

## Women's Role as the Actor of Citizen Diplomacy to Promote National Identity Based on Local Wisdom

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### ABSTRACT

*In millennial era, all the components of the society can participate in human development. Nowadays, village women can explore their potency to be developed in public domain bravely. Some women come from Bakalan Village, Polokarto Sub District, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java, have explored their potency recently through traditional art, such as kothekan lesung and karawitan, as a means of preserving local wisdom. The objective of the current research is to describe that the village women can show off their ability in performing kothekan lesung and karawitan, and introduce it abroad. The data was collected through surveys, interviews, and documentation directly from the objects studied. From the data, it could be seen that the women in Bakalan village had intention, spirit, and motivation to introduce kothekan lesung and karawitan to other countries such as Malaysia and South Korea. Those women could serve as actors in citizen diplomacy. The research results showed that the activity should be supported by family, community, and the government. The process of introducing kothekan lesung and karawitan to other countries could be accomplished because nowadays women have been accustomed with using information and communication technology particularly internet through gadget. One of supports expected by the emaks (moms) were other language training centres for English, thereby still dependent on the trainer. The conclusion was that the traditional culture as the manifestation of local wisdom could be a means for women (emaks) to be actors of citizen diplomacy.*

**Keywords:** emak (moms), local wisdom, citizen diplomacy.

### INTRODUCTION:

A mother cannot leave her domestic affairs incomplete. A woman, who has been destined to be a wife and a mother to her children, make domestic domain her main focus on attention and duty. Recently women even has been exposed to thicker segment called emak-emak (mother/moms) rather than ibu-ibu (mother/moms). Emaks are considered as those who represent digital-era women or called now-age moms in central Java, Indonesia. The change in the term, ibu into emak suggests that the existence of women in current digital technology era can shift into a new culture and identity for their femininity. Using the new term emak, women or moms now show that they can participate not only in domestic (household) world inherent to kitchen, child, and husband, but also in public interest activities (professional women). Through this term, women express stronger distinctive power in not only accepting the money from her husband, but also useful to herself, family, and community.

Out of 143.26 million Information and Communication Technology (ICT) users in Indonesia, 48.57% or 69,581,382 are females (Mite Setiansah and Nana Sutikna, 2018). It indicates that women have shifted their role from mere wrestling with domestic affairs to exploring the globalized civilization. It suggests that women nowadays make ICT, a part of their life either towards private or public interests. Gadgets are actually used to disseminate information on activity, interest, and everything that end up to show the women's self-existence.

New experience that arise along the global era gives an opportunity to build local culture as community's wisdom with its distinctive peculiarity. Local wisdom needs some serious attention towards recalling its existence so that it is very helpful to improve the community's wellbeing. Indonesian people belongs to local wisdom which means that they contribute to the national identity. In global era, the position of local wisdom as well as the local community's assets get replaced by the entry of foreign culture that may result in cultural homogenization (Berry, 2008; Dahliani, 2015). It is this cultural homogenization that should be alerted among the native people to recall that some of them are almost incapable of maintaining the national identity as the manifestation of national resilience.

Indonesia is a country of diverse tribes, religions, languages and traditions. Every region has its own characteristics necessarily to be explored and managed along with its ancestor's heritage and asset so that it can be bequeathed to the next generation. Every community should play an essential role in developing its local characteristics to attract the tourists. Community empowerment becomes one of the pillars and strategies to build tourist village with wellbeing as its end goal (Cahyaningrum, 2017). The local wisdom management is also a potential route to create job opportunity or to reduce poverty, to improve quality of life, and to protect the natural wealth and local culture.

Bakalan village is one of the regions belonging to Polokarto sub district, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java. Bakalan village, intended in this research, has distinctive characteristics, particularly in traditional art such as kotheakan lesung and karawitan. Some community members, particularly women, despite prioritizing their domestic chores, still allocate their time to assemble and practice together the form of traditional art. In the viewpoint of liberalists', women have equal rights to develop alike their counterparts. But there is a question arise here i.e., the level of equality affected by its local culture, including social freedom? (Iordache, 2013).

