



RESEARCH ARTICLE

GENDER STEREOTYPING IN INDONESIA – PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS
TOWARDS GENDER-EQUAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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ARTICLE INFO

Received 6th October, 2020
Received in revised form 15th
November, 2020
Accepted 12th December, 2020
Published online 28th January, 2021

Keywords:

Gender Inequality, Gender and Labor Market,
High School Students, Qualitative Social
Research, Focus Group Discussions

ABSTRACT

This article deals with the question to what extent a gender-equal labor market access is given in Indonesia. Thinking about a higher labor market involvement of females is necessary as their labor market participation has not increased for many years and is especially low by regional standards. The relatively low and stagnant rates of female labor force participation in Indonesia are quite puzzling, given shifting patterns of education and fertility. This qualitative study has created a special research design in order to analyze the perceptions of High-School students towards a gender-equal labour market access: instead of having interviews, qualitative focus groups were held in which the participants - males as well as females - could discuss their perceptions critically. The results show that gender stereotypes are still eminent within the young generation of High-School students and create challenges for young females who want to be constantly involved in labor market.

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INTRODUCTION

In order to analyze the current labor market developments as well as possible gender inequalities, it is important to outline the political shift Indonesia is facing since the beginning of the 21st century. Democracy does not have a long history in Indonesia. Instead, for more than thirty years, the country was strongly influenced by the autocratic Suharto-regime. This not only affected people's attitudes but also the economic development as many companies were state property and the culture of clientelism was quite common (Driemeier *et al.* 2020). In order to overcome this situation, the country partnership framework (2016-2020) outlines three major challenges to be mastered: The first challenge is to reduce poverty and social inequality. A growing number of families does not officially count as being poor but instead as being vulnerable. These people suffer from income instability, decreasing wages and lacking perspectives to improve their living conditions. Therefore, the possibilities of the poor and vulnerable social groups to permanently terminate poverty is considered to be extremely low. The second challenge – the one that is most important for the presented research – is that Indonesia's increase in inequality is considered to be the highest in the East-Asia-Pacific region. Between 2003 and 2010, consumption of the bottom 40 percent grew at 1 to 2

percent annually, while that of the two richest quintiles grew by about 6 percent. Consequently, the Consumption Gini coefficient, as a central indicator of inequality, increased from 30 to 42 over this period. This is amongst the fastest increases of inequality in East Asia (Purnamasari *et al.* 2020). A lack of education and the creation of a high number of low-paid jobs had been identified as key factors for explaining this development. Education still seems to depend on the income situation of families in Indonesia. While upper and middle-class families can afford higher education for their children, underprivileged families do not have the resources to invest into the educational development of their children. Higher education enables young people to leave their country in order to look for well-paid jobs outside of Indonesia. Of course, it also helps to get into rare high-paid positions within the country. Nevertheless, most of the jobs created in Indonesia since the beginning of the 21st century are in low-productivity sectors and therefore connected to low incomes. Against this background, the effects of gender inequality pose a substantial threat. More precisely, the problem resides in the existing gender wage gap (women earning about 70% of what males earn) and in the high number of unpaid female family workers. Recent studies stress that females in Indonesia are more likely to work in the informal sector and suffer from more instable working conditions than men do. As the number of female-

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headed households (single mothers) is growing, constant working biographies of females as well as family-friendly working policies need to be developed (World Bank 2019). Therefore, reducing gender inequality is considered the third major challenge to be mastered. The educational system in Indonesia consists of two organizational streams: the Islamic stream (which is under the authority of the Ministry of Religious Affairs) and the secular stream (which is under the authority of the Ministry of Education). Both streams provide a variety of public and private teaching institutions from primary to tertiary education. However, a preschool system or institutional childcare (e.g. kindergartens) offering early childhood education do not exist in Indonesia. The secondary system consists of junior high schools, senior high schools and vocational high schools. Vocational high schools had been developed for those students who would like to enter the labor market without studying at college or university. The tertiary education consists of colleges, universities, training institutions as well as polytechniques (Wicaksono and Friawan 2011). To understand the recent status of the educational system in Indonesia, it is important to know that the economic crises of the late 1990s not only lead to an increasing unemployment and poverty rate but also to a decrease of investments into the public educational system. Thus, when the economy recovered, more and more private educational institutions, especially private universities, were established in Indonesia. However, this also led to an increased quality of the public educational system. In general, the rankings today show that public universities provide a higher quality of education and therefore carefully select their students, what sharpens social inequality. As a result, in 2019 nearly 70% of Indonesia's students were enrolled at a private or Islamic university (OECD Country Note Indonesia 2019), because they weren't accepted at a public institution. The tuition fees at private universities differ a lot and so does the quality of teaching. Although the public universities provide scholarships for students from underprivileged families, the local disparities lead to a solidification of educational disadvantages. Those parts and islands of which suffer from an insufficient infrastructure also provide lower quality in secondary teaching at high schools which, in turn, leads to a smaller number of rural applicants who pass the entrance exams of public and private universities, respectively. As private universities have differing tuition fees and the families have to pay for the accommodation of the students, higher education is still a privilege of regions with good infrastructure and middle- or high-income families (Moeliodihardjo 2010).

