prevent women from advancing through the glass ceiling. They face many challenges when trying to break through these invisible barriers to advance their careers (Hansen, 2009; Smith et al., 2012). In addition, scholars also argue that the existence of gender stereotypes as a glass ceiling may stem from upper management blocking their progress by not providing guidance, mentoring, and training to women on how to successfully advance their careers (Dang et al., 2014; Powell & Butterfield, 2015).

Nonetheless, interestingly, stereotypes about women are not always negative. The analysis of multiple primary and secondary data in this study showed that public managers believe women have better loyalty than their male peers. Women are also considered to be more receptive to suggestions and inputs as corrections to improve their performance from the leadership and also have a better and more meticulous character in terms of calculating detailed budgets. Thus, most leaders prefer women for certain echelon II public positions such as in the finance, health, or education affairs (Informants 1, 2, and 3), as stated below:

“Speaking of the level of trust in subordinates towards women and men. If I trust women more in carrying out their duties because of what is said, they will do it, while the men sometimes do different things than what I have told them.” (Informant 2)

Finally, the factors in the intra-organizational dimension that contribute to the low representation of women at the top management level are leadership and work stress management. The informants explained that men and women have different leadership styles in management positions. However, since generally, the bureaucracy is dominated by men and masculine stereotypes with its main characteristics as being more autocratic and power-oriented, it has

caused distinct pressures among female civil servants so that they tend to avoid public positions that require a masculine leadership style.

This phenomenon occurs due to women believe they cannot perform a more masculine character in their leadership behaviour, such as being authoritarian, less emotional, and more open to communicating with others (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Croucher & Lacy, 2020). Moreover, scholars explain that the difficulty of women's leadership styles being accepted in public organizations is due to the presumption that women's leadership styles tend to be empathic and not authoritative. Ironically, scholars add that if women try to adopt a masculine leadership style, they are often criticized by their co-workers, and this affects their image and professional performance by their peers (Fitzgerald, 2018; Galant, 2014).

Individual dimension

The last is individual dimensions, which refers to factors stemming from individual women that affect their representation in echelon II leadership in local government. The individual factors encompass education level, self-confidence, and excessive domestic responsibility. These three factors were found to be acting as a glass ceiling or invisible barrier that compels women to avoid leadership position. The study's results demonstrated that education or academic factor plays a vital role in the success of women in accomplishing echelon II leadership positions in the public sector. However, there is still a gender bias related to the assessment and appreciation of education that has been achieved by female employees, which is known to inhibit their success in achieving echelon II structures.

Several informants explained that male employees with a minimum education of a Master's degree are more appreciated than women and are more likely to get opportunities to be promoted to a higher structural career hierarchy. Several female employees also reported that this phenomenon is the reason behind the demotivation of female employees to continue their education to a higher level. Related to this, an Echelon III

