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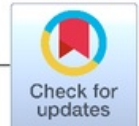
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# Resistance and compliance in women's academic identity work in the Global South

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to explore women academic's identity work in the context of the Global South (Indonesia). This is done by examining how the interplay between macro-level social, cultural and political influences and micro-processes produce moments of compliance and resistance. To this end, the following research question is posed: What is the nature of identity work among women academics in higher education institutions of the Global South where there are shifting and conflicting social and cultural conditions? This study contributes by illuminating the ways in which women comply with or resist traditional and contemporary organisational and occupational structures that produce gender inequality. It also contributes to understanding how the interplay of power and resistance influences women's academic identity work in developing nations.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Higher Education in Indonesia is going through a transformation that mirrors global trends. These changes are creating an environment in which there is an increasing prevalence of identity breakdown and fragmentation (Harris, 2005) to the extent that academic identities are in a constant state of construction, destruction and reconstruction (Billot, 2010). This is symptomatic of a work environment where there are multiple, expanding and conflicting ideas about what it is to be an academic (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013) where academics are required to be able to cope with various threats to their academic identities (Clegg, 2008) and because 'becoming an academic is a complex process in which the subject acts in order to get recognition' (Angervall, 2018, p. 108). This is problematic as they are not only upholding their personal-internal identities to maintain a sense of coherence and authenticity, but also managing their public (academic-professional) identity in order to deal with

monolithic organisational stories of neoliberalism and global competition (Churchman & King, 2009). This often leads to academics finding it difficult to establish who they are (Barnett, 2000).

As in many other parts of the world, women working in Indonesian Higher Education are facing complex and contradictory challenges to the way in which they develop their academic identity arising from competing demands and work situations where organisational cultures tend to favour masculine values (Fotaki, 2013). In such work settings women are often expected to be responsive to child-rearing and housework, while at the same time dealing with pressures to perform in their current role at work as well as trying to climb the career ladder (Angervall, 2018; Harris, Myers, & Ravenswood, 2017; Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; Nikunen, 2012; Ylijoki, 2011). This is significant because identity work is 'more necessary, frequent and intense in situations where strains, tensions and surprises are prevalent, as these prompt feelings of confusion, contradiction and self-doubt, which in turn tend to lead to self-examination' (Brown, 2015, p. 6). Moreover, scholars argue that identity work is often performed in challenging circumstances or at times of significant transition and liminality (Aschraft, 2012; Petriglieri, 2011), within socially formed discourses (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Clarke, Brown, & Hope-Hailey, 2009), demanding professional careers (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006), and during times of culture and values change (Kosmala & Herrbach, 2006). Given the context of this research and the yet-to-be resolved theoretical and practice-world problems identified in the identity work literature, this research contributes by providing new insights that will not only progress theoretical understandings of identity work but also provide perspectives from the Global South that could assist with eliminating gendered organisational cultures, attitudes and work practices that are associated with the under-representation of women in senior organisational positions, particularly in academia. By examining the evolving work identities in aspiring and established women academics in Indonesian universities, the widely held assumption that Indonesian women (like in other nations of the Global South) often succumb to socio-cultural pressures to conform to work identities that are prescribed by religious teaching is challenged (Jaschok & Shui, 2013; Melman, 2016).

In sum, there is a need to understand better the ways that women resist and reform organisational and occupational structures, how gender inequality is reproduced or challenged, and the extent to which the situation in the Global South is different from developed nations (Muzio & Tomlinson, 2012). This is particularly important when the ways in which power and resistance influence women's identity work trajectories are illuminated (Järventie-Thesleff & Tienari, 2016).

As a developing nation, Indonesia provides opportunities for studying identity work among women in the Higher Education work setting in ways that will uncover new theoretical insights that are applicable to a diversity of contexts globally. As well as being the fifth largest nations in the world by population, Indonesia is a young and thriving multicultural, multi-party democracy where tradition, religion, modernity and postmodernity are thrust together in a rapidly evolving political, economic, social and cultural context. This has created a situation where tensions between traditional values and identities, contemporary masculine values and women's career aspirations are writ large. Similar to many other nations, the Higher Education environment in Indonesia as elsewhere exemplifies the ways in which Indonesian women are confronted with trying to reconcile their career identity and aspirations with demands arising from responsibility at work, and with expectations stemming from traditional views about the roles they must take-on in the domestic sphere (Lindawati & Smark, 2015).