The Central Research Aim: Analyzing the Transition Processes

Transition processes are central milestones in individual biographies. Therefore, a variety of theories on transition processes exists. In order to build an analytical framework for this study, central assumptions of socialization theories have been connected with thoughts on transition processes. The central question here is: How do social, familial, economic, cultural and ecological structures and contexts influence the education and development of individuals? Socialization can be defined as a process by which culture is transmitted to the younger generation and by which they learn how to behave

within the different social groups they belong to. Therefore, the core of the socialization process is defined by interactions of individuals as well as social groups; it can also be characterized as an active as well as a passive process (that is more and more increasing when thinking of the influence of social media on children's behavior). Biographies of human beings are marked by different socialization periods, all of them deeply connected to groups and institutions that help to develop social and individual skills and learn about social norms and values of society (Hurrelmann and Bauer 2019). At all stages, parents and families are recognized as the primary socialization agents because they highly influence the decision-making process of their children not only with regard to the selection of friends, hobbies, education and jobs but also by shaping their thoughts on appropriate lifestyles and gender roles. Socialization is also still dependent from gender. In most cultures, girls and boys are raised with different and gender-specific toys, with gender-based expectations on emotions and behavior and with a gender-based knowledge that is supposed to help them to be aware of their different role models in life. In many Asian countries, girls but not boys have to help with household duties and parents have a clear concept of female-friendly jobs and branches. This influences the working biographies of young women more than of young men (Schmillen and Weimann-Sandig 2016; Schmillen *et al.* 2019). Moreover, socialization has to be defined as an interactive and mutual process (Hurrelmann and Bauer 2019) which makes it challenging but at the same time also interesting to analyze as it causes permanent social changes. One example is the increased significance of higher education for females in Asia (Schmillen *et al.* 2019). Whereas in previous decades, higher education was accessible only for upper-class males, the number of young women attending university is constantly growing in all Asian countries and has led to a re-thinking of educational support for daughters in families through all social classes with an increased need of special scholarships for females. Nevertheless, the socialization process depends on different environmental conditions. For example, local disparities influence the educational possibilities of children and adults as well as the job selection process because they both offer different work branches and different labor market needs. The educational and economic background of families as well as other socio-economic indicators influence the norms and attitudes towards higher education, often in combination with local disparities. Whereas poor families in urban regions might encourage their children to attend labor market as soon as possible by working in factories or low-skilled professions in order to increase family or household income, rural families suffering from poverty want their daughters to stay at home and help them doing the farming work as unpaid family workers. Children from low-income families need to have additional socialization agents such as early childhood centers, all-day schooling with pedagogical concepts, social workers, scholarships or, in general, social policies that support not only their well-being but their education and later labor market access as well (Hurrelmann and Bauer 2019). The third environmental condition are the dominant cultures, religions and political tendencies within a country. Accordingly, in order to understand the socialization processes in each country, it is necessary to have a deeper knowledge about political systems, dominant religious norms and cultural

approaches. Elements of transition processes have been discussed within role theory, family theory, life-span theory and systems theory (Wapner and Craig-Bray 1992). In her theory of transition, Nancy Schlossberg creates a transition model that outlines three types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated and non-events (Schlossberg *et al.* 1995; Evans, 2010). The first, anticipated transitions are events that occur predictably. This means that a university student applies for a job at a certain company after graduation because she has all the skills required and is accepted because she is more talented than all other competitors – gender does not affect this decision. The transition is adequate to the life-plan of the young woman and follows the planned path. Unanticipated transitions are non-predictable transitions. Finally, non-events are transitions that are expected to occur but, contrary to expectation, do not occur. For example, a female, highly talented high school graduate from a rural part of Indonesia has applied for three universities because she has always wanted to study medicine and all her teachers encouraged her to do so. Three times, her application fails, and since she does not pass the entrance exams, she is not able to study medicine. Therefore, she has to decide whether she wants to focus on her dream and apply again in the following year or if she wants to change her major. Contrary to Schlossberg *et al.* (1995), whose theoretical framework is based on the transition itself, this research can highlight the strong dependence of transition processes from structural and systemic indicators. In the research done previously, non-transitions often seemed to occur not only because of gender but also because of structural barriers (e.g. because of the existence of traditional images of female and male duties or because of lower educational standards in rural areas of Indonesia that prevent rural high school graduates, especially females, from getting access to university). In addition, this study will identify the importance of biographical crises (in a positive as well as in a negative sense) that highly influence transition processes (Schoyerer and Weimann-Sandig 2015). Accordingly, a special research and analysis design was developed which is described in the following chapter.

METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS AND METHODS

Objectives and Methodology of the Study

While the general dynamics of female labor force participation are well known, the existing, mostly quantitative data, is not sufficient to reveal a range of profounder issues to understand why the disparities identified above persist. An in-depth analysis using a qualitative approach is proposed to complement the existing knowledge by providing a better understanding of the constraints that females belonging to different social groups (females from different social classes, females with different marital status as well as females living in different regions of Indonesia) are currently facing. Accordingly, the role of unpaid care work, the reconciliation of work and family as well as the constraints of females to create their own careers should be explored. These answers seem necessary to identify appropriate policy suggestions that help women to enter the labor market properly. Whereas quantitative social research is often defined as explaining research by using statistical methods to analyze the empirical data, the methodological approach of qualitative studies is

quite different. The reference point in this regard is the interpretative sociology that has been developed by Max Weber at the beginning of the 20th century (Burger 1977). Interactions as well as verbal- and non-verbal communication are at the heart of this methodological approach. The central aim of all qualitative research is to reflect the everyday interactions of human beings. Different kind of interviews as well as qualitative observations are just one example. Qualitative research relies on theoretical assumptions of Symbolic Interactionism, Ethnomethodology, Phenomenology and Social Constructivism (Kleining 1991). With regard to this study, the central theories of Social Constructivism make up the main theoretical framework. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and social context in order to understand the development of societies (Berger and Luckmann 1966). This perspective is closely associated with the developmental theories of Vygotsky (1987) and Bandura's social cognitive theory (1989). Bandura stresses that social learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of persons, environment and behavior. To social constructivists, knowledge is a human product and, as such, is socially and culturally constructed by the interactions of people (Kukla 2000) but also by analyzing individual and social transition processes. Therefore, learning is a social process. An appropriate empirical method dealing with these central paradigms of social constructivism are focus group discussions. In Germany, Werner Mangold (1973) was the main sociologist who developed focus group discussions as a method to gather the collective awareness as well as collective perceptions of a group. The premises of this approach is that focus group discussions offer insights not into individual opinions but into collective knowledge that is updated during the focus group discussion (Bohnsack *et al.* 2006; Weimann-Sandig 2014).

In other words, focus group discussions are an ideal approach to analyze the values and standards of certain groups and compare them to the common values and standards of society. In order to get deeper insights into the constraints and challenges different groups of females in Indonesia are facing, the concept of focus group discussion has been a well-tested qualitative empirical method in the field of gender and social inequality (Schmillen and Weimann-Sandig 2019; Weimann-Sandig *et al.* 2020). Following the central research aims and analyzing the central transition processes from high school towards higher education or direct labor market access by critically analyzing biographical crisis that cause labor market dropouts, six focus group discussions with a minimum of six participants and a maximum of nine participants each have been conducted in different provinces. As Indonesia consists of a huge number of islands, not all rural disparities could be taken into account. The sampling process was therefore stimulated by the results of previously done studies (e.g. Roberts, Sander and Tiwari 2019). Instead, the qualitative research focused on a few districts, differing from each other by their socio-economic achievements, providing different infrastructural development and therefore different educational standards and labor market possibilities. Badung for example offers a mixture of tourism-related jobs, high-tech development and manufacturing industry. Semarang on the other hand is the capital of the largest province, East Java. It has been an important port for export and

import and is characterized by growing trade, large industries and a developing service sector.

In order to eliminate distorted perceptions and to analyze how far stereotypes exist within both gender, contrast groups with male participants and female participants were placed at central transition processes. High school definitely marks a milestone from secondary education to direct labor market access or tertiary education. Therefore, focus groups with both female and male students were placed. To analyze the – maybe different – reasons for high school dropouts, both genders were examined in this context as well. Two important decisions had to be made: Firstly, native speaking researchers had to be found who were experienced in qualitative as well as in gender research. Secondly, suitable places and locations for the focus groups had to be searched for, ideally located in the neighborhood of the participants. For every focus group discussion, survey instruments provided detailed thematic guidelines and a questionnaire of less than one page to be filled out by the focus group participants (largely to gather basic socio-demographic information). All material gathered during these focus group discussions was transcribed and translated into English immediately following the discussion and then systematically coded with the help of the qualitative software MAXQDA. Most focus group discussions lasted between two and three hours. The qualitative data analysis was done by combining elements of qualitative content analysis and hermeneutical method (Kuckartz 2018). This method enables researchers not only to identify, analyze and compare the contents of the different focus group discussions but also to analyze the communication within the discussions. This helps to identify those topics that are more relevant than others for special groups of females. In difference to other methods of qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2008; Gläser and Laudel 2010), the meaning of not building the analytical framework a priori but, instead, based on the empirical research is essential for Kuckartz's idea. To sum it up, doing focus group discussions requires having experienced moderators who not only have a deeper knowledge about the research topics but also have high communicative and social skills. Moderators have to know how to stimulate discussions within the participants without influencing them and they have to know how to help those discussants who have problems articulating their opinions. In difference to focus group interviews, the role of the moderator is only an accompanying one. The following section presents the detailed findings of the focus groups corresponding to the following central research questions.

