


# Chapter 12

## Challenges for Indonesian Women's Leadership in Higher Education:

### A Reflexion on "Panggil Aku Kartini Saja", a Biographical Novel of Pramoedya Ananta Toer

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#### ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines the challenges faced by Indonesian women in attaining leadership roles in higher education, using Pramoedya Ananta Toer's "Panggil Aku Kartini Saja" as a foundation. Kartini's advocacy for women's education during the colonial era laid the groundwork for gender equality, yet structural barriers persist. Patriarchal norms, cultural expectations, and institutional biases continue to limit women's leadership opportunities in academia. Through an analysis of Kartini's influence as depicted in Pramoedya's novel, this chapter explores how historical struggles shape contemporary gender disparities. A critical discourse approach highlights ongoing challenges and the need for policy reforms to foster inclusivity. By addressing these barriers, Indonesian higher education institutions can better empower women in leadership and uphold Kartini's vision of equality.*

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## **KARTINI AND HER INFLUENCE ON INDONESIAN WOMEN EDUCATION**

Raden Ajeng Kartini was one of Indonesian heroes focused on gender inequality as well as the importance of education for Indonesian/Javanese women. She was a noblesse, daughter of a Regent in central Java. The children of Javanese Regents or nobles on the first half of twentieth century had the rights to attend school, but not for women, that is why she 'protested' by writing her ideas about the role of women throughout a book entitles "*Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*": "After the darkness, the light will appear", or "After rain comes sunshine." (Armijn Pane, 1922). Her book was her letters sent to her best pen friend, a Dutch woman, named J.H. Abendanon. On her letters Kartini described her worries about the condition of women in Javanese patriarchal society. She tried to create 'mini school' for women, expected the equality between social classes, and she fought particularly for women's rights during the colonization era. Based on her ideas, women have the right to go to school, she said that education is for everyone, enables person to become better (R. A. T. by A. L. S. Kartini, 1920). Her effort then expressed by a famous Indonesian writer, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, on a biographical novel entitled "*Panggil Aku Kartini Saja*" (Call me Kartini only) (Toer, 2000).

The history of women's education in Indonesia in fact is deeply intertwined with the country's colonial past, the struggle for independence, and the intellectual and social movements that helped shape modern Indonesian society. During the colonial era, education in Indonesia was a privilege reserved for the few, with the most of women denied access to formal education. This lack of access was further complicated by societal norms that confined women to traditional roles. However, figures like Raden Ajeng Kartini played a critical role in challenging these restrictions, advocating for women's education, and leaving a legacy. This chapter explores the challenges for Indonesian women leadership in higher education, starting with the historical context of women's education in Indonesia, focusing on the colonial era's educational restrictions, Kartini's transformative influence, and the portrayal of her struggles in literature, particularly in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novel *Panggil Aku Kartini Saja*.

## **COLONIAL ERA AND EDUCATIONAL RESTRICTIONS**

The Dutch colonial period (1602–1945) played a significant role in shaping the structure of Indonesian society, especially in terms of education. Under colonial rule, the educational system in Indonesia was designed to serve the needs of the

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