

# SKILLS BUSINESSES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN WOMEN-FAVORED? EVIDENCE OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP MOVEMENT IN ECOPRINT BUSINESS "LALUNGGUH" BEBER DISTRICT, CIREBON REGENCY

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**Abstract:** *This research discusses most women have an equally important role as men in the development of the country's development and is a frequent subject of public discussion and causes pro and con debates. Discussions about gender equality have attracted attention and proven that women in modern times can now lead like male leaders and even exceed them, as well as the Lalungguh Ecoprint business under women's leadership can increase women's empowerment, especially housewives. This research method is qualitative with a descriptive approach conducted by observation, interviews, and literature review in the form of reputable articles from previous research. The purpose of this research is to analyze how the leadership role of Lalungguh Ecoprint business owners in increasing the empowerment of women entrepreneurs, identifying differences in the workforce of women and men in running the ecoprint business, and knowing the impact of women's leadership roles in running the ecoprint business. The novelty of this research is that women's leadership in the Lalungguh Ecoprint business can refute the stigma of society that women are weak because through ecoprint, women can strengthen the economy where their income from hundreds to millions of rupiah can prosper themselves and their families and can even introduce the art of ecoprint to foreign countries that the art of ecoprint can be done on media other than cloth, namely paper and animal skin. The results of the research through the creative economy in the ecoprint fashion sector, women have contributed to increasing Indonesia's economic development and state income.*

**Keywords:** *Ecoprint Business; Women's Leadership; Gender Equality; Women's Empowerment*

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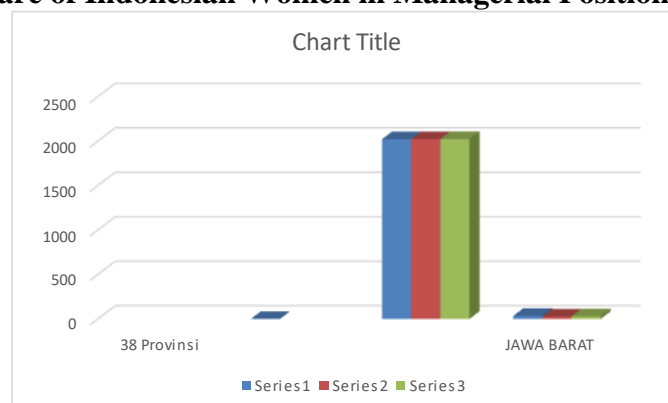
## Introduction

In the modern world that is increasingly advanced and interconnected, women in the country of Indonesia have the same important role as men in the development of the country's development. Several Indonesian heroines such as RA Kartini, Cut Nyak Dien, and Dewi Sartika have paved the way for women's emancipation in the struggle for balanced gender equality opportunities in various fields of employment and social status, such as higher education, paid employment, social and political leadership positions, and military service. The ability to lead at a higher level than men is demonstrated by women just as much as men, in making wise decisions through firmness, tenacity, and determination (Novaliana & Siskawati, 2022).

Indonesia has implemented legal protections to protect the environment and ensure gender equality between men and women (Geraldine & Sadiawati, 2024) Article 27 paragraph (1) of the Constitution explains that the principle of gender equality applies to all Indonesian citizens, such as in the ISPO mechanism according to Presidential Decree No. 44/2020 and in Article 8.3 paragraphs (1) and (2) and Article 9.5 paragraph (1) of the IE-CEPA, which means that it provides indirect opportunities for Indonesian women to participate and take advantage of working with EFTA countries (Iceland, Switzerland, Norway, and Liechtenstein) in the development of SMEs or SMEs. Likewise, Article 27 paragraph (1) of the Constitution explains that the principle of gender equality applies to all Indonesian citizens without exception, which means that the recognition of the principle of gender equality is also in line with the granting of rights to men and women, so that the principle of gender equality eliminates discrimination between men and women, given equal rights by the state before the law and government regardless of differences in sex, ethnicity, religion, position, social status, or class and their community (Ulandari et al., 2022). Gender equality includes many things, such as equality in education, employment opportunities, decisions in politics, decision-making in opening a business, and legal protection with the ultimate goal of gender parity that can build a community where men and women have equal opportunities to strengthen women's leadership capabilities in view and change the way of life, improve the quality of life, and live their lives without problems (Iftitah et al., 2023).