- What perceptions do young female and male high school students have on gender equal labor market access?
- What challenges or chances do young students, especially females, face when they want to focus on a career?
- To what extent do gender stereotypes influence the reconciliation of work and family?

Empirical Results

Gender Stereotypes amongst High School Students – the Dominance of Traditional Role Models

As recent quantitative research claims the number of dropouts in Indonesia is highest at secondary level and has not decreased within the last years (Setyadharna *et al.* 2017), it seemed worthwhile to identify the perceptions of female high school

dropouts by organizing own focus groups. These results will be presented in what follows.

Nearly all high school students who attended the focus group discussions – females as well as males – believe in the existence of a gender-balanced labor market system in Indonesia when talking about access possibilities. Gender inequality is considered being a characteristic of previous generations. Instead, all participants stress that social inequality with regard to the socio-economic status of high school students as well as local disparities have a higher impact towards labor market access than gender. Nevertheless, the detailed hermeneutical analysis could reveal that gender stereotypes still exist and that – most interestingly – the participants are not aware of them. For example, having a career was considered being a typical male attribute while caring for children was considered being a typical female attribute. Most discussants are interpreting the role models in their families as gender-equal because their mothers are not reduced to being a housewife but also have to help their husbands, stressing the importance of unpaid family work. Nevertheless, being the breadwinner and having a career is clearly defined as a male role while the unpaid family work of their mothers is not being discussed as something extraordinary (by managing household duties, education of children and generating extra-income) but as a side issue. As an illustrative example, a sequence of a focus group discussion is given: the biographic telling of one participant raised a lot of interest among the other participants: he stressed that both parents have been constantly employed although they have five children. Especially when he declared that his mother was working as a doctor in a hospital, the discussion touched upon the issue of the reconciliation of work and family. He was asked how his mother could manage her family and job duties at the same time:

High School Student 8: Bro, I want to ask (directed to High School Student 6), your mother is a doctor, and your father works in Gorontalo (a different island, note from the author) which makes him rarely home. With your mother's profession as a doctor and you have 4 younger siblings, how does your mother manage that? Being a doctor is surely a busy job, how did she manage to take care of her children while having a career as a doctor?

Male High School Student 6: When her work at the hospital requires her and cannot be disturbed, then my mother would stay at the hospital. But if her children are sick or there are other needs to be taken care at home, she usually asks her colleague to switch work schedule at the hospital.

Moderator

She would still go home?

Male High School Student 6: She would still go home, "the most important thing is my children's needs are being fulfilled. The work and my own needs will be postponed," that is what my mother said. The most important thing is her family.

Male High School Student 8: So, there's a possibility that being a doctor is not as busy as we thought. With that profession there is still time for the family?

(Focus Group Discussion Male High School Students, Yogyakarta)

The hermeneutical analysis shows that the male discussants are quite interested in this case. Finding concepts away from the traditional male breadwinner model is quite rare. On the other hand, their interest is closely connected to the worry if the mother could fulfill her mandatory duty, which is to take care of family and household (“She would go home”). The discussant shares his biography in detail and uses direct speech in order to convince the auditors that his mother is not neglecting her family duties. The discussant himself does not reflect how proud he could be by having a highly educated mother doing one of the most challenging jobs in society. Instead, he tries to convince his fellows that a working female can also follow the role of being a good housewife at the same time. Crucially, the other discussants do not reflect the major efforts of women following both – a career and a family – but instead tend to lower the significance of being a doctor. The content analysis leads in two directions: On the one hand, this is a perfect example for modern ways of living and the possibilities of dual-career couples in Indonesia. The description that profession and family can be connected could encourage young females in particular but also help young males to develop related role models for their later family lives. On the other hand – more critically spoken – a mother seems to have to justify her career more specifically than males have to do. This might be influenced by the dominance of the Islam but could also be the product of a very traditional society in Indonesia. For Muslims, the Quran stresses the significance of both genders but it also emphasizes the different roles of husband and wife within the family. It declares women as the heart of the family, which means that they are essential for keeping the family together (Nisa 2019). Moreover, the young discussants could develop a gender bias regarding professional development. Female professionals might be judged as not as professional as male ones because they have to leave from their jobs earlier and need to prioritize other things.