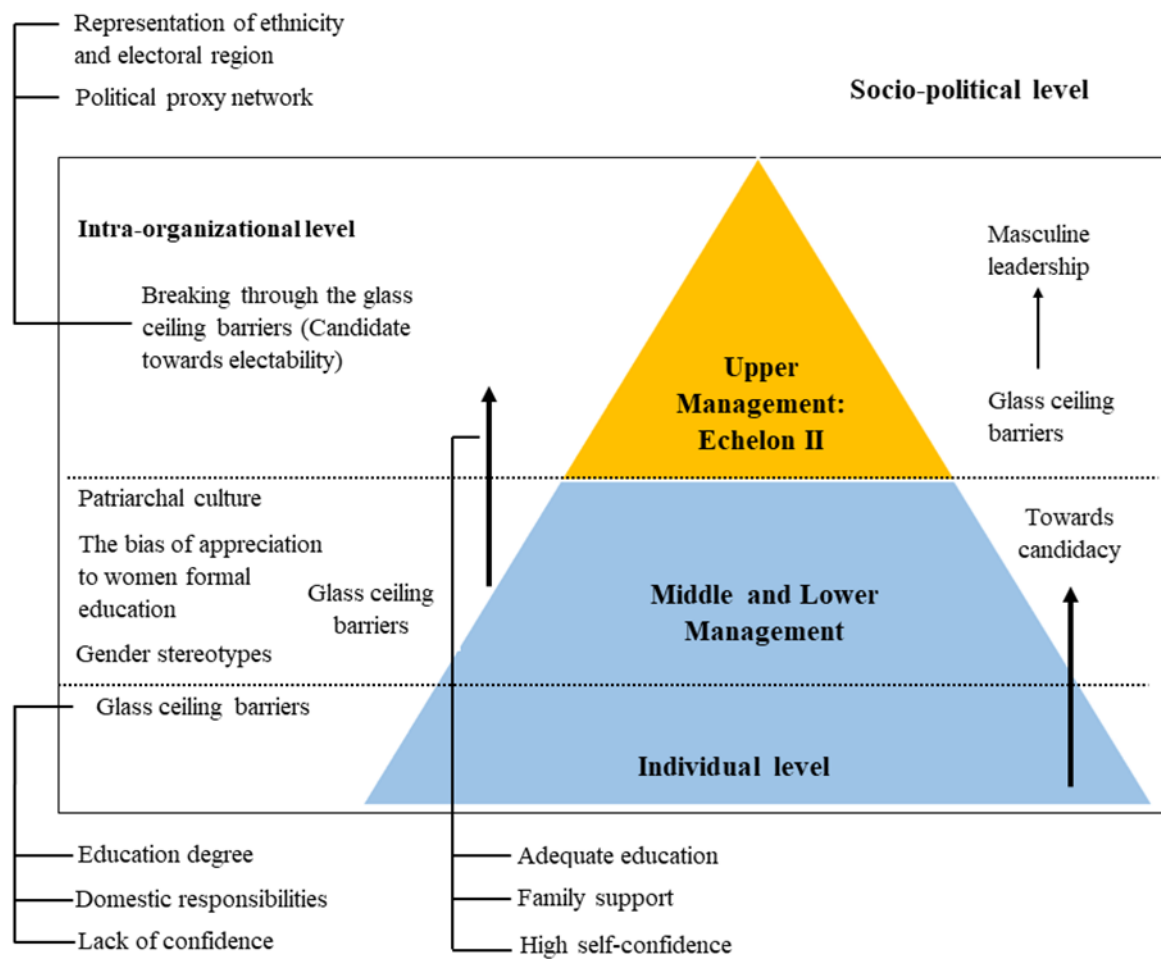


Figure 3. Drivers and Barriers of Women's Representation in Echelon II Top Management Leadership in Local Government Organizations
 Source: Data Analysis

female official who failed to get a promotion to the Echelon II level despite having a master's education from an Australian university explained that education is indeed a significant factor in increasing an individual's prospects of reaching the nomination or candidacy stage. However, to be elected as top managers, women's education is often under-considered as a consequence of the presumption that even though women already have adequate education, they do not necessarily have better leadership abilities than their male co-workers, as stated below:

"Men are valued more in terms of education. However, some women often have good performance and education and are valued and get promotions but only a tiny number. Not all women feel that educa-

tion is part of a career. Unless she already knows there is an opportunity and an X factor." (Informant 11)

Hence, this discriminatory assessment drives most organization members who proposed to participate in the echelon II recruitment and selection process to be male employees. This reality is similar to previous studies in several western countries where men have higher promotion opportunities than women (Bosquet et al., 2021; Paoloni & Demartini, 2016). Ironically women can feel discrimination in the promotion process as the education they have achieved is not the same as getting an award from the managerial side (Harris et al., 2020; Hurst et al., 2018a).

Furthermore, the second factor in women's dimensions is self-confidence. This study revealed that this factor is related to inequality regarding women's representation in top management positions since women often show less interest in occupying public manager positions than their male colleagues. Many of the informants added that their female colleagues easily expressed their fear that they could not perform the assignments of a qualified leader (Informants 2, 11, and 12). Thus, this characteristic reduces the worth of women when participating in the selection and recruitment of public sector leadership positions. This condition occurs due to the patriarchal and masculine organizational atmosphere (Burkinshaw & White, 2019; Harris et al., 2020)

