

## Gender Equity in Indonesian Higher Education: Exploring the Opportunities of Women's College Graduates as University Leaders

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### Article History

Submitted:  
2021-05-21  
Reviewed:  
2021-06-01  
Approved:  
2021-06-28

### Abstract

*Gender equity is an important target in human development, both at the national and global levels. Gender equity in the higher education context is a crucial issue. This study was aimed at analyzing the gender-based differences in Indonesian higher education graduates. Further, this study also explored the opportunity for women to become university leaders. In this study, a quantitative method was employed by using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to analyze the gender gap in higher education. This study involved the secondary data taken from the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education (Kemendikbudristek) in the year 2019. This study revealed that there is no significant difference between men and women graduates from higher education. However, the descriptive data indicates that the number of women graduates is higher than men graduate. Further, the findings of this study also show that the opportunity for women's college graduates to become university leaders is widely opened, but commonly they find various obstacles in the field.*

**Keywords:** *gender differences, women's college graduate, higher education, leader*

### INTRODUCTION

Gender equity is an important target in human development, both at the national and global levels (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2019; Razavi, 2016; Sen and Mukherjee, 2014). Gender equity is defined as an equal condition that gives men and women equal rights and opportunities to become human beings, play a role and participate in all fields, from politics, economics, socio-culture, national defense and security, and quality in enjoying the results of country development. There are several studies that reported the impact of gender equity in improving human development in Indonesia (Efendy, 2014; Lestari, Marwah, and Pratiwi, 2017; Malau, 2014; Prasetyawati, 2018).

Although the quality of women's development in Indonesia increases day by day, it has not been comparable yet with the men's development (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2019). Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik) reported that, in 2018, the ratio of gender in Indonesia is 101,0. This indicates that almost half of Indonesian citizens are women. However, the report also reveals that women's roles in society are not optimal (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2019). A large number of Indonesian women have the potential to become a huge development capital. This is because the success of national development depends on the roles of all Indonesian citizens, both men and women. Qualified women can contribute to human resources development, both nationally and globally (Riniwati, 2016). Therefore, the women's roles should be optimized to improve human resources and country development in Indonesia. To achieve equitable development, women's involvement is a necessity. A study states that a country is unlikely to achieve prosperity if its women are left behind, marginalized, and oppressed (Manembu, 2017).

Gender equity in the educational field is one of the most crucial issues because of its significant effect on other fields. Well-educated women are expected to create more qualified and competitive young generations through their reproductive function (Hughes, 2016; Munfarida, 2020). This research focuses on gender equity in education, particularly Indonesian higher education. Men still dominate educational institutions. Men are still the majority in various top-level positions as strategic policymakers in higher education institutions (Alghofaily, 2019; Morley, 2013; O'Connor and Irvine, 2020). Therefore, the role and opportunities of women in achieving leadership positions in higher education need attention from various parties. So that, they have a role in influencing gender mainstreaming-based institutional policies.

Several studies focusing on gender equity have been published from various perspectives worldwide (Aktas et al., 2019; Barnard, 2017; David, 2017; Silander, Haake, and Lindberg, 2013; Teelken and Deem, 2013). A study from South African higher education suggested that higher education institutions should foster women's freedom to freely choose their lives and future, including strictly complying with gender norms, which is a vital supporting force (Walker, 2018). A study from Ireland reported that gender equity in higher education institutions (HEI) is concerned at the organizational level. Then, there is a state

initiative to tackle gender inequality from various perspectives, including the Expert Group Review, Gender Equality Task Force; Senior Academic Leadership Initiative; initiatives funding research institutions and people around sexual harassment (O'Connor and Irvine, 2020). Gender equity seen from women's leadership in educational institutions in Saudi Arabia suggests that Saudi women still face various barriers in improving their leadership positions. However, the Saudi government's vision of 2030 is expected to reduce this barrier (Alghofaily, 2019).

In Indonesia, gender equity also has been investigated and analyzed from various perspectives (Dhaniarti, Wulandari, and Setiawan, 2017; Faizah, 2013; Maula, 2020; Pandiangan, Lotulung, and Sanggelorang, 2020). Fibrianto (2016) conducted a study that analyzed gender equity in the scope of college student organizations. The findings of his study revealed that men still dominated the organization as leaders, where the majority of women function as secretaries, treasurers, and members. This implies that women are still in the second position after men. The study also remarked that college student organizations did not yet have gender equity and justice and gender mainstreaming (Fibrianto, 2016). Another study conducted by Pandiangan et al., (2020) asserts that the proportion of leaders in higher education must pay attention to gender representation and several activities are needed to increase awareness and ability of the academic community about gender issues (Pandiangan et al., 2020).