Asked about their perceptions on gender-equal relationships between wife and husband, the young men showed a high willingness to discuss life plans and career plans equally as long as having no children. Within the early stages of a relationship or marriage, both partners should work in order to save enough money and to have financial resources when becoming a family. Nevertheless, the birth of the first child marks an important change: The wife is estimated as the central person for staying at home and raising the children.

Male High School Student 5: I agree. The point is, women’s responsibility is to take care of children.

Moderator: Do you think men don’t have the responsibility to take care of their children?

Male High School Student 3: There is that responsibility too, but the role of women is to be responsible for the family.

Male High School Student 5: Yes, that’s right. It is the wife who feeds and cares for the children, especially when they are small.

(Focus Group Discussion Male High School Students, Sedati)

Again, the hermeneutical analysis shows an interesting perspective: “*There is that responsibility, too, but...*” seems to be the key statement. The young discussants do not deny the

importance of the father for raising children but they stress a clear ambivalence: The mother is the core of the family, a picture that cannot only be found in the Quran but also in other dominant religions like Hinduism or Roman Catholicism in Indonesia. The discussants do not explain this female role but rather take it for granted. This not only highly influences their later relationships but also the minor perspectives of young females to reconcile family and work – and this is exactly what young females are aware of. The focus group discussion of female high school students is divided in two parts: a life before getting married – which includes thoughts about career development – and a life after becoming a mother that allows only few thoughts about side jobs or doing microbusinesses. When talking about the consequences of deskilling for higher educated women, the discussants stress that higher education for females means a more personal attribute that helps them to expand their chances of finding a groom from a well-off family instead of developing own career perspectives. Therefore, the best jobs for men are described as those who offer males an opportunity to develop their skills, high-paid positions as well as management possibilities. Formal employment is characterized as more suitable for males. As in all branches overtime work is mandatory, lifelong learning is expected and the willingness to travel is required. As a central research aim was to find out what kind of transition processes do influence gender inequality at the labor market Nevertheless, the decision-making process is highly influenced by gender stereotypes as young women depend on female-appropriate jobs and therefore have a limited job selection. Based on gender-influenced definitions of “good jobs”, young Indonesian women are not able to freely choose their job fields, which might also affect the employers’ decision making-processes when searching for new employees. In fact, male candidates seem to have better chances to get a job even when being less qualified because they are interested in a constant labor market involvement while females have several dropout periods due to motherhood. Nevertheless, young Indonesian women are searching for labor market possibilities, since most of the female participants do not want to be financially dependent on their husbands. Therefore, they are searching for appropriate ways to reconcile earning own money and looking after their children.

Career Paths of Young Females – “Women Have Better Working Possibilities but no Career Possibilities”

The discussions with male and female high school students definitely show that the life plans of young people in Indonesia are quite different from those of the previous generations: Attending public or private universities or colleges and therefore participating in higher education seems essential for males and females alike. In contrast to previous generations, the moment of getting married and having a family has extended. The young women while still attending university do not favor giving birth. Instead, nearly all of them think that, before giving birth, it is mandatory to have at least two to three years of working experience after graduating. The detailed discussions on the definition of work experience reveal differences between male and female discussants. The young males stress the importance of getting in touch with other cultures and working abroad in order to get international work experience. Going abroad is seen as the best possibility to get into good positions

when coming back. When asked about working conditions, the willingness to establish an own business is high within the male participants. Many of them already work part-time while attending university in order to gain as much work experience as possible. Starting a family is connected to being successful, having a good income and enough savings to buy own property. Vice versa, the young males feel a high pressure to become successful in order to be a reputable candidate for later marriage. On the other hand, only few females can image leaving their families in order to build their own career. Two dominant reasons could be identified by this research: first, parents fear letting their daughters leave Indonesia more than they fear their sons leaving Indonesia, and second, female discussants seem to have less trust in themselves (that they would be able to manage this new situation). Locality also plays an important role as most female discussants feel obliged to stay connected to their families in order to care for elder family members or younger siblings. Instead of defining themselves by establishing an own career, the female discussants declare marriage and giving birth as milestones of their biographies although this marks a transition process from free career development and individual success.

Female High School Student 2: *Especially since there are more work opportunities for women because women don't demand too much like men do. Men demand a lot and it's understandable because they're going to be the head of the family in the future. While women don't demand so much, they settle with what they receive, as long as they get the extra cash and have a job.*

Moderator: Do any of you have other opinions or have something they want to add?