The main aim of this paper is to seek answers to and possible resolutions to these problems by examining academic identity work processes of women in Indonesian public universities. To this end, the following question is examined: What is the nature of identity work among women in higher education institutions of the Global South where there are shifting and conflicting social, cultural and political conditions? Seeking answers to this question is important because understanding how women deploy their identity work resources in the academic arena provides insights into how these resources not only allow women to navigate competing demands on them, but also how they can be agents of change that will improve women's academic work and career conditions in universities around the world.



## 2 | WOMEN'S ACADEMIC IDENTITY WORK

The literature about academic identities is broad and constitutes an important theme in Higher Education research but has so far been largely limited to Western contexts. While it is important to examine the extent to which people interpret, modify, embrace or reject elements that make up 'academic identity' (Watson, 2008), what is required is research that captures the fluid, situated nature of identity work that is based on specific instances of identity construction or modification (Koerner, 2014). This includes full consideration of place and time as they saturate all areas of social life (Brown & Humphreys, 2006). So research that examines contexts other than Western Higher Education is important to establish the extent to which current theory can be applied across various national contexts.

Identity work is 'processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity' (Watson, 2008, p. 129). Although every individual engages in identity work, differences will arise depending on the relative strength of multiple influences, one of which is gender. In terms of identity, gender not only functions as a powerful structuring process (Lindgren & Packendorff, 2008) but also acts as an effective tool for social regulation (Alvesson & Billing, 2009).

Current ideas about academic identity work are informed by Henkel (2000, 2005) and Barnett (2000) who argue that it is characterised by fragmentation connected to conflicting values, multiple functions and loosening of institutional boundaries. Harris (2005) points to agency (individual academics) and structure (Higher Education organisations) as important factors in shaping and reshaping academic identity work that has progressed to the extent that there is an emergence of hybrids of internal (or private) profession-based identity combined with external (or public) identity that are aligned with new university structures (Clegg, 2008). This hybridity is often characterised by an internal (private) identity that is kept 'in the shadows' while at the same time public identities that conform to professional norms and 'monolithic organisational stories' are presented at work (Churchman & King, 2009; Winter, 2009). This interaction of the internal and external affects the definition of authenticity and success and can result in identity tensions and conflicts (Archer, 2008; Billot, 2010) which are in turn associated with negative work outcomes such as reduced commitment as well as lower work motivation, morale, work satisfaction and productivity (McInnis, 2010; Winter, 2009; Winter & O'Donohue, 2012).

These tensions could come in the form of polarisation of academic identities resulting ranging from resistance to change, to success in adapting to change, through to the neutral, by-stander position where the focus is on maintaining work-life balance (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013). The research about Western Higher Education brings in focus the personal self as being the most important element (Sheridan, 2013) but we must also consider various influences including the institution, peers, as well as individual values and beliefs (Fitzmaurice 2013). In sum, the current research into academic identity points to fragilities and insecurities associated with increasing institutional demands and organisational policies and management practices (Knights & Clarke, 2014).

For women, previous research suggests that a major source of identity tension and fragility arises from the ways in which organisational culture in universities favour masculine values that enable a work environment that tends to favour males (Fotaki, 2013). In this respect it is similar to many other male-dominated occupations, engineering for example (Hatmaker, 2013) in which women are in a no-win situation. Micro and meso-scale studies suggest that when women try to achieve their career aspirations, their identity work tends to conform to the imperatives of prevailing masculine norms (Fotaki, 2013) where success is predominantly based on masculine values, supported by performance management systems (Angervall, 2018; Archer, 2008; Chasserio, Pailot, & Poroli, 2014). Women who adopt identity work processes mirroring that of their male counterparts are often stigmatised as being not feminine enough in the workplace and sometimes treated with suspicion (Buchanan, Warning, & Tett, 2012; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). Indeed, micro-political capabilities are an important ingredient in the identity work of women academics, especially during change (Parsons & Priola, 2013). In addition to workplace-specific problems, women are also often faced with having to deal with broader (macro-level) socio-political and cultural contextual influences. Recent research points to a strong, but not unassailable, influence of cultural

norms and roles on women's identity work (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Leung, Zietsma, & Peredo, 2013). As Brown (2015, p. 32) contends, 'there is much we still do not know about how contexts—particularly organisational and national cultural settings—affect individuals' identities and identity work'.

