

WHY WOMEN LITERACY MATTERS? A REVIEW OF HOW IMPORTANCE THE LITERACY FOR WOMEN

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Abstract

The abilities to read, to write, and to count are commonly known as the basic meaning of literacy. This paper aims to describe the meaning of literacy for Indonesian women in wider scopes. By utilizing descriptive study, the article uses secondary data of my research which were received from literature and scientific journals. In addition, the data were analysed by reviewing and comparing the data based on the current situation and theories. At the end, the research results reveal that; 1). the numbers of illiterate women in Indonesia caused by more Indonesian women dropping out from school in secondary school. 2). being literate for women is a human right 3). the coordination between society, NGOs, and some ministries are needed in creating literate Indonesian women; this task cannot be given to the ministry of education only. The suggestion also offered that for further research, investigating the meaning of literacies for women by conducting research in the field of study will be much better.

Keywords: women literacy, women education, women equity, gender equality

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been known globally for years, women around the world are much more left behind by men in some aspects such as in labor market, education, health, and even political participation. This situation is not solved yet since there are remaining problems regarding women around the world. Regarding those issues, this paper is intended to reveal why women literacy matters especially in Indonesian setting.

1.1 Literacy of Indonesian Women

Economically, Indonesia is a new developing country marked by the recent development in some sectors such as tourism and manufacturing. UNFPA Indonesia (2015) states that the World Bank classified Indonesia into a Newly Industrializing Economy (NIE). Accordingly, this fact should reduce the poverty and increase the employment among citizens. However, poverty and employment are not equally get by all the citizens especially women who lived in remote and rural area of Indonesia.

The unexpected situation of illiterate women not only will affect their life but also their family life both their husband and their children. There is a famous proverb “behind the successful man, there is a great wife”. However, if women are illiterate, how can they support their husband? Even for their own life they still illiterate. For children, if their children go to school, they will find difficulty in tutoring their children when they have homework. This fact often found around us.

One of the reasons may be affected by the level of education that women get. This is in line with ASPBAE (2012) survey which revealed that the numbers of illiterate women in Indonesia are higher than men. In addition, BPS’ census data (2012) also reveal that more girls were going to primary school but in the older age, there were more males than females in school. This fact indicates that females are dropping out of school in their secondary school (UNFPA Indonesia, 2015). As a result, the numbers of illiterate woman aged 30-40 become higher time to time. In regard to solve this fact, the solutions must be proposed.

1.2 Why Women Literacy Matter?

Some people think that literacy is translated into the ability to read, to write and to count. There is nothing wrong with that meaning but widely, literacy is the ability to implement the abilities such as reading, writing and counting in the real life. Therefore, literacy is deeply important for every human including woman. According to UNESCO (2014) "Since the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), education has been recognised as a human right". The illiterate women can be categorized uneducated and can get their right since in education, whether formal or informal, will change women to be literate people.

Morgan et al. (2011) propose a view in looking at broadening the conceptualization of literacy in the lives of adults with intellectual disability. Seeing the abilities of adults in writing, reading, and counting may less strong since the real life not only need that kinds of skill. They suggest the idea that qualitative research such as participatory study may be good for investigating the wider concept of literacy.

Moreover, illiterate women can be a serious problem since the role of women are indeed important when their role as the mothers and as the independent individual. UNESCO (2014, p. 13) also stated that "the links between learning and such outcomes cannot be claimed to be causal but rather strong associations between literacy learning and wider outcomes have been evidenced". The roles of women inside and outside house are clearly depending on their skill and knowledge. In this case, education can be a pledge solution to provide an opportunity for women to take role in wider area.

The education of women in labour market has been studied by Arani and Mobarakeh (2011) that the current employment of educated women in private sectors especially language institutes and travel agencies are still low. By utilizing in-depth interview, they found that education is marginalized and has been put on the top of the agenda for the employers. It indicates that education is considered important for women. To sum up, in order to participate in wider scope such as labour market with high paid job, literacy is a top requirement for women.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In regard to women's literacy problem, this paper is written by utilizing secondary data from survey and scientific journals.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 How to Literate Indonesian Women

Physically, women may not as strong as men. On the other hand, they have a role as great as men especially in raising their children. Since Indonesia is a developing country, the welfare of the citizens is not good yet. It is often found that women also have to go working to help their husband in fulfilling the everyday needed. It is usually found that women work as a carpenter, farmer labour, seller, or even driver. In summary, Indonesian women need to be literate not only in basic literate such as reading, writing, numeracy, and life skills but also more complex literate such as functional skills, economical skills, political issues and so on (Likando et al.: 2016).

Moreover, UNESCO (2014:14) states that "literacy learning is closely linked to vocational training". By learning vocational skills, women are prepared to be more ready to face the challenges as the intellect women and no longer be left behind by men. This is in line with Likando et al. (2016) who studied perspectives on adult literacy and livelihood in Namibia. They revealed an answer for a case study question about can adult literacy enhances livelihood activities? By examining the National Literacy Programme of Namibia (NLPN), they found that not only of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture be solely left in the domain, other relevant stakeholders, such as, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, the

Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development, the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, and the Private Sector and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs and Civil Society) should play an active role in the designing and implementation of the literacy program. The coordination of some ministries in literacy program such as offered idea by Likando et al. (2016) can also be implemented in Indonesia. Since the real literacy for women does not merely know how to read, to write and to count, the advance literacy for social welfare is also needed.

In 2016, Haque and Zulfiqar also highlight the key constructs including financial literacy, financial attitude, financial wellbeing and economic empowerment. They present the impact of financial literacy, financial attitude and financial wellbeing on the economic empowerment. By applying survey study, the result reveals that Economic empowerment is found to be affected by age, education, income level, marital status profession, saving and investment behavior. In regard to Indonesian women literacy, the financial literacy is also important to be taught since the rich people is rare in Indonesia. The financial literacy need to be learnt because the ability of saving is difficult for women when they have more money. The preparation for unexpected condition is related to saving and financial literacy.

The discrimination in getting education must be fight since women often see as the “kitchen landlord”. There is nothing more important job for women but cooking in the kitchen. This paradigm should be changed since women have to take care of themselves and their family. The idea to reduce this problem is offered by Zhang (2014) by conducting a study about the relationships between economic growth and gender discrimination in labour markets and education. The finding reveals that comparative dynamic analysis in regard to changes in discrimination in the education sector, women’s propensity to stay at home, women’s propensity to receive education, women’s knowledge utilization efficiency, and the propensity to save need to be done.

4. CONCLUSION

After reviewing some findings and theories about women literacies, some highlight can be listed: 1). the illiterate women in Indonesia caused by more Indonesian women dropping out from school than men in secondary school. 2). being literate for women is a human right since their roles are also as great as men. 3). the coordination between society, NGOs, and some ministries are needed in creating *literate Indonesian women*; this task cannot be given to the ministry of education only, but also the Indonesians’ responsibility.

At the end, for further research, it will be better to investigate the meaning of literacies for women by conducting research in the field of study, not just reviewing the secondary data.

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