Although there have been several studies that analyzed the importance of women roles in higher education, it is still difficult to find a clear and comprehensive description of gender equity in Indonesian higher education, especially that is dealing with women's college graduates, due to the limited studies focusing on that issue. Most Indonesian universities graduate more women than men. Besides, it cannot be denied that the quality of female graduates also cannot be underestimated. This can be seen from the number of high achieving female graduates. The existence of well-educated women who graduated from higher education opens enormous opportunities for them, both economic and social status. The high level of education they have may posit them in strategic positions in higher education institutions as leaders. Unfortunately, there are only limited studies focusing on women's roles, in which there is a great possibility that they can create a better generation through sharing knowledge, insight, and skills with their children. Besides, as leaders in higher

education institutions, they are expected to significantly influence designing programs, activities, and policies that do not gender-biased.

Both the roles of university students and graduates need to be optimized for gender mainstreaming in the university environment. This is crucial because when gender equity has been successfully implemented at the higher education level, it will provide better opportunities for women to act as decision-makers and occupy strategic positions in universities. Apart from the number of female graduates at higher education level, their quality also needs to be considered. Thus, the increasing role of women in higher education is seen from the number and capacity and competence. The implication is that they can make gender-friendly campus policies to eliminate gender-based violence on campus.

Besides, university graduates are also fundamental social capital in human resources in the labor market. It is believed that the higher a person's education level, the greater their chances of getting a job (Amankwaa and Anku-Tsedee, 2015; Ganie, 2017). Therefore, this study explored gender equity in higher education based on the output of graduates that universities throughout Indonesia have successfully produced. To get a comprehensive description, six levels of higher education programs are provided, i.e., diploma degree, bachelor degree, master degree, doctoral degree, professional and specialist degree as published by the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education in 2019 (Kementerian Riset, Teknologi 2019). This study took the university graduates as the research indicator because they have pivotal roles in improving the quality of human lives. Also, they can get a bigger income from their jobs due to the qualification they have. This is because most companies and government agencies require personnel or individuals with special abilities. Further, the majority of them provide special requirements related to education graduates in administrative requirements when applying for jobs. In addition, university graduates are expected to be able to find jobs easier. Higher education is important for many reasons, including long-term financial gain, job stability, career satisfaction, and success outside of the workplace.

Higher education statistics in 2019 indicates that the Indonesian higher education institutions graduate more female students than male students. The percentage of students who graduated from higher education in 2019 is 40% male, or around 705.315 graduates. Meanwhile, female students who passed in the same year are 60% or approximately 1.050.624

graduates (Kementerian Riset, Teknologi, 2019). Figure 1 below illustrates the number of higher education graduates throughout Indonesia based on gender and level of education programs.