### 3 | CONTEXT

Between 1966 and 1998, Indonesia was ruled by the New Order regime headed by President Soeharto. In order to preserve its power, the New Order regime spread a particular ideology and set of values through public organisations and state-owned media. According to the New Order ideology and values, the social roles of women are based on *kodrat wanita* (roughly translated meaning the nature of women) that defines them in terms of domestic roles (Oey-Gardiner, 2002). Moreover, *kodrat wanita* encompasses both the ideal of *ibu* (symbolic and actual mother) and *peran ganda wanita* (the dual role of women, as a mother of a family and a mother of the nation) (Sullivan, 1994), which 'implicitly limits the employment and career options of Indonesian women to the domestic domain' (Nilan & Utari, 2008, p. 137).

The uniformity of gender identities was an integral part of the Soeharto's New Order regime dubbed *State Ibuism* (Blackburn, Smith, & Syamsiyatun, 2008; Robinson & Bessel, 2002; Suryakusuma, 2012). This is characterised by tight control of, and power exercised over, the creation of an ideal figure of an Indonesian woman to which they should aspire. *State Ibuism* decrees that Indonesian women are merely appendages and companions of their husbands, procreators of the nation, mothers and educators of children, housekeepers and members of Indonesian society (Suryakusuma, 2004), where men occupy the public sphere and women are limited to the domestic sphere. This is reflected in New Order era when women were more focused on how to be seen as a good woman as defined by *State Ibuism* in appearance and behaviour, to avoid social pressures within what was a pan-optical environment (Siahaan, 2003). This created a single, limiting image of the Indonesian ideal woman defined within the social-cultural, political and economic framework of *State Ibuism*.

Complementing *State Ibuism* is *Bapakism* which translates as Fatherism. As one of the guiding principles for interpersonal relationships within a family context it is manifest as strong obedience to a charismatic father figure as the ultimate leader. *Bapakism* strengthens patriarchal values, which permeates not only the Indonesian family, but also wider society (Oktaviani, Rooney, McKenna, & Zacher, 2016). Like *State Ibuism*, *Bapakism* was also glorified by the New Order regime in order to create a sense of togetherness, a harmonious nation and create respect towards the great Father figure of the nation (i.e. Soeharto). In the social and organisational context, it can be seen in an expectation that respect will be given to any contextually defined authoritative senior male (father figure). This could be a teacher in the classroom, a manager in an organisation, or an older male family member. This principle is a form of Javanese paternalism and patronage that requires compliance and respect to male authority. The values of *Bapakism*, which reflect the patronage relationship beyond family relationships, are embodied within the values of *Hormat* (respect)—a Javanese term that refers to respect for male authority that is carried out as a proper practice of etiquette (Geertz, 1961).

All of these values are embodied in *Pancasila* (five principles of the Indonesian nation state). It is taught at every level of education and Indonesians are expected to obey and implement the values of *Pancasila* in their daily life. It is believed that this is required in order to live together harmoniously, avoid potential conflicts, and to reach agreement through consensus (*musyawarah untuk mufakat*) by prioritising social obligations over personal liberty (Tjarsono, 2013).

There are 122 public universities and 3,154 private universities in Indonesia (DIKTI, 2018). According to DIKTI (2018) only 23 per cent of professors are women (905 out of 4,769) and women comprise 30 per cent of academic staff in public universities and around 40 per cent in private universities (Table 1).

In contrast to Western universities, Indonesian public universities exclusively promote internally to leadership positions. It is also commonplace that an individual will spend their entire career in one university. As government



**TABLE 1** Number of academics in academic career (DIKTI, 2016)

Academic position	Women	Men
Professor	905	3,864
Associate Professor	10,451	20,038
Assistant Professor	19,835	29,523
Lecturer	20,930	25,908

employees, academics in public universities conform to the rules and policies set down by the Indonesian government including employment conditions, career path, salary and allowances.

According to the Indonesian Minister of State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform (2013), career advancement can occur every two years provided they obtain the required credit points by accomplishing the *Tri Dharma* activities of teaching, research and publication, and community service and receive a positive annual assessment from their line-manager (loyalty, work performance, responsibility, compliance, honesty, cooperation, initiatives and leadership) (DIKTI, 2014).

In 2014, The Indonesian government announced that by the year 2025, its Higher Education quality will improve significantly in order to contribute and improve the nation's competitiveness at the international level by improving both Higher Education institutions and the human resources (Welch, 2007, 2012). This vision was then shared with and imposed on all Indonesian universities as a main guide to formulate the vision of the universities (DIKTI, 2015a). In order to achieve better education quality, academics are required to improve the quality of their research and publications by fulfilling their workload target, publishing marketable research solutions and gaining PhD qualification (DIKTI, 2015a). However, these demands of performativity and skill improvement are not supported by the academic environment and facilities. As a result, there are serious pressures on and insecurity among Indonesian academics (Altbach, 2010; Hill & Wie, 2013; Idrus, 1999; Welch, 2012).