Female High School Students 1 and 3: It's the same. (Focus Group Discussion, Female High School Student. Sedati)

Here, again, the hermeneutical analysis reveals the implications for those young females. At first, it looks as if they would mention that women have better career opportunities. In fact, they are talking about "work opportunities" which means that a woman is able to find any work – no matter how much she is going to be paid or what the conditions are going to be like. In contrast, a man has to look for career opportunities because he is the main breadwinner. Therefore, being formally employed is considered part of a childfree life, which defines another transition process also highly influenced by gender. The young generation of Indonesian females does not only face the transition from high school or university into formal employment but also from formal employment into informal employment when starting a family. Studies show that informal employment plays an important role amongst females in Indonesia as it offers possibilities to have a second income, gives them the flexibility to work in the evening or early morning hours or at the weekends (Schaner and Das 2016; Cuevas *et al.* 2009). On the other hand, informal employment is characterized by missing working contracts, unpaid overtime work and a general absence of decent working conditions. Young Indonesian females seem to be quite aware of the differences between a job and a career, but the latter is characterized as being a predominantly male achievement.

Biographies of Female High School Drop-Outs – An Example of Multiple Barriers Sharpening Gender Inequality

Although the school dropout rates of young Indonesians had constantly decreased since the 1980s, there is a growing number of students dropping out of high schools since 2010. Previously done quantitative research points out that female students show higher dropout rates than male students (Setydharna *et al.* 2017). According to UNICEF, seven out of ten high school dropouts are girls (UNICEF 2019). Therefore, this study examines the reasons for female school dropouts and the situation of these young women. Nevertheless, a comprehensive group consisting of male high school dropouts was designed as well in order to see if social indicators might be the same for both genders. Accordingly, two separate focus group discussions with females and males from Badung and Sukabumi have been conducted. Each group consisted of 13 participants aged between 16 and 20. As this regions offer a mixture of tourism-related jobs, high-tech development and manufacturing industry, our interest also was to see whether female and male drop-outs can find a job, what strategies they develop in order to find jobs and which kind of jobs they successfully apply for. Based on other research which highlights that most drop-outs occur in senior and vocational high school (Setydharna *et al.* 2017), the sample consisted of young people who had dropped out in the first or second grade of senior, Islamic or vocational high school. Two female participants as well as one male participant had been married. Among the female participants, eleven were currently unemployed; only two women were informally employed in part-time jobs. Nearly the same overall impression emerges from the sampling structure of the male discussants: only three of them were employed, all of them working part-time in informal arrangements.

The reasons for the school dropouts can be seen in the economic situation and the family status of the participants. Those young people coming from underprivileged and poor families suffer from the bad economic situation of their families. Although their parents want them to finish high school, the additional and often unbearable costs for the families deeply affect the feelings and thoughts of the female participants. But in general, all participants stress that living in poverty determines the whole communication in their families. Tuition fees and costs for school uniforms or school equipment is perceived as a high burden for their parents. Thus, the feeling of being obliged to work as soon as possible and to create an additional income is described as an essential part of everyday life. The following part of the discussion underlines the fact that most teenagers are not forced by their parents to drop out but that, quite to the contrary, they result from the young males and females wishes to help their parents.

Moderator: Okay, so everyone here has expectations for the future. The next question is about education and your experience at school. Maybe you can tell us why you decided to quit from school? Surely everyone has a different story.

Female Dropout 1: At that time, my family encountered economic difficulties. I thought I could work after graduated, but then why not now? At that time someone invited me to work in a store. I had arguments with my parents. I wanted to help them, so I made my own decision to quit from school. It turned out that finding a job was very difficult, so I regret it.

(Focus Group Discussion Female High School Dropouts)

The hermeneutical analysis here stresses the fact that parents want their children to participate in secondary education (“I had arguments with my parents ... I made my own decision to quit school”) but the terrible economic situation of the family leads to an extended wish of earning money which, in turn, causes high school drop-outs. The family status often intensifies this situation. Those girls living in single-parent households or even without parents at all describe their situation as even worse. The missing family income leads to increased poverty and to an increased need for the children to work as soon as possible. Here, too, a strong gender-bias could be identified as it is the girls in particular who feel responsible whereas the male siblings are encouraged to get a good educational background. In fact, the male participants say that their families forced them to go back to school or to attend vocational training programs instead. Within poor families, the influence of peer-groups often plays an important role for dropout decisions too. Most participants – males and females alike – reported that they met other teenagers who convinced them to skip school. Especially the young women claim that they had been socially excluded because of their poverty by classmates or schoolmates and had no chance to make friends. Both reasons seem to lead to dropout decisions. The influence of peer-groups on children from underprivileged families has been well examined within the last forty years. As one example, the study of Tomé *et al.* (2012) shows that peers have a high influence on adolescents’ risk behavior, especially when they don’t feel protected or cared for by their families. Most interestingly, the female participants in particular reflect their dropouts as a rash and naïve decision as they are not able to get a proper labor market access. While some of them could not find a job at all, others jump from one unskilled job to another. As all of them are informally employed, they report unfair working conditions consisting of long working hours, low hourly wages (or not being paid at all) and the need to fully comply with the employer’s wishes. None of the young women is satisfied with the current situation; instead, all of them want to go back to school.