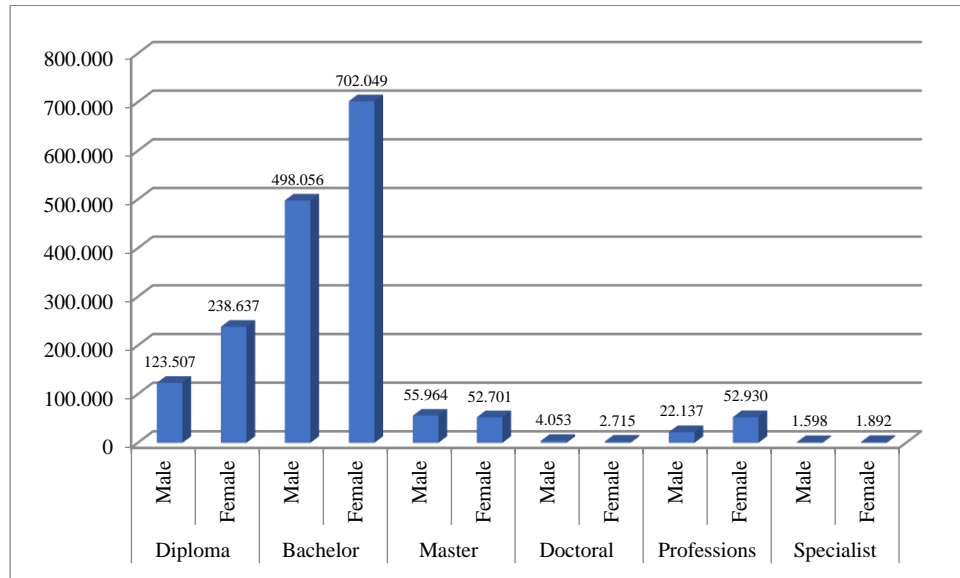


Figure 1. The Number of Graduates based on Gender and Education Program Level (Source: The Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, 2019)

Figure 1 indicates that the number of female graduates is higher than male graduates at the diploma degree, undergraduate/bachelor degree, and professional and specialist degree. However, at the higher program levels, such as master's degree and doctoral degree, it was found that the number of female graduates was lower than that of men (Kementerian Riset, Teknologi, 2019). This indicates no gender gap in higher education in Indonesia, especially in the number of graduates.

This study employed a quantitative method to explore gender equity in Indonesian higher education based on the number of graduates. The secondary data on higher education graduates published by the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education in 2019 served as the basis for analysis to obtain hypothetical decisions. The hypotheses offered in this research are as follows.

*H0: There is no significant difference between the number of male and female graduates from higher education institutions*

*H1: There is a significant difference between the number of male and female graduates from higher education institutions*

To proof the hypotheses, this study used the one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) method, which is usually used to analyze the comparison of the average sample consisting of one category.

This study is expected to provide additional insights and a more comprehensive description of gender equity in Indonesian higher education institutions, especially regarding the number of graduates. They are closely related to the quantity of well-educated women, who can open up opportunities for women to become leaders in various fields, not least in higher education institutions which are still men's territory. The most important implication of this study is the provision of references to gender disparities in higher education in Indonesia, which can be used as a reference for increasing the role of women in influencing gender mainstreaming-based campus policies. As a result, women who have strategic roles and positions on campus are expected to prevent and reduce gender-based violence in the campus environment and the wider environment

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

This section presents statistical analysis results, both descriptive statistics and hypothetical tests to make the research decisions. This study took the secondary data about Indonesian higher education statistics published by the Ministry of Research, technology, and Higher Education in 2019. This data covers higher education institutions, study programs, accreditation rankings, new students, enrolled students, drop-out students, graduates, and lecturers throughout Indonesia. This data is from all universities in Indonesia, both private and state universities. The data used in this study was the number of university graduates from all universities in Indonesia, in which the graduates were taken based on each province in Indonesia. There are six higher education levels in Indonesia, i.e., diploma degree, bachelor degree, master degree, doctorate, professions, and specialist degree. From the 34 provinces in Indonesia, the data were classified based on gender. Four hundred eight samples were analyzed to answer the hypothesis in this study. Table 1 below shows the gender proportion from the number of graduates from Indonesian higher education in 2019.

Table 1. Sample Proportion Data based on Gender

Variables	N
Male	204
Female	204
Total	408

From table 1, it can be seen that the number of samples based on gender, which was analyzed in this study was equal between male and female graduates, that is, 204 graduates for each, so that the total number is 408. Those numbers come from 34 provinces throughout Indonesia, in which those numbers have been tabulated based on each province. Therefore, the data of this research has covered the whole of Indonesian higher education graduates in the year 2019. The following table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, which illustrates a general description of the research data.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	3.457	9.733	681	2.114	4.801
Female	5.152	13.519	947	3.285	7.018
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.305</b>	<b>11.796</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>3.157</b>	<b>5.452</b>

Table 2 above indicates that the average number of Indonesian higher education graduates is 4305. This number comes from all levels of higher education programs in 2019. Further, from table 2, it also can be seen that the number of female graduates has a higher average than that of male graduates in all levels of higher education, which is 5152. Meanwhile, the average number of male graduates is 3457. There is a significant difference in the number between female and male graduates, which is about 1695. The high number of female graduates indicates the high number of well-educated women. Their role is crucial for gender equity in higher education (David, 2017). Well-educated women can be represented by those who graduate from higher education, in which it is hoped that they will be able to raise the women's social status, not only in higher education institutions but also in all fields.