Women who care about the local wisdom, particularly the preservation of traditional art, became the focus of current research. This practice, often occurring in the culture, still replete with traditional values. According to Maluleke (2012), sometimes it reflects the value and belief thus giving priority to a group of people. In general, it is always men who are prioritized based on an assumption and principle that it is them who can be held responsible for their family. As aforementioned, women are entitled to access social life via supporting and developing the community. One of the measures women take, to get social access, is to preserve local wisdom. Local wisdom, according to Kamonthip Kongprasertamorn (2007), is a series of knowledge that is acquired from experience and accumulated over a period of time through understanding of local community. Local community, in which the knowledge is inherited and developed locally, forwards the knowledge from one generation to another and it serves as a life guideline to perform daily activities. Through its function as a guideline of daily life, local wisdom provides instruction and ethic in establishing a relationship with family members and community both inside and outside the neighborhood (Talang, 2001; Mungmachon, 2012).

Since the knowledge grows and develops within the community, the local wisdom is useful to (1) maintain the history, value, tradition, and rule prevailing in the corresponding community; (2) maintain the local wisdom in order to provide a base to be convinced about belief (faith) and to improve health quality; (3) to develop the local wisdom so as to give the local community the opportunity of enjoying traditional entertainment, for instance, harvest song (Mungmachon, 2012). These three benefits indicate that when the local wisdom is maintained, it can create harmonic life which is more balanced with nature and relatable with community members either abstractly or concretely. The concept of local wisdom is a series of knowledge, a community has, in the form of story, song, value, belief, rite, local language, and the utilization of natural sources. On the other hand, Dahliani (2015) explained local wisdom as a series of natural knowledge that combines the location and experience that was developed and developing by the community itself. Imitating process colors the process of maintaining or performing local wisdom despite not abandoning the spirit completely inherent to and rooting deeply into community life.

In general, the tradition inculcated into a local community with rural nuance can be the typical characteristic of the region indirectly. Such condition should be supported and appreciated by both the people themselves and the local government. The preservation of local wisdom is more beneficial if it is introduced to other culture communities. As aforementioned, in global era, the probability of one culture to be mixed with other cultures is high. This probability can be utilized by making the local wisdom, own culture and national identity as a means to be introduced into other country or culture. Community that exist within it is encouraged to assume the role of a diplomatic citizen in a brave manner.

Citizen diplomacy is an opportunity considered by the community as a means of supporting or strengthening the government diplomacy. In his speech, John W. McDonald at Institute of Multitrack

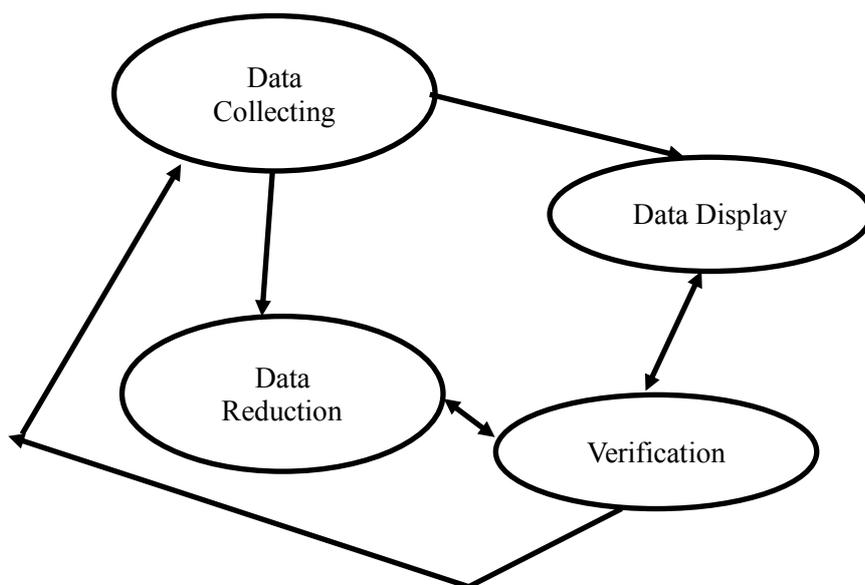
Diplomacy (1992), explained that a good citizen, either individually or as a group, has all the rights and opportunities to help solve the problems that could not be solved by the government itself. Such crucial role is played more at international level, particularly in non-government channel. Ujara (2014) mentioned that citizen diplomacy enables a citizen with an opportunity of being a key factor in performing diplomacy between foreign countries. Through its position as a key factor, a citizen acts on behalf of his or her state's national interest rather than prioritizing their own personal interest.