Women's leadership is increasing to this day (Aulia Mutiara Hatia Putri, 2023) Many Indonesian women leaders strive to improve the quality of their work; they have strong conviction in expressing their opinions, thoughts, and actions in the workplace. Table 1 shows the proportion of women in West Java who hold managerial positions (BPS).

**Table 1: Share of Indonesian Women in Managerial Positions by Province**



Source: (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024)

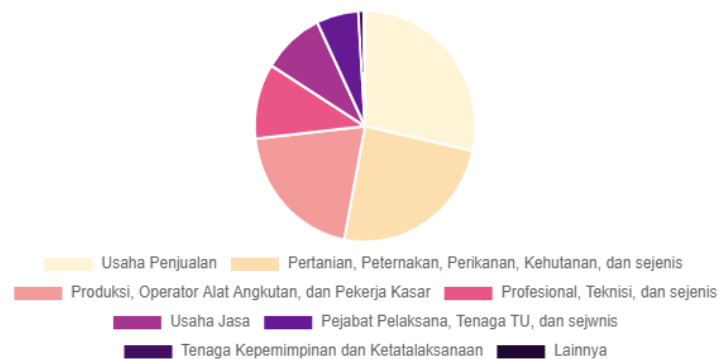
According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024) Table 1 shows that the proportion of Indonesian women in managerial positions in West Java Province increased by 33.71% in 2021, and decreased slightly by 27.44% in 2022, then increased again slightly in 2023 by 29.15%. Central Java Province continued to increase in 2021 by 30.91%, in 2022 by 32.58%, and in 2023 by 37.52%. East Java Province increased by 37.86% in 2021, and decreased by 29.19% in 2022, then increased again in 2023 by 38.16%. DKI Jakarta Province continued to increase by 33.15% in 2021, in 2022 it increased again by 37.21%, and in 2023 it increased by 37.81%. DI Yogyakarta Province amounted to 25.84% in 2021, increased by 32.87% in 2023, and in 2023 slightly decreased by 32.01%.

According to Baer and Kaufman (Baer & Kaufman, 2008) many studies show that between girls and boys there are no differences especially in divergent thinking tests, meta-analyses show little likelihood of significant gender differences, so it should be noted that if there is a winner in the number of studies where one gender has outperformed the other gender then women and girls are superior to the male gender due to the environment, including different adult expectations of girls and boys, differences between the opportunities available to male and female children and adults, and the different types of experiences that the female and male genders may have.

Gender roles mean how humans are expected to think, dress, speak, dress up, and have needs based on gender such as girls and women are expected to dress femininely and be friendly, nurturing, maternal, loving, polite, and accommodating. Whereas men are usually considered strong, tough, aggressive, and more courageous (Planned Parenthood, 2024).

According to Ginis (Ginis et al., 2023) explained in his research that there is a relationship between gender and creativity among famous visual artists from Australian women, which illustrates that gender influences artwork and the role women often play in personal and professional life, resulting in an influence on the support, upbringing, and empowerment of female artists to achieve success with their contribution to empowering society.

**Table 2: Types of Employment of Indonesian Women**



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics

According to Nur Aini Rasyid (Nur Aini Rasyid, 2024) on Monday, April 17, 2023, data on Decent Work Indicators in Indonesia for the 2022 period was released by the Central Bureau of Statistics which discussed the distribution of women's employment in Indonesia, namely the number of female workers in 2022 was 52.74 million, then an increase of 0.95 million compared to 2021. Sales workers are the most common occupation for female workers in 2022, mostly from urban areas, with a percentage distribution of 28.44% of all female workers, then