Academics in Indonesian public universities have traditionally not been well paid and have to take on extra work to supplement their incomes (Clarke, 2014; Welch, 2007). In spite of the *Sertifikasi Dosen* programme implementation (financial benefits which aims to improve the quality of the academics and also their wellbeing), numerous Indonesian scholars have moved to other countries like Malaysia and Japan because of unequal compensation structure and unsupportive working atmosphere (Kompas, 2011). Poor remuneration means that many academics also work a second job, usually as a project consultants, working for trading businesses, or working in a management or teaching roles at a private Higher Education institutions (Ramadhan, 2013; Setiawati, 2009; Welch, 2012). The situation in private universities, with lower proportions of qualified and full-time staff, is even less favourable (Buchori & Malik, 2004).

## 4 | METHODS

The study was assessed and approved by relevant university human research ethics committee before data collection commenced. After gaining ethics approval, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 participants over a period of 12 months between 2014 and 2015 in 19 public universities located in major cities of Indonesia. In these interviews, participants described various aspects of their academic and personal experiences. The interviews also included questions to elicit demographic details including age, career stage, family status, education background, work experience and work status.

In this research, data saturation was reached at 23 participants. Of these, 17 hold a Master degree (74%) and the rest have a Doctorate degree (26%). Their length of employment varied from less than 10 years (nine participants), through 10 to 20 years (seven participants), to over 21 years (seven participants). Interviews were

conducted with participants at various levels of seniority (Table 2) who were at different career stages (early-career, mid-career and late-career) based on the Directorate of Indonesian Higher Education/ *Direktorat Pendidikan Tinggi* (DGHE/DIKTI) academic classification system (DIKTI, 2015b). Criteria for inclusion in our study were: (1) women who are working as academic staff; (2) women who are employed in DIKTI accredited and registered public universities in Indonesia; and (3) women who have been working in public Higher Education as an academic for at least 12 months. Potential participants from different universities were recruited by email or phone call or personal reference from colleagues. As soon as a participant agreed to participate in the study, a schedule for the interviews session was arranged. Out of 45 potential participants, 23 agreed to participate and there were two participants who withdrew their consent. These withdrawals were from participants who had experienced oppression during the Soeharto and the New Order government era and found the idea of sharing personal stories uncomfortable. The interview recordings comprise 45 hr and 27 min of discussion that produced almost 380 pages of transcribed text.

The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. The transcripts were transcribed and then translated into English before analysis. Transcript translation is a sensitive issue in terms of finding and understanding

**TABLE 2** Characteristics of respondent (Data processed, 2017)

No.	Pseudonymised name	Education	Age	Tenure	Academic rank	Managerial position
1	Dewi	Master	31–40	Under 10 years	Junior Lecturer	–
2	Susi	Master	Over 40	10–20 years	Lecturer	–
3	Lenny	Master	31–40	Under 10 years	Junior Lecturer	–
4	Jelita	Doctorate	Over 40	Over 21 years	Professor	Senior Executive
5	Fitri	Master	31–40	Under 10 years	Junior Lecturer	–
6	Sitti	Master	31–40	Under 10 years	Junior Lecturer	–
7	Dian	Doctorate	Over 40	Over 21 years	Professor	Senior Executive
8	Kejora	Doctorate	31–40	10–20 years	Lecturer	–
9	Putri	Master	Over 40	Over 21 years	Senior Lecturer	–
10	Hastuti	Master	31–40	Under 10 years	Junior Lecturer	–
11	Ayu	Master	31–40	Under 10 years	Assistant Professor	–
12	Citra	Master	31–40	10–20 years	Lecturer	–
13	Indah	Master	Over 40	10–20 years	Senior Lecturer	Executive
14	Retno	Master	Over 40	Over 21 years	Senior Lecturer	–
15	Imelda	Master	Over 40	10–20 years	Lecturer	Senior Manager
16	Lestari	Master	31–40	10–20 years	Lecturer	–
17	Sinta	Master	Over 40	Over 21 years	Senior Lecturer	–
18	Sundari	Doctorate	Over 40	Over 21 years	Associate Professor	Senior Manager
19	Elisabeth	Master	20–30	Under 10 years	Junior Lecturer	–
20	Fatmawati	Master	20–30	Under 10 years	Junior Lecturer	–
21	Wulan	Doctorate	Over 40	Over 21 years	Professor	Senior Executive
22	Ratna	Master	20–30	Under 10 years	Assistant Professor	–
23	Pratiwi	Doctorate	Over 40	10–20 years	Associate Professor	–