The attempt of prioritizing the national interest can be conducted among various sectors, one of which is culture. Culture is a national identity and is inseparable from a nation's character. When a group of citizens affiliated with community focuses on preserving the local culture, this attempt indirectly refers to the maintenance of its local and national identity. The objective of current research is to explain the activities conducted by citizens, particularly the women in Bakalan Village in playing kotheakan lesung and karawitan thereby getting appreciation from foreigners, particularly Australians.

**METHOD:**

This research investigated the women power that can break the routine, created by masculine culture, by preserving the traditional art as the manifestation of local wisdom and is descriptive qualitative in nature. This study described the activities performed by women in Kothakan Kampung, Bakalan Village, Sukoharjo Province, Central Java Province, in the preservation of traditional arts such as kotheakan lesung and karawitan. The study period was four months spanning between June to September 2018. Zarqa Azhar et al (2014) cited a study published by Sekaran in which it was stated that the descriptive study has two characteristics. Firstly, a descriptive qualitative study provides an opportunity to change the social phenomenon observed by the author. Secondly, a descriptive qualitative study also has the ability to describe social phenomena observed as well as its relevant aspects within it. The aspects intended, leads to the existence and the activity of individual, organization or other perspective. Based on the argument of Sekaran, the researcher chose the last option. The social phenomena is described especially the activities of women to preserve local wisdom. For the data analysis, the researcher used interactive model put forth by Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2009).

**Figure 1: Interactive model of Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2009)**



Based on the model illustrated in figure 1, the data was collected through interview with women who affiliated with art studio focusing on the preservation of kotheakan lesung and karawitan art come from Bakalan village. These women also were considered the research objects. In this study, the author conducted a survey on the location to find a better description of the community's life. The author interviewed the women affiliated with karawitan group (3 women), kotheakan player (2 women), and coach (1 woman). All of these six informants are natives of Kothakan Hamlet with different backgrounds (farming worker, vendor, factory worker, and housewife guided by a coach constituting an alumnus of art institute). The interview results were displayed in the results section. The researcher also used the data reduction from this step to

verify the outcome. The time taken to conduct the interview was about 30-60 minutes. The author conducted the interviews during evening when the participants were practicing at their coach's house.

## RESULT:

To support this research, the researchers interviewed the Head, Bakalan village, Sukimin, on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018. Considering the interview results, the primary data collected was analyzed and interpreted that some of the female participants have not been graduated from secondary school due to marriage. About 57 women became housewives when they were 18 years old and 100 during their 20-56 years. About 70 women became widows when they were 25-26 years old whereas they served as the family head. Two hundred and twenty five (225) women did not worked at all during their 20-56 ages of life. Out of 225 women, about 187 were factory workers, onion-farming workers, and vendors.

The women, worked out of house, attempted to play double roles: they worked to help their family's income and took care of their household. Two days in a week are utilized to preserve traditional art by practicing kothehan lesung and karawitan. Kothehan lesung and karawitan, in practice implementation, are led by a coach named Ngadimin. Lesung is made from large wood with a hole in its center. The hole was beaten to produce the sound thek-thek. It was called kothehan lesung. Kothehan lesung became an additional music in the Kebo Kinul folklore staging. The fragment or folklore is usually accompanied with music created by gamelan players (pengrawit). Karawitan is a traditional music instrument and a part of art with non diatonis (laras slendro and pelog) that works best with a mixture of vocal and instrument (Setyawan, 2017: 79). This performance is supported by Pertamina which is a part of government. Both the arts have been appreciated both domestically as well as in abroad. Middle east students, Australian cultural observers and Indian artists visited Bakalan village to see the performances of original art produced in Sukoharjo Regency. The success in inviting the foreign guests becomes the reward for the struggles of the coach who never practiced in foreign countries.