Further, the hypothesis testing was needed to know the significance of the number of higher education graduates based on gender, whether or not gender significantly influences the number of graduates. Before the hypothesis testing by using one-way ANOVA, the homogeneity test is needed to know whether or not the data variance is the same. Table 3 shows the homogeneity test results by using *Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances*. The output of the SPSS shows the following.

Table 3. The Results of Homogeneity Test

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
4,44	1	406	0,04

Table 3 indicates that the data used in this study is homogeneous, in which the *p*-value from this homogeneity test is  $0.04 < 0.05$ .

### **Gender Differences and Higher Education Graduates**

This part presents the results of hypothesis testing to provide empirical data about the gender gap in Indonesian higher education based on the number of graduates. This result was used as a basis for making the main conclusion of this study. Table 4 shows the results of one-way ANOVA analysis using SPSS, which offers *tests of between-subjects effects*: the impact of gender differences, level of education program, and the interaction of gender differences and level of education program towards the number of higher education graduates.

Table 4. ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	292800000	1	292800000	2,11	0,15
Within Groups	56340000000	406	138800000		
Total	566300000000	407			

Table 4 is the main point of this research results. It shows the influence of gender differences and level of education programs on the number of Indonesian higher education graduates in 2019. From table 4, it can be seen that the significance level of the gender variable based on the result of ANOVA is 0.15, which is higher than 0.05. Therefore, it is concluded that the null hypothesis is accepted because there is no significant difference between the number of male and female graduates in higher education. As a consequence,



the statement of the null hypothesis becomes the conclusion of this study. This result indicates that the gender difference based on the number of higher education graduates is statistically not significant. In other words, the influence of gender on higher education graduates is not significant.

The hypothesis testing concludes that there is no significant difference in number between male and female graduates of Indonesian higher education. However, if it is seen from the average number of higher education graduates in table 2, it is seen that the gender equity in Indonesian higher education graduates is well-achieved. There is no gap between the number of male and female graduates that shows the domination of male graduates. Further, from table 2, the number of female graduates is slightly higher than that of male graduates, but it is not significant, which is only 0.67 point. This condition is good because Indonesian women are aware of the importance of studying in higher education for their lives. This result is also supported by the report from the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education which states that the percentage ratio of the number of higher education graduates based on gender is 60%: 40% for women and men, respectively (Kementerian Riset, Teknologi, 2019).

A more in-depth search of the Indonesian Higher Education Statistics data for 2019 indicates that women outperform men in the number of higher education graduates at four program levels, including diploma, bachelor, profession, and specialist. However, contrasting results can be seen at two other levels of educational programs, i.e., master and doctoral, where the number of male graduates seems to outperform women (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2019). The average number of female graduates based on diploma program level is 7.019, while the average number of male graduates at the same level is around 3.633.

This is why almost all universities in Indonesia graduate more female students in every graduation process than male students. Besides, there is a tendency that female students outperform males in terms of academic performance. So, female higher education graduates are in terms of quantity and quality, which has shown better achievement than men. A large number of female higher education graduates also indicates the large number of female students studying on campus. The awareness of Indonesian women to receive the highest possible education provides them with better opportunities to improve their lives in the future.

This is inseparable from the various programs of the Indonesian government that strive for equality of education for all citizens so that Indonesian girls get fair rights and treatment in formal education in educational institutions. It can be said that the gender equity program in Indonesian education has been implemented in a structured manner by the Indonesian government. The proof is that the nine-year compulsory education program and the government's school operational aid (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah/BOS*) program promoted by the government have succeeded in closing the gender gap in the world of education at the primary and secondary school level. Every Indonesian citizen is obliged to attend the nine-year compulsory education program, both male and female. Also, there is no gender bias or gender discrimination in the government's school operational aid (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah/BOS*) program. All students are entitled to it regardless of their gender. The implication is that very few Indonesian girls do not receive primary and secondary education. Those who do not complete education for up to nine years or graduate from junior high school (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP*) are usually not due to financial problems or gender differences. This is because economic factors are no longer the main reason Indonesian girls get an education at these levels. These programs are a milestone for the awareness of the Indonesian people about the importance of education, especially parents who are eager to send their daughters to the highest level of education.