decreased by 0.16% from the previous year. In 2022, the percentage dropped by 0.25% from 2021 to reach a percentage of 33.64% of all urban female workers. Furthermore, female workers who mostly work in agriculture, hunting, plantations, forestry, animal husbandry, and fisheries who come from rural areas are in second place with the percentage rate decreasing by 0.22% from the previous year and reaching 24.6% in 2022, then reaching 46.16% of rural female workers. Manual workers such as production workers and transportation equipment operators rank third with a percentage of 20.24%, then 10.53% of women who work as professionals such as technical personnel or the like. Furthermore, 9.05% of female workers are projected as business personnel in the service sector, and 6.20% are projected as executive officials such as administrative personnel, and other jobs. Employment for women is below 1%, with leadership and management personnel at 0.78% and other jobs at 0.16%.

Facts and phenomena related to the proportion of women in women's emancipation which has to do with the number of women involved in the workforce and efforts that have the capacity to become leaders have increased in the 21st century so that business and women are also the subject of greater attention in jobs that are accessible to women to compete and take responsibility as career women in government, economic, socio-cultural, education, politics, arts, health, military, police, and other fields of work (Purwanti et al., 2020). Women's emancipation has also paved the way for Indonesian women to have the opportunity to lead their businesses and careers. However, the stigma of Indonesian society still believes that women are not as strong as men, and some Indonesians still consider female leadership as a taboo for Indonesian women to do because their nature is to stay at home.

Over the years, women's leadership has been a subject of public discussion that has often led to a debate between the pros and cons of women leaders in the country of Indonesia, resulting in an increase in the recognition of basic human ownership globally. However, along with the development of modern times, women can now lead like male leaders and even more so, because they are more multitasking and multitasking, wise in making decisions, can empower, communicative, give a good example, be compassionate and motherly, intelligent, diligent and thorough in working, disciplined and have high responsibility.

Women's leadership is very considerate of local culture and local wisdom, prioritizes open-mindedness, and tends to be more rational in making important decisions regarding business sustainability that can increase intrinsic motivation and decent income, and can open employment opportunities for anyone (Munajim et al., 2022). So that in terms of leadership, theological differences between men and women do not exist because women are in accordance with their nature, and between men and women have different roles (Lestari et al., 2023).

The leadership role of women in Indonesia is an interesting subject of research conducted by researchers. Therefore, researchers conducted research on the leadership role of Lalungguh Ecoprint business owners in Beber District, Cirebon Regency in increasing the empowerment of women entrepreneurs. The purpose of this study is to analyze how the leadership role of Lalungguh Ecoprint business owners in increasing the empowerment of women entrepreneurs, identifying differences in the workforce of women and men in running an ecoprint business, and knowing the impact of women's leadership roles in running an ecoprint business.

## Research Methods

The research method used is qualitative research with a descriptive approach with data and data sources from primary data and data collection techniques in the form of observations and interviews at the Lalungguh Ecoprint business place in Palwi Cipinang Indah Housing Block B 22-23, Cipinang Complex, in Beber District, Cirebon Regency, West Java Province, Postal Code 45172 which was conducted on March 12, 2024, as well as secondary data in the form of *literature studies* of reputable articles from previous research. Furthermore, researchers analyze data from data collection, data reduction, to data presentation to draw valid conclusions.

The gap found in this research is that Indonesian society is still taboo with women's leadership which is seen as weak compared to men. The novelty of this research is that women's leadership in the Lalungguh Ecoprint business can refute the stigma of society that women are weak because through ecoprinting, women can strengthen the economy where their income from hundreds to millions of rupiah can prosper themselves and their families and can even introduce the art of ecoprinting abroad where Lalungguh Ecoprint can make products whose materials are obtained from other than fabrics, namely in the form of paper and animal skins such as sheep and cow skins whose manufacturing and maintenance processes are more complicated than making ecoprints on fabrics.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Women's Leadership Role in Ecoprint Business

According to George R. Terry (George R. Terry, 2019) leadership is defined as a relationship that exists in a person or leader who is influenced by activities that can provide encouragement for people to work together consciously in work and tasks, so as to achieve organizational goals voluntarily carried out together. Leadership, according to Badu and Djafri (Badu & Djafri, 2017) is the effort of a person to lead a group or organization by influencing others and encouraging to do work in cooperation so that common goals are achieved.

