

Spiritualism: Hidden survival values among Indonesian women entrepreneurs

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Abstract

This qualitative research was intended to explore the personal values of Indonesian women who survived in establishing their profession as entrepreneurs. They were women who tried to survive in dealing with their economic difficulties within the suppressive modern capitalist market economy environment. It would be interesting to understand how they struggled from fierce competition of their surroundings while they also needed to keep up and maintain the harmony, the quality of life of their family who were very dependent upon their earnings. Variety low-scale entrepreneurial works were examined through questionnaires, participative observations and in-depth interviews. 200 respondents were involved. The narrative analysis demonstrated that a core value "spiritualism" functioned as a source of motivational inspiration to keep up their struggle to survive. There are several spiritual phenomena included in this values, that is: humble and submissive, honesty and simple, and keep the harmony with others. This finding implied that the economic motives did not play a significant role in struggling their businesses; their "spiritual soul" did. Spiritual values made the women entrepreneurs more compassionate to their works and consequently it eased their burden as family earners.

Keywords: women entrepreneurs, spiritual values, narrative analysis

Researches on entrepreneurial behavior among women has been developed as a hot topic within this decade.(1). One reason is the emergence of significant numbers of women at working world, i.e. entrepreneurial work is one among others that creates significant roles among women in global economic order. In Indonesia, for example, women participation in developing economic wealth is increasing from years to years. In 1985, women participation at work was 43.5%, whereas men was 81.7%. This percentage was increased to 51.78% on 2001, but there was no significant change to men. Within the period of 1995-2000 work participation of women was increased to 6%. It showed that more women were entering the labor market compared to previous years. This phenomena was phenomenally increase when economic crisis attacked Indonesian families in 1997; more women were forced to carry the burden of family earnings. (2).

Small scale-informal businesses were emerged as solid structure to support Indonesian economy at that time. It was widely acknowledged that small-scale businesses run by, mostly, women could save the national economy in dealing with 1997 crisis. Its contributed to absorbing 96% of the labor force. (3). In the year of 2007-2008 these kind of business could absorbed about 90.896.270 labor forces, or 97.04% of total labor forces. Within the current year, 60% of 85.4 million of labor forces are women and most of them are involved in these small-scale businesses. (4). These entrepreneurs were proven able to

develop family economy, can open new lanbor markets and involving their families as workers, with their earnings mostly use for food and family educations. (5).

The emergence of women entrepreneurs are initiated by many reasons: having their own control on work-related spending time, dealing with glass ceiling effect on fair opportunity at work that mostly lead to the helplessness and apathy in developing their own career, and the opportunity to open new ventures. (6).

As entrepreneurs, women possess many kind of skills, competencies, values and attitudes that support the success of their works (7). Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio (8), for example, mentioned the unique functions of transformational leadership in developing trust and effective relations with customers. It is also realized that women entrepreneurs are exist as a complex social phenomena with its own uniqueness. (9). Their uniqueness come from their motivation, strategic orientation , and their way to access their resources. Besides, they also must carry their status as women that still lead to injustice and unfairness. Tambunan (10) in his research identifies some obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs: low access to technology and information, less opportunity in marketing their products , low supports from families, and *sexual harassment*. In expanding their capitals and businesses, married women still need their husbands' signature if they apply for loans from the bank. Their dual roles as mother and wife forced them to balance their attentions and time between work and family. In patriarchic culture like Indonesia, women are perceived as not the main provider for families' wealth, but men do (11; 12). To deal with these conditions, women as entrepreneurs develop their own ways to survive. In some cases, their motivation to survive are not limited to economic reasons, some of them develop unique values and perspectives in developing harmony: work and families. And these can make them eager in dealing with role complexities.

This qualitative research was intended to explore the personal values of Indonesian women who survived in establishing their profession as entrepreneurs. They were women who tried to survive in dealing with their economic difficulties within the suppressive modern capitalist market economy environment. It would be interesting to understand how they struggled from fierce competition of their surroundings while they also needed to keep up and maintain the harmony, the quality of life of their family who were very dependent upon their earnings.

Variety low-scale entrepreneurial works were examined through questionnaires, participative observations and in-depth interviews (13). 200 respondents were involved. The analysis (14; 15) demonstrated that a core value “spiritualism” functioned as a source of motivational inspiration to keep up their struggle to survive. The results show that there are several spiritual phenomena included in this values, that is: humble and submissive, honesty and simple, and keep the harmony with others. This finding implied that the economic motives did not play a significant role in struggling their businesses; their “spiritual soul” did. Spiritual values made the women entrepreneurs more compassionate to their works and consequently it eased their burden as family earners.

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