In contrast to primary and secondary education, which have provided various policies to eradicate gender disparities, Indonesian higher education institutions do not have similar policies. There are no legal regulations that oblige all Indonesian citizens to receive education up to higher education. Also, there is no grant program in the form of financial assistance for students from the government, including all students, without exception, even though there are various aid and scholarship programs available for students and various institutions, both from government and private institutions.

However, the Indonesian government has provided legal protection by giving equal opportunities for men and women to continue their education to higher education. Law number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education in Article 6 states that "Higher education is carried out with democratic principles and justice and is not discriminatory by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values, pluralism, unity, and national unity". This provides a huge opportunity to realize gender-responsive higher education, in which all

parties, both men and women, have the same rights and options. Various institutions and agencies are currently very passionate about promoting gender-responsive education. Various parties were involved in this promotion; even men did not hesitate to play an active role in realizing equal education for men and women at all levels.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the number of women who study in higher education is equal with or even exceeds that of men. This also resulted in an increasing number of female graduates from higher education institutions. The higher the level of female education, the greater their chances of getting strategic positions in higher education institutions, both as lecturers, researchers, and even professors. Getting a role in the leadership aspect of a higher education institution is also not impossible for women. Seeing the phenomenon of the quantity and quality of well-educated women who come from higher education graduates, their opportunity to have an equal position with men is not an impossibility.

### **Women Leadership in Higher Education Institutions**

Several studies have reported that women have succeeded in closing the gender gap in higher education institutions. The number of new students tends to be dominated by women (Alghofaily, 2019). Women have outperformed men in the number of higher education graduates (Ismail, 2020; Kementerian Riset, Teknologi, 2019). There are also several studies which reveal that women also outperform men in terms of academic achievement at the higher education level, not only in Indonesia but also in various countries in the world (Crawford and Wang, 2015; Núñez-Peña, Suárez-Pellicioni, and Bono, 2016; Shoaib and Hazir, 2019; Sivrikaya, 2019; TL, Widowati, and Surjawati, 2017; Tlhoale et al., 2014). These achievements should be appreciated as the basis for the higher achievements of women, especially in higher education institutions such as occupying important positions in higher education institutions that can influence various policies.

Unfortunately, men still dominate as leaders academically in the majority of higher education institutions (Alghofaily, 2019; Morley, 2013; O'Connor and Irvine, 2020). This leads to difficulty for women who have the quality and competency to achieve their top careers because their potentials are often neglected and underestimated due to various factors (Longman and Madsen, 2014). Women get various obstacles and problems to achieve their leadership position (Alghofaily, 2019). Thus, the representation of women in senior-level positions in higher education is still scarce (Hidayah and Munastiwi, 2019; Longman and

Madsen, 2014). There is a continuing concern that many women have the opportunity to get strategic positions so that they can take important roles in critical leadership in higher education (Madsen, 2012). However, scholars have paid great attention to the gaps in women's leadership in higher education institutions (Hidayah and Munastiwi, 2019). This can open up fruitful discussions that provide positive possibilities for women to achieve their highest academic careers.

The representation of women in strategic positions in higher education institutions is crucial for several reasons, i.e., (1) social justice, which recognizes equal rights and obligations for anyone with competence regardless of their gender; (2) equity and parity, which is to overcome the problem of wage disparities and opportunities that are still detrimental to women; (3) quality, which is to improve the quality of leadership in higher education, academically qualified women should not be ignored; (4) economy and business, where there is an urgency from around the world to foster gender equity in leadership which includes equality, diversity, and inclusion for the sake of harmony and justice (Burkinshaw, 2015). Women's representation can lead to various high-level positions in higher education institutions, which provide various opportunities for women. Diverse leadership in higher education institutions benefits not only women but also men. Good diversity can strengthen the overall effectiveness of the institution (Burkinshaw 2015).

To get a critical leadership position at the higher education level, women must receive education up to the masters and/or doctoral levels. Holding a master's degree is an absolute requirement for anyone who wants to become a lecturer or educational staff in Indonesian higher education institutions. The position as a leader in higher education must start from that beginning. So, all women are required to at least graduate from the master's level, and it would be better if they can pursue the doctoral program to get a greater chance of becoming a leader.