According to the opinions of the experts above, researchers can conclude that leadership is an action that directs, influences, and supervises the behavior of individuals or groups to do things to achieve a goal. Women's leadership is usually associated with the job performance of women who have loving and motherly female traits that have resulted in progress and work where society has not fully accepted the role of women in the public sector who have male subordinates (Afandi et al., 2023). However, it is different in business, women can lead themselves and their environment, and can even lead a community or organization by establishing a business in which they can prosper their families and can even increase the empowerment of women in their environment.

Women today are very easy to express themselves as female emancipated actors who can lead their businesses and companies, even many women have occupied positions as directors and owners of their own businesses. Currently, women can easily establish creative economic businesses based on halal products that are in accordance with Islamic religious law, as is the case with Mrs. Nedy Apriyanthi, S.T.P in starting her business in the field of ecoprint, namely establishing the Lalungguh Ecoprint business in Beber District, Cirebon Regency, which requires a gradual process.



**Figure 1: Lalungguh Ecoprint Business Owner Nedy Apriyanthi, S.T.P.**

The Lalungguh Ecoprint business has a very interesting history, where during the Covid-19 pandemic most businesses have experienced bankruptcy. But in contrast to Lalungguh Ecoprint, which began to stand during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has contributed a lot to the empowerment of women and the family economy and even the income of the Cirebon Regency Regional Government. The *Lalungguh* Ecoprint business has a business name meaning "La" from Arabic which means "No" while "Lungguh" from Sundanese means "Silence". So the overall meaning of "*Lalungguh*" is a business that is never silent.

Lalungguh Ecoprint business can progress when it was founded and led by Mrs. Nedy Apriyanthi, S.T.P with her husband, Mr. Diding Ismayasa, M.E, S.y in the ecoprint center, namely in Palwi Cipinang Indah Housing Block B 22-23, Cipinang Complex, in Beber District, Cirebon Regency, West Java Province, Postal Code 45172 with the help of its employees and the community in the neighborhood who often hold ecoprint training both in the city and outside the city even Lalungguh Ecoprint has partnered with various agencies in the Regional Government, hotels, and private companies. Then in 2021, Mrs. Nedy has joined many SMEs in Cirebon City and in 2022 registered the Lalungguh brand on her ecoprint fabric business.



**Students of Bunga Bangsa Islamic University Cirebon  
Conducting Ecoprint Training**

The ecoprint business is a business that focuses on transferring tannin colors from various plant parts such as leaves, flowers, twigs, The ecoprint business is a business that focuses on *transferring* tannin colors from various plant parts such as leaves, flowers, twigs, and roots that undergo a washing or *scouring* process and a *mordanting* process by binding natural materials from natural processes such as the results of soaking from sawdust or iron rust then the steam process or steaming of fabrics that have been spiked with plant parts for two hours before the Main Fabric (KU) is washed in the *scouring* process and soaked in the *mordanting* process and has been coated by Blanket Fabric (KB) or not coated with Blanket Fabric (KB) then rolled

with the help of black plastic and small paralon then tied with rapia rope until it is shaped like a rice cake.



Figure 3: *Scouring, Mordanting and Coating the Blanket Fabric with the Main Fabric*



Figure 4: *The Process of Rolling with Black Plastic, Binding in the Shape of Lontong, and Steam or Steam the Ecoprint Fabric*

According to Ms. Nedyia, in making ecoprint fabrics, it is done through the *scouring* stage with TRO or natural materials such as lerak to wash the fabric before the printing process or fabric printing with plant parts such as leaves, roots, twigs, and flowers. Then the next stage is the *mordanting* stage or the stage of binding natural dyes such as sappan powder or iron rust dissolved in water by means of Kain Blanket (KB) soaked overnight if the color results of the ecoprint fabric are colored but if it is not coated with KB then the Main Fabric (KU) has a plain white base color. After the *mordanting* stage, then the Main Fabric (KU) is printed by affixing plant parts on it then coated with Blanket Fabric (KB) and rolled with the help of black plastic and small pipes.