the intended meaning of a text in a particular culture and how it tied to local realities (Temple & Young, 2004). The precision of the translation was ensured firstly because one of the researchers conducting the study is a Bahasa Indonesia native speaker. Once anonymised, the translations were also checked by a Bahasa Indonesia speaker with an expertise in English and a native English speaker with an expertise in Bahasa Indonesia. The data were then imported into the NVivo software package for analysis. In conducting analysis, this study develops a composite analytical interpretation of the identity work processes experienced by participants. The analysis consists of what they experienced as well as how and why they experienced it (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

#### 4.1 | First cycle coding: Open coding

The first stage of coding was conducted to establish initial categories and their relationships. The open coding process involved a line-by-line, sentence-by-sentence review to assess, compare, conceptualise and categorise the data (Saldana, 2013). The raw data were constantly compared and categorised into as many codes as possible. The researchers examined and identified the meaning of the data by asking questions, making comparisons, looking for similarities and differences between the comments.

In this study the open coding process led to the establishing of units of information that were classified together to form codes (Saldana, 2013). Theming of the codes began by identifying topics that were prevalent in each code. This approach was useful in identifying key concepts and in this stage, important illustrative quotes from the raw data were attached to these key concepts. At this point in the analysis the perspectives and experiences of the participants were examined to identify the ways in which they converge. The analysis concluded with the identification of clusters of meaning that describe what the participants experienced (textual descriptions) and a structural description of the context (Creswell, 2013).

#### 4.2 | Second-cycle coding: Pattern coding

Second-cycle coding involved reorganising and reanalysing data from the first-coding cycle to refine codes and themes from first-cycle coding to develop a smaller and more select set of broad categories, themes and concepts (Saldana, 2013). This required pattern coding to formulate theoretical constructs and processes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process of pattern coding dimensionalised the major themes that emerged and revealed dynamics of their interrelationship (Saldana, 2013). In doing this a theoretical perspective was formulated that describes and provides explanations about the identity work processes of the participants.

### 5 | IDENTITY WORK PROCESSES

Evidence of three distinct identity work processes emerged from the analysis. The first is dominated by prescribed social/political/cultural values grounded in *State Ibuism* that involves an acceptance of a pre-defined (*State Ibuism*), limiting female identity.

I have to be a woman that I was taught to be, to be the image of State Ibuism woman... I must adhere to the notion of kodrat, that men are destined to be the leader. (Kejora, Mid-career, Kendari)

The second is a rejection of *State Ibuism*. Instead, Westernised, masculine, managerialist conceptions of academic success prevail that emphasise an adoption of identities akin to those of male work colleagues (becoming one of the boys) in the hope that doing so will lead to career progression.



One must not only be 'Pintar' [clever], but also 'Pintar-Pintar' [being a smart worker and have interpersonal-political skills] .... Now, I am familiar with networking activities such as golfing, 'ngopi-ngopi' [having coffee while lobbying, usually with the influential person], and 'jalan-jalan ke Pusat' [networking with an influential person in Jakarta]. (Jelita, Professor—Senior Executive, Medan)

The third identity work is characterised by resistance to the influences of values arising from *State Ibuism* and those stemming from the imperatives of managerialist conceptions of academic success. The analysis of this study suggests that this resistance involves an engagement in attempts to establish new identity work pathways.

It is so ridiculous to impose a totally different culture into ours. I will never be an ideal woman as they like, because my youth really gave me this hatred feeling for ideal Indonesian [State Ibuist] woman image. (Elisabeth, junior lecturer, Jayapura)

What is with these standardized measurements and publication targets? I only see the modern academic as no more than a robot. (Hastuti, junior lecturer, Lampung)

## 5.1 | Macro-level influences and micro-level compliance

The first two identity work processes involve, in their own way, compliance with dominant power relationships. In accepting the prevailing female identity as defined by *State Ibuism* by complying with managerialist conceptions of academic identity, these two groups of women are repositioned within the territory of dominant male power structures. Even though the way participants repositioned their academic identities seem to have different flows, both comply with and conform to established male power.