Ngadimin, as the coach, explained that when he was learning at Indonesian Art Institute (Surakarta), he has always performed new dance creation several times in Middle East and India. Through the connections he has, Ngadimin tried to introduce his local typical art to the global countries. This attempt was taken sometimes without seeking the help of local government. It is in line with Darsini, a gamelan player in karawitan, who stated that the coach and his members attempted to introduce the traditional art in abroad several times. Meanwhile, Maryati, another gamelan player, said that the Indonesian traditional art is not known by other countries, when its own community is not willing to preserve or introduce it. Ofcourse, it requires much effort, thinking, and cost which is sacrificial for the country's and community welfare. Ngadiyem, as kothehan player, added that through the introduction of culture in abroad, not only Bali, but also the name of Indonesia gets exposed and established.

Another gamelan player, Sulastri, suggested that there is a distinctive pride over her participation in preserving the traditional art along with artists. Sulastri, working as a daily vendor, was still interested in practicing karawitan because of her love towards her ancestor's culture. Sulastri was also proud of her capability to play gamelan being something interesting. Sutarni, another kothehan player recommended the young generation to practice traditional art vigorously to prevent it from being defeated by foreigners. From the interview results, it can be summarized that the traditional art should be preserved. This preservation should be manifested into practice and introduce it to foreigners. The attempt of introducing traditional art abroad should not await the government's intervention, but it should be taken on an independent initiative.

## DISCUSSION:

A state, blessed with cultural diversity, can leverage its potentials and opportunities to go forward. Local culture preservation remains the responsibility of all the citizens and is not limited to learning or practicing with surrounding people only. When the local culture is preserved, it will have more added-value and useful to citizens as well as the state, if it is introduced to other states' community. The attempt to preserve local culture, more particularly, the traditional arts of kothehan lesung and karawitan performed by women in Bakalan Village becomes the part of citizen diplomacy implementation. The implementation of citizen diplomacy performed by rural women can be said as a positive effect of globalization. Didigwu and Augustus' (2015) Hossain's (2010); and Mark's (2000) studies found that there is a significant positive effect of globalization on technology sophistication since the utilization by community is made very easy. Through technology, particularly internet, women can perpetuate the

activities they do without abandoning their duties as a mother and wife.

The presence of traditional art community provides a distinctive meaning to surrounding people, particularly the rural community. This community becomes a means for rural women to get out of the patriarchic cultural environment's bonds. Most Bakalan women still believe that it is difficult to get out of this environment. Particularly the women interviewed by the author responded similarly that most men who exist in the Bakalan village do not want their wives to attend social activities other than home. The activities conducted usually or routinely by women so far were concentrated more on domestic affairs, in addition to monthly meeting in the form of arisan (gathering).

The establishment of kothekan lesung and karawitan traditional art studios enables the women to explore the potentials that they possess. Women's potency and interest should be developed to improve their self-confidence. Three informants such as Sulastri, Maryati, and Sutarni, when interviewed, stated that they learnt playing gamelan and lesung to create an interesting music strain twice a week for about two hours. The coach gave the members of kothekan lesung and karawitan an opportunity of disseminating the activities through social media. In addition to the dissemination of kothekan lesung and karawitan activities through social media, Bakalan village women also staged it in foreign countries. The importance of traditional art dissemination is related to many elements, firstly, the (women) community's care about the local culture disseminated through social media thus attracting other citizens to find out and to see further. Secondly, it is related to women who are willing to devote their time for preserving traditional art and to the appreciation giving to the nationalism that they possess. Thirdly, the rural women can be a role model for the young generation through their activities in order to maintain local wisdom and utilize social media wisely. Fourthly, Bakalan women activities can make themselves, the actors of citizen diplomacy. Fifthly, the women activity through this traditional art performance gives positive image all at once to both local region and state.

#### CONCLUSION:

The implementation of citizen diplomacy is very desirable and should be socialized to all the elements of community. The activity is very important to support the diplomacy conducted by the government that has authority which is trusted as the main actor so far. The shift and development of government's role to citizens gives an opportunity to help solve the problem encountered by the state and improve the state's positive image. Citizens, particularly women coming from Bakalan village, have been able to explore their potency and express themselves through traditional art as the manifestation of local wisdom.

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