The last factor in the individual dimension is domestic responsibility. The informants stated that the rationale that women are seen as having domestic or household responsibilities was one of the compelling circumstances that discouraged women from contending in the selection process for echelon II positions in local government. The negative impact of domestic responsibilities on the women's carrier is caused by the double roles both as public administrators and mothers or wives who are fully responsible for taking care of the family, including children, husbands, and other relatives (Informants 11 and 12), as stated below:

"Women are less interested in the positions of echelon II position. Because there is already much workload in the household, they are worried that they will not be able to provide satisfactory performance or fail to lead. That is sometimes the complaint I hear from them." (Informant 12)

Holding domestic obligations means that women have less time at work than men and therefore become less proficient, reducing political officials' faith in their abilities as excellent leaders and decision-makers. This burden also makes women lack the confidence to devote sufficient time to work without leaving their roles and responsibilities in the family (Zubiri-Esnaola et al., 2021). This dilemma eventually forms a significant barrier to achieving leadership positions in public organizations since women

prefer family as a priority over their responsibilities as public servants (Peterson, 2019; Nguyen & Tuan, 2020). Moreover, leadership positions are generally seen as having high work pressure, and women afraid to take this risk as it can worsen women's stress levels (Schwanke, 2013; Sturges, 2008).

Therefore, based on the descriptions above, although these eight factors are critical rationales behind the low representation of women in top management positions, the analysis showed that the eight factors have different roles (see Figure 3). The six factors such as the patriarchal culture, gender stereotypes, the dominance of masculinity leadership, academic assessment discrimination, lack of self-confidence, and household responsibilities serve as invisible barriers or a glass ceiling at the institutional level for women to depart to the echelon II candidacy stage. These sixth factors reduce the value of women since men are noticed as more worthy of occupying echelon II structural positions, which members of the organization mostly perceive as masculine departments. This, these departments are seen as more suitable to be led by men and not a woman.

Although women confront glass ceiling barriers on the institutional and individual dimensions, those who can overcome these obstacles and are willing to engage in the recruitment and selection process for echelon II officials requires two features to penetrate institutional barriers and be elected as echelon II officials. These two features are political capital from a proxy network of political actors and social capital from prominent figures representing the ethnicity and territory of a certain electorate.

CONCLUSION

The publications about the critical factors behind women's representation in echelon II positions in non-western countries are encountering a deficit following most recent studies which investigated the antecedent of public sector leadership styles (Mau, 2017; Sethibe & Steyn, 2015; Ufua et al., 2020). Thus, to fill this research gap, this study was performed in the context of Indonesia as a non-western country in Southeast Asia, with the Provincial Government of East Nusa

Tenggara (ENT) as the research locus considering its development in representational practices within the bureaucracy leadership position arrangements.

The novel findings of this study are that it discovered the social and political capital possessed by an individual woman plays a critical element that functions as a driving factor in breaking through institutional barriers and individuals who are invisible (glass ceiling) in the context of local government in Indonesia. This social and political capital is a network of political proxies and representations of ethnicity and electoral territory. Nevertheless, this study also found that other factors play a function as an obstacle to women's success in acquiring echelon II positions, namely patriarchal culture in the organization, gender stereotypes, masculinity leadership dominance, discrimination in academic judgment, lack of confidence in women; and the presence of domestic burdens.

This research has several limitations. First, using the interview research instrument has a drawback regarding the memory bias of the research participants. However, to overcome this weakness, this study applied the triangulation technique of sources and data by interviewing multiple participants who have different positions with similar questions. Thus, through this methodology, this analysis can minimize bias and gain various perspectives in understanding the case's object of study.

Second, this research is limited to the Provincial Government of East Nusa Tenggara; thus, it cannot grasp the various contexts in Indonesia, primarily in local government organizations in the western part of Indonesia. Third, the representation phenomenon is limited to women's leadership positions in structural echelon II and does not include echelon III and IV positions. Also, this study does not capture women's representation in other public organizations, such as the central government.

Thus, future studies can focus on exploring the phenomenon of women's representation in top management appointments at the central government level to discover other significant variables for women's ca-

reer success in gaining top leadership positions. Future research could also investigate women's leadership in middle and lower-level public managers or local government organizations in western Indonesia, which have different political situations, organizational cultures, and demographic diversity.

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