*State Ibuism* is grounded in *nrimo takdir* (accepting a pre-defined female identity) in which New Order values are strongly embedded. The analysis suggests that this tends to be associated with acceptance of the prescribed *State Ibuist* female identity that is allied with the idea that this is necessary to ensure group security and harmony and prevent conflict. This complies with the New Order credo of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). This study found that the influence of *State Ibuism* on academic identity work created a situation where a particular form of gender identity is more salient than professional identity. Participants described this as an image of the ideal woman as defined by New Order values that is submissive, gentle, quiet, loyal and obedient to their husband.

For the second identity work process there is a sense that one is able to escape socially assigned identities and pressures of *State Ibuism* and at the same time allowing career advancement. The analysis of this study suggests that this is achieved by employing various strategies ranging from imitating masculine appearances and behaviour to actively engaging in office politics (including negotiation and lobbying in the high level) and impression management (which is frequently translated by participants as interpersonal skills). Participants outlined the need to display and negotiate identity by embodying the dominant masculine conceptions of success at work and at home. What differentiates this identity work process from the previous one is that it requires that women adopt an identity that embodies and complies with the masculine image of a successful academic.

The academic identity work of the third group of women is characterised by resistance to socially prescribed New Order gender identities and values of *State Ibuism* as well as challenging managerialist values of contemporary academia. This tends to take the form of agentic action that attempts to create new forms of feminist discourses that emphasise women's identity choices, fosters a collective voice for female academics and shifting away from neoliberal definitions of success in terms of individual, measurable performance criteria. The analysis suggests that this is part of a pattern that allows the development of alternative identity work pathways. Noticeably, most participants who expressed these perceptions are younger, in junior positions, live on islands other than Java, and have cultural backgrounds that are different from the dominant Javanese.

The origin of this resistance is the democratisation period after the New Order regime fell. Activism in the protests against the regime, the gaining of personal freedom and access to information denied to previous generations provided inspiration for such identity work. In resisting masculine-based academic identities and the culture of passive obedience to senior staff these participants adopt a contemporary stance on women's rights.

Resisting intervention from senior staff is exemplified by a junior lecturer who perceived interventions from her senior as threats to her independence as an academic.

One of the professors in my faculty told me to pass this student... I thought... that's it... Enough! I am sick and tired of it and I don't want to do it anymore. (Sitti, junior lecturer, Jakarta)

Sitti said that she accepted her senior's behaviour in her early years as part of her effort to be accepted in the profession by being a 'nice girl and never saying no to seniors'. As the time went by, she found it 'very unethical ... because I betrayed the profession's nobleness'. Moreover, as she actively struggled in her identity work process, she refused to comply with her senior's instructions and instead adopted a stance of resisting the status quo.

Resistance to current academic culture and values also suggests that there is opposition to the imperatives of neoliberal-inspired managerialism that has recently influenced the higher education sector in Indonesia. While accepting such notions might be essential to academic career advancement, there is more concern about the negative effects on wellbeing at work and how it is degrading the process of knowledge creation.

These findings suggest that the current calls by identity research to focus on its situated nature are valid to the extent that in this research it is found that similar tensions between internal and external forces are at work. What is needed though is a more nuanced understanding of these forces. While in Western research there are a strong organisational/professional (meso) influences on the (micro) process of an individual's identity work, in this study the strongest influences arise at the macro (social, cultural and political) level. In the next section we examine this further with reference to the group of women who resist these macro-level influences.

## 6 | RESISTANCE

For the third group of women in this research, their efforts to search for and construct alternative academic identities involved engaging in resistance through depositioning. Drawing on the concept of depositioning it is possible to capture the micro-process of identity work and depict how the resistance this study observed is a separation from the prescribed macro definitions of identity as defined and understood within the discourses of *State Ibuism* and contemporary academic managerialism.

In this research, the three characteristics of resistance emerge from the development of new styles of individual acts. The first is acts of resistance to socio-cultural expectations.

Why must we change ourselves into something that we are not? I am happy to be a Minangkabau woman, don't force me to be a Javanese woman who always regards herself as *konco wingking* (companion at the house). (Dewi, junior lecturer, Padang)

Dewi describes her identity work as a rejection of the *konco wingking* ideal woman as defined by the dominant Javanese (*State Ibuist*)—an act of defiance against prevailing New Order. Secondly, as can be seen from the excerpt, resistance takes the form of emphasising connections to other women. Rather than using *I*, Dewi uses the term *We*. This suggests that Dewi was attempting to convey her thoughts as a collective voice of women academics that was to express a sense of shared values rather than individualist values as espoused in managerialism.