The next stage in the ecoprint process is after being tied in the shape of a rice cake with rapia rope, then the fabric is steamed or steamed for two full hours and then cleaned from the parts of the plant that have withered in the fabric. Furthermore, the washing stage after ecoprinting and the final stage is the drying stage in the sun. After the ecoprint fabric is dry, Mrs. Nedyia, besides being the leader of Lalungguh Ecoprint, is also a *fashion designer* who makes patterns on the fabric to form fashion products such as women's and men's clothes, bags, shoes, hats, prayer clothes, and other ecoprinted products.

## 2. Empowering Women Entrepreneurship through Ecoprint Business

The Lalungguh Ecoprint business has increased women's empowerment in the Cipinang residential neighborhood in Beber sub-district and outside the city. The women's community led by Mrs. Nedyia is a community of housewives who regularly hold recitation, PKK, and arisan events. Initially, Mrs. Nedyia was only accompanied by her husband, Mr. Diding Ismayasa, M.E, Sy in the establishment, registration of the Lalungguh Ecoprint brand, and management of the Lalungguh Ecoprint business since the Covid-19 pandemic hit Indonesia. Then Mrs. Nedyia recruited women in the surrounding environment such as farmers who were looking for leaves with interesting leaf shapes and tannin colors, tailors, and housewives to often conduct training in making ecoprints by *steam* or steaming ecoprint fabrics for two hours then designed by Mrs. Nedyia herself and recruiting employees Mr. Ono who was looking for leaves and Mrs. Ida as a special tailor for the results of ecoprint fabrics to be made into clothes and ecoprint products such as bags, shoes, hats, belts, and other products.



Women's Empowerment through Ecoprint Training in Cipinang Housing, Beber District, Cirebon Regency and Cibeureum Village, Kuningan Regency

According to Mr. Diding Ismayasa, products from ecoprint fabrics are sold with a system of buying and selling in collaboration or partnership with the Regional Government (Pemda) of Cirebon City and Regency and SOEs such as Customs and Marga Services, hotels such as Aston and D'Jehan hotels, and other institutions by often holding ecoprint training seminars and exhibitions of handicrafts from ecoprint fabrics. Then the Lalungguh Ecoprint business owner applies a *profit margin of 20% - 30%* of the selling price of ecoprint products entrusted to partners.

In addition, Ms. Nedyia Apriyanthi often works with mothers in her neighborhood community as well as the UKM Mall and Griya Kriya communities to sell ecoprinted products from Lalungguh Ecoprint. Mrs. Nedyia also often participates in fashion festivals such as Ecoprint Fashion held in Jakarta. As a result of frequent training seminars and fashion festivals, Ms. Nedyia is often offered cooperation with fashion models, *influencers* or *content creators*, and writers who review the Lalungguh Ecoprint business in scientific journals and website news pages.

### 3. Differences in Women's and Men's Performance and Marketing Process of Ecoprint Business.

According to Ms. Nedyia, the performance of women and men in running an ecoprint business has many differences. Women's labor, especially housewives, is more needed in the process of making ecoprint fabrics and products made from ecoprint fabrics because women's loving and motherly characters are more diligent and patient in the process of making ecoprints so that the results of printing ecoprint fabrics are more effectively done by women than using male labor who are usually impatient. Meanwhile, male labor is only needed to find ecoprint materials such as leaves, twigs, flowers, roots, sawdust, iron rust powder, lerak, and other materials. In addition, male labor is also needed in the marketing and accommodation process of the Lalungguh Ecoprint business.

The marketing process of the Lalungguh Ecoprint business is also carried out offline, namely by cooperating or partnering with BUMN, local governments, and private parties as well as offline marketing by word of mouth or better known as the *door to door* system by recruiting resellers who are mostly housewives. While the marketing process is *digital* marketing or online marketing, Mrs. Nedyia and Mr. Diding through their social media accounts such as WhatsApp (WA) accounts, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and website pages that promote the Lalungguh Ecoprint business.