Moderator: So how long did you work at the store?

Female Dropout 1: Almost 5 months. Then I resigned and being unemployed for a few months. In 2019, I looked for jobs at a mall in Bandung and I got a job at a Thai Tea outlet. I worked for almost a year. The salary did not consider the working hours. I often had to work overtime, but they paid me less. Initially, I got IDR 1.5 million [about 100\$] a month because many events so I received a salary increase. I’d receive IDR. 1.7 million [about 114 \$] if I had full events. The office hours start at 10 am but at 8 am I should be at the venue to prepare. If it was crowded, even at 1 am, the work hadn’t finished. On Saturdays, the mall is always crowded, especially if there is an event. We have events, such new year, fasting month.

Moderator: Did the salary increase equal with the workload?

Female Dropout 1: I don’t think so, because I had to do everything, from being a cashier, a drinks mixer, cleaner, and everything else. (Focus Group Discussion, Female High School Dropouts)

Summarizing the focus groups discussions with the female and male High-School dropouts, the conclusion to draw is that the working opportunities for unskilled young people seem to have narrowed as more educated competitors are accessing the Indonesian labor market. Having no high school diploma means to be stuck in odd jobs with low wages, instable working conditions and uncertain future perspectives. Therefore, it seems mandatory to keep in mind the reasons that might cause early high school dropouts. The discussions show that children from poor families are much more affected by early dropouts than other children are. Although the parents seem not to support the dropouts of their children, the financial situation as well as their own educational disadvantages lead to a low school support for their children. Schools have to find appropriate ways to deal with children from disadvantaged families and to build up strong relationships with parents. Social workers might be one essential support mechanism at high schools in order to bridge the gap between teachers and parents. Once more, the influence of peer-groups becomes evident. Belonging to the “wrong circles” does not only influence but also deeply affect the lives of Indonesian teenagers. The discussions underline the long and difficult way to proper employment, as the dropouts have to realize that they need to repeat their high school graduation. The results of the focus group discussions also underline the missing social competencies of children belonging to poor and disadvantaged families (such as a lack of self-esteem or problem-solving abilities) which makes them even more vulnerable for high school dropouts. In addition, according to human capital theory (Becker 1994), young people who have been out of the educational system need other learning structures and motivational factors that convince them to invest into their educational development.

Conclusions – Analyzing the Four Dimensions of Gender Inequality in Indonesia

This part summarizes the central results of the study by looking at them through the eyes of established research results on social and gender inequality. As a central step, the four dimensions of inequality and their dimensions in Indonesia are described, referring to the qualitative empirical data. The previously shown empirical material stresses the meaning of gender as an essential indicator of social inequality. In order to analyze the empirical results in the right way, it is necessary to differentiate between two ways in which gender causes inequality that could be found in this study:

In general, the tenor of this study is not that gender “merely” is an indicator for unequal distribution but that gender directly and strongly causes unequal distribution and unequal future possibilities. First, gender influences the unequal distribution of desirable life outcomes such as educational success and material possessions. The limitation of educational success for women leads to a dominance of females in low-income and informal jobs and offers them only limited access to material possessions. Indonesia has to work out concepts for gender-balanced income solutions as most females are suffering from wage inequality – even when they are doing the same jobs as men. This demands a radical change in the way people think about the meaning of female work. As long as female work is regarded as “additional work”, employers will not change their attitudes towards paying less. As the situation of females in Indonesia is changing and

the number of divorces is increasing, a different income strategy for women has to be placed. Having one's own money means having the possibility to pursue new behavioral strategies for females within their families. Females can decide what to buy and when to buy, and therefore can remodel traditional dependencies. However, women need to have a greater support by gaining decent money for decent work. The problem is not about working but about being experienced as socially valued. The results of the focus groups stress that the female income is counted as an additional income – not only by young males but also by the females themselves. These constraints prevent females from successfully competing with males, although there might be no differences in their qualifications. This perception limits the job perspectives for women and therefore discourages them to build their own career paths, as they have no support. Females have to be accepted as individuals and to be encouraged to establish their own life plans by gaining an income adequate to their educational background. In fact, neither of the female focus group participants are working according to their educational background nor are they getting the same wages as males who work in the same job positions. Second, gender influences the unequal distribution of opportunities. A central question in all focus group discussions was the question about dreams and achieving happiness. More than half of the women in our sample could not fulfill their dreams about education and working perspectives but nearly all of them connected their individual happiness to moments of feeling socially accepted by peers, succeeding at school, being taught something useful or meeting someone who supported their dreams.