A third feature of resistance that emerged from analysis was evidence that participants are searching for new values to inform their identity work. In this study, academic identity became less about material things and instead



focused on the intangible. For example, one participant said she felt 'empty, like there was a hole in my soul' (Susi, Mid-career, Malang). This holds that academic success is not necessarily assessed in individualistic, symbolic, or material terms. Instead it is more about knowledge creation and contribution to enhancing society that is connected to a dis-satisfaction with the way organisations are changing and the slow pace of social improvement. For the participants, it seems that identity work is not just a personal project it is also connected to bringing new meaning (potentials) to identity work more generally.

To sum up, this study found that with women on entering academia, there tends to be a process of territorialisation of their academic identities by dominant, established (masculine) value frameworks (either *State Ibuism* or managerialism). The interview data suggest that there are macro-influences that force compliance with pre-defined socially prescribed identities but there is also the possibility of micro (individual)-level resistance at the margins where women engage in a depositioning of identities and develop alternative identity work pathways. What they did was attempt to carve out space for the creation of an identity of choice. But this micro-level depositioning is in tension with the macro-level forces of territorialisation.

## 7 | NEW POTENTIALITIES

The participants who engaged in resistance in this research gave similar descriptions of how the search for alternative academic identities have potential to open up new depositioning moments, where the multiplicities of individual resistance connect to each other. In effect, these participants remake their own world by creating new trajectories—new identity work processes.

We like money and fame, who doesn't like them? But, it is time to give back to our people. I decided to forget my dream to be the academic idol. (Fitri, junior lecturer, Ambon)

However, the reality of organisational and social life is complex. In this research, efforts to construct alternative academic identities tended to be covert and gradual.

We could not create or publish our work because we were limited by the appropriateness and norms. So we planned to create an art festival in campus, but we discreetly included some feminist agenda and several pro-LGBT programs in it. (Sitti, junior lecturer, Jakarta)

Now I spend much of my time in educating homeless and jobless persons in my neighbourhood. I am very proud about this and this is my work... not much money but I feel the pride in it. (Elisabeth, junior lecturer, Jayapura)

The above excerpts suggest that these participants actively engage in resistance. The activities conducted by them are efforts to provide alternative identities for them to choose from. In addition, it is evident that identity is more salient and authentic whenever they are outside the professional habitat. According to the participants, the primary impetus was often an alarming or threatening experience to their identity which then set them on a search for new ideas that involved self-reflection. It was after this period of reflective introspection that liberating ideas were generated and elaborated and acted upon. According to the data, it was the participants' desire to escape the status quo that led them to resist. Their desire for an alternative identity drives depositioning and resistance that is not just intended to fight domination, it was also to be free from it.



## 8 | DISCUSSION

While the research sample of 23 women necessarily limits the degree to which the research findings can be generalised to represent all female academics, the findings raise questions and prospects for further research that will carve out new theoretical insights into the complex and sometimes conflicting processes encountered by the women in this study. This is most likely best achieved through longitudinal research that traces changes in academic identity work trajectories.

Current research draws attention to micro-processes of identity work, and how it connects to meso-level (organisational) influences and then to macro (social, cultural and political) forces. This study contributes first by suggesting that in contexts such as the Global South it is important to account for how dominant macro-level influences reinforce individual (micro-level) compliance with established power structures through the organisational (meso) level. While Watson's (2008) three-step model acknowledges the role of social identities in influencing identity work processes, it was discovered in this study that in the Indonesian context there are a limited number of available academic identities prescribed by dominant social and cultural value frameworks. Rather than contributing to the development of women's academic identities, it is found that their identity work is limited by macro influences. While Pick, Symons, and Teo (2017, p. 15) argue that for 'someone working as an academic, becoming an academic is central to their identity', this study suggests that for women who work as academics in contexts where their identities as academics are predefined, their profession might not be central to their identity. Instead, this study identified three differing and competing identity work processes that requires a more nuanced approach. One involves complying with dominant socio-cultural *State Ibuist* values of *kodrat wanita* requiring women to relinquish their efforts to establish an academic identity and with it their career aspirations. Another rejects this prescribed gender identity and instead adopts a situated managerialist discourse in which a woman's identity work and career progression depends on complying with masculinised organisational values and culture. The third is one of resistance. This perspective provides pathways to alternatives that do not conform to either the imperatives of *kodrat wanita* values or contemporary academic managerialism.