Buyers of ecoprinted products come from the Cipinang residential area, within the city and from outside the city and even foreign nationals who consider ecoprint as an art that can be paid for because foreign nationals like the cracks motif on ecoprints which are considered unique and *limited*, while local people who see cracks or imperfections from ecoprints consider the product reject or unattractive. Products from ecoprint fabrics are less well-known than products from batik crafts because local people prefer batik fabrics and products that are more affordable than ecoprint products.

#### **4. The Impact of Women's Leadership Role in Running an Ecoprint Business**

Women's leadership involves women as leaders in leading organizations, communities, or groups that are emotional and mentally trained, thus providing encouragement to spend women's thoughts, energy, and resources so that goals are achieved and effective (Raiyana Putri Kana et al., 2022). Halimatuzzahro and Azmi (Halimatuzzahro & Laelin Farhani Azmi, 2020) explained that women's leadership is more likely to lead to leadership practices that are feminist in nature and play a role in any *shifting* ideologies and perspectives in the decision-making process, participate in deliberations, dare to argue, and work professionally in the management of various specialized and general economic sectors.

The positive impact or advantages of women's leadership role in running an ecoprint business according to Ms. Nedyia is that it can provide jobs to Indonesian women, especially housewives so that they get entrepreneurial skills in the field of ecoprint and get income in the form of money so that they can prosper themselves and their families. Even through the creative economy in the ecoprint fashion sector, women have contributed to increasing Indonesia's economic development and state income.

According to Sari (Sari, 2022) stigmatization of women comes from a strong tradition in society that places men above women, making it seem as if public roles can only be taken by men. This is due to the patriarchal culture rooted and dominating society, where men hold the main role in all communities, especially the smallest communities such as families. So that traditionally the stigma of women has been indoctrinated and portrayed as weak human beings, always dependent on men, and having no benefits.

The position of women is marginalized because women's work only takes care of household affairs so that women have their rights in carrying out mandates based on many considerations in gender equality, based on teachings in the hadith and the Koran, that women do not have the ability to become leaders (Winda et al., 2023). The community believes that women are creatures created by Allah SWT who have physical weaknesses and in accordance with QS. An-Nisa verse 34 that men have the responsibility as leaders.

The impact of women's leadership roles in the ecoprint business on the negative side or weaknesses according to Mrs. Nedyia is that women have a dual role, namely besides serving a lot of household affairs, they also have to focus on developing a business that has been initiated since the 2019 Corona pandemic, so that women who become leaders in managing businesses often experience stress due to physical and mental fatigue.

#### **Conclusion**

Many people think that women have physical and mental weaknesses and are always dependent on men. However, women can become leaders in modern times because women's leadership is more likely to lead to feminist leadership practices and play a role in the decision-making

process, participate in deliberations, dare to argue, and work professionally so as to achieve common goals.

The women's community led by Mrs. Nedy is a community of housewives who regularly hold recitation, PKK, and arisan events. The Lalungguh Ecoprint business has increased women's empowerment in the Cipinang residential neighborhood in Beber sub-district and outside the city because it can open employment opportunities for women, especially housewives, through training in ecoprint fabric making skills and earning money from hundreds of thousands to millions of rupiah.

The female leadership of Mrs. Nedy Apriyanthi, S.T.P in managing the ecoprint business plays an important role in the progress of the Lalungguh Ecoprint business. Therefore, Lalungguh Ecoprint implements its business resilience strategy by adding a network of business relationships through cooperation or partnering with local governments, state-owned enterprises, hotels, and private companies in which there are ecoprint training seminars, fashion festivals, and ecoprint product exhibitions. The researcher's suggestion is that further researchers can research in the future about women's leadership in business fields other than ecoprint, so that the doctrine and stigma of society that women are weak can be refuted by the many women who lead their own businesses by becoming directors, managers, or commissioners in the company.

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