Female High School Student 4: I've got a lot of happiest moments of my life. But the most recent one is when I worked at the headquarters that I have been eyeing for a while as I have passion in the stock market and I want to understand more about investment without detaching from my major because I also loved what I learned in college. Then I realized I really loved working in management communication. In this industry, I learned a lot about stock bonds and I feel very excited. Nevertheless I'm fully aware that I won't get a management position because I am a woman and I need to care for my family later.

(Focus Group Female High School Students Jakarta)

For females in Indonesia, it is still less possible to fulfill their career dreams or to experience happiness with regard to leading a carefree life. Moreover, the qualitative research could not only identify a gender-based unequal distribution of opportunities and outcomes but also an unequal distribution within the group of females. Young women coming from poor and especially rural families seem to be more affected by school dropouts than other young women are. The family situation seems to affect the dropout decisions of young females, as they feel responsible to improve their parent's situation. Although parents want their daughters to invest in secondary education, breaking the vicious circle of poverty seems impossible. Education could be identified as a central key to overcome existing gender stereotypes but it seems less effective if supporting structures end with the beginning of motherhood or depend on local disparities. Education also is a central key towards a new understanding of gender roles. The

definition of gender in Indonesia is still deeply connected with biological aspects like physical strength or the aspects of childbearing or care duties, and this is true no matter what age-group the interviewed persons belong to. Nevertheless, the great merit of international gender studies is the knowledge that non of these gender differences are naturally given but that, instead, they are social constructions (Ehlert 2012). Centuries of male-dominated societies have led to role models that connect gender with different attributes. Women should be caring, loving, responsible for their families, stepping behind their husbands while males should be dominant, competitive and fearless. As mentioned at the outset, theories on socialization have been used as a central analytical framework for studying the effects of gender-based role models. It is worth stressing that gender stereotypes can only be reduced by educating people discussing this topic at early ages. Therefore, establishing institutional childcare could be a milestone in changing gender stereotypes. It might change the perspective towards the reconciliation of work and family.

The horizontal dimension analyzes the career choices of men and women: The young males in the focus groups seem to have a wider career choice, which means that they cover nearly all professions and working fields provided in a society. By contrast, women concentrate on fewer work fields and do not pursue career paths but rather focus on job possibilities that allow them to reconcile work and family. In addition, the research shows that job selection of females is based on traditional definitions of female-friendly jobs, all linked to a concept of a "natural duty" of women to have children and care for their families. Therefore, work fields connected to teaching, education, caring and nursing are described as typical-female jobs, as most of them are located in the public sector and ensure stable incomes as well as regulated working times. This means that young females are limited in labor market access and, when compared to their male fellows, have a narrowed job selection profile. The results of the focus groups on the one hand show an increasing awareness of males and females towards a new picture of parenting. Fathers are regarded as important for the well-being of children and the young male participants theoretically showed a high willingness to play an important role in the life of their children. On the other hand, when analyzing the focus group discussions in more detail, this theoretical commitment appears to be somewhat of an illusionary placebo. Asked about the willingness to reduce working-times or step out of labor market for childcare, only few young males could imagine a modern role model. To the contrary, most male discussants stressed the responsibility of females for childcare and household duties whereas female career development was regarded less important than male career development. Consequently, the timeline for women to access the labor market and to develop their skills is a tough one. The birth of the first child seems to mark a transition process from formal employment and constant labor market access to informal employment and irregular job opportunities. With regard to a gender equal labor market enrollment, Indonesia has to establish gender sensitive educational policies as well as working policies that allow females to develop their careers equally to those of males. As family plays an important role, the support services have to be intensified. Childcare systems from early age to school age could provide better

opportunities for young families to reconcile family and work. Young Indonesians need best practice examples of gender-equal role models, which means that gender equal education has to be placed in all school types. Scholarships and special support for female high school students could help to establish new role models and to encourage young women to let their career dreams come true. Nevertheless, there is a need for a general social shift towards greater gender equality in Indonesia by critically analyzing hidden gender stereotypes.

Sub-subsections

The heading for sub-subsections should be in Times New Roman 12-point with only the first word initial letter capitalized, and flush left. (i.e. The health spendings)

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