Even though the total number of female students and female graduates is higher than that of males, their quantity is still lesser than males at certain education program levels. At the master's and doctoral levels, which are crucial as a requirement in pursuing a position in higher education, the number of female graduates is still less than male graduates. Based on the Indonesian Higher Education Statistics data in 2019 in Figure 1, the number of male graduates at the master level is 55964, while the number of female graduates at the same level

is only around 4053. Then, the gap is about 3263 in the number of graduates from the master's program. Meanwhile, for the doctoral level, there were 4053 male graduates and only 2715 female graduates. The gap is about 1338. Apart from the two groups of the education program, at the other program levels, it indicates that the number of female graduates in higher education is more than that of men. The number of graduates at the diploma and bachelor (undergraduate) levels is huge, up to 115130 and 203993, respectively for women and men. Likewise, female graduates also outperformed men; it is 52930 for women and 22137 for men. Meanwhile, for the specialist program level, the difference in the number of graduates between men and women is 294 graduates.

These numbers are significant to be used as a basis for seeing the opportunities for the existence of women leaders in Indonesian higher education institutions. Looking at the opportunities for Indonesian women to become leaders in higher education institutions is very important. Referring to the quantitative data, such as the Indonesian Higher Education Statistics data, which the Ministry of Research, Technology publishes, and Higher Education annually, it can be seen that women's opportunities are widely opened. The statistical data shows that women's participation is more dominant in higher education. The high interest and motivation of women to actively participate in higher education as students indicate their high awareness of the importance of higher education. They are aware that graduation from Senior High Schools is not sufficient as a provision for them to live in a society where the competition is getting tougher. The increasing number of women studying in university indicates that more women will achieve better life opportunities.

However, it should be noted that these statistics data cannot be inferred as valid and effective representations of women's leadership in higher education (Alghofaily 2019). Thus, expectations that are too high to see equality in leadership in higher education which is merely based on women's participation in higher education institutions, are likely to lead to disappointment. Further, it should also be noted that women still face various obstacles and challenges in their role as leaders (Abalkhail, 2017; Alghofaily, 2019; Hidayah and Munastiwi, 2019; O'Connor and Irvine, 2020). A study reported that women who have better qualifications and experience should not easily gain positions as leaders in higher education. Compared to male colleagues who lack qualifications and experience, women are less preferred and less selected as leaders (Abalkhail, 2017).

Women's lack of freedom, gender stereotypes, and limited opportunities to develop themselves are obstacles to becoming leaders in higher education (Al-Asfour et al., 2017). Besides, women also face various challenges to become leaders, both from inside and outside (Alsubaihi, 2016). The various obstacles and challenges women face in playing an important role as higher education leaders can be classified into three types, i.e., cultural, organizational, and personal challenges (Alghofaily, 2019; Sobehart, 2015). At least, two main factors can prevent women from becoming leaders in higher education institutions, i.e., the limited movement of women and their lack of freedom in choosing education and employment. Lack of opportunity and trust is also one of the reasons for the lack of female leaders in higher education institutions.

Indonesia, where most of the population is Muslim, still believes that women should stay at home. Not a few men and conservative clerics always encourage women to stay at home instead of pursuing careers outside, such as in higher education. The patriarchal culture still strongly influences this perspective. Consequently, women who try and eventually succeed in professionally pursuing achievements are often deemed incompatible with society's moral and cultural message and religion. Thus, women who have promising professional careers may be seen as a threat to the culture that has been embedded in society. Career advancement and higher education status can undermine patriarchy's dominance, which is also considered to threaten men's power and control.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study analyzes gender differences based on the number of graduates in higher education institutions throughout Indonesia using data published by the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education in 2019. Besides, the analysis results are linked to the probability of women becoming leaders in higher education institutions. The general description of statistics indicates that the number of female graduates is higher than that of male. However, at some program levels, the number of male graduates outnumbered women by a sizable gap. At program levels that are crucial in occupying leadership in higher education, such as in master's and doctoral programs, women are known to be outnumbered by men. However, hypothesis testing reveals no statistically significant difference in the number of graduates in Indonesian higher education viewed from gender category. Then, the opportunity for women to become leaders in higher education institutions is still widely

opened even though they face many obstacles, such as limited space and opportunities given to them.

More in-depth research on gender-based gaps in higher education needs to be carried out in various aspects to provide a clear description of women's opportunities to become leaders. Thus, a balanced number of leaders can be realized, serving as a foundation for gender mainstreaming in Indonesian higher education.

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