The second contribution is to extend the idea of 'hybridities'. In this study it is found that particular national and cultural contexts have a strong influence on the identity work of female academics. Regardless of their ethnicity and location, female academics struggle to construct an identity that is not that of either an ideal woman as defined by *State Ibuist* values or one that is defined by the masculine values of managerialism and academic capitalism. This is reinforced by an overhang from the authoritarian New Order regime that pursued an ideology of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), which for 32 years forced culturally varied Indonesians to adopt particular Javanese culture and values into their identities. The effect of this is significant on identity work among women entering the workplace as it creates insecurity and shame among those who want to pursue alternative identity pathways. Previous research suggests that women in Java struggle to pursue their career as a result of being pressured to become a reflection of some pre-defined ideal of a proper or good Javanese woman (Lindawati & Smark, 2015). This study found that this extends beyond Java across the whole nation. This though is just one of a complex array of multiple pressures faced by the female academics in this research arising from processes by which 'individuals are not read by others in terms of a single social-identity but in terms of several' (Watson, 2008, p. 136). This might suggest the presence of hybrid identities but not those identified in current academic identities research (e.g. Clegg, 2008; Churchman & King, 2009). Instead hybridity in this study is more about combining socio-cultural identities (minority and dominant Javanese) which is then overlain on a hybrid internal (private) identity and public identity that in some cases conform to dominant socio-cultural discourses and practices and in other cases resist these discourses and practices or some combination of the two. It seems that the situation in contexts like Indonesia and other parts of the Global South, academic identity work processes complex, diverse, interwoven, and competing macro and micro-scale influences that are then refracted through the meso (organisational) prism.

By examining women's academic identity work in a Global South context, this study also makes a contribution by suggesting that while academic identity work is well understood as an ongoing process of becoming and unbecoming (Archer, 2008), there is also the possibility of re-becoming. In this study the unbecoming academic is one whose identity work do not conform to dominant influences as they self-question their identity work by disrupting their sense of self (Beech, Gilmore, Hibbert, & Ybema, 2016). Their academic identity work is not on a pre-defined, fixed trajectory. For the unbecoming academic there is the possibility of re-becoming in a way that fulfils new, alternative constructions of identity. In exploring this idea, this study raises some intriguing questions that could only have been illuminated through a study of a Global South context, such as: will resistance successfully fulfil its potential to transform the lives and careers of the younger, junior academics? Or is it only a matter of time until they are repositioned within currently prescribed identities? Or are there possibilities of new, sustainable hybrid identities? The conditions under which each might occur do not belong to the internal constitution of resistance but rather are shaped by the relations of identity work to the macro contexts in which they occur as refracted through a meso (organisational) prism (e.g. the type of organisation, its conditions, formative events, national-cultural context, gender, etc., Brown, 2015). Different combinations of factors generate different movements and trajectories of compliance and resistance as different combinations of influence generate different forms of identity work process.

This study also contributes by challenging the assumption that women in what might be termed more traditional (Global South) contexts (e.g. Muslim majority nations) are submissive, passive and conform to their roles as prescribed by religious teaching and socio-cultural pressures. Many studies argue that particular religious teachings tend to dominate women's identity work in their careers (Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Coles, 2006; Jaschok & Shui, 2013; Melman, 2016). However, in this research it is found that it is more about how these are being interpreted and exploited in ways to disadvantage women. In this study of Indonesia it was discovered that this occurred first under the New Order regime and now by male organisational and social actors who are intent on preserving masculine dominance. Most worryingly for the academic profession is that this study produced evidence that many women compromise their academic freedom in order to survive and progress in their academic career either by adopting a socio-culturally prescribed academic identity that limits them to the domestic sphere or limits them to a pre-defined *masculinised* form of academic identity. This creates a contradiction in that the more women acted to strengthen their career, the more pressure there was on their academic freedom and the more limits imposed on their identity work.

Turning now to the implications for Higher Education policy-makers and managers, the results of this research has implications for those interested promoting diversity. There is plentiful evidence to support the idea that poorly understood and managed tensions around identity at work have negative impacts on work outcomes (McInnis, 2010; Winter, 2009; Winter & O'Donohue, 2012). In this study, tensions around identity were found to be particularly acute among younger women. Their academic identity work emerged as a form of resistance to dominant discourses and it was this group that seemed most conflicted and it is these women who will form important part of the future academic workforce. As part of developing this workforce, policy makers should take into account the aspirations of younger women to ensure universities can attract and retain the required number and quality of academic staff.

## 9 | CONCLUSION

This study contributes to resolving questions about theory and practice of women's identity work in higher education. While the organisational (meso-level) pressures on women academics in this study of a nation in the Global South are similar to their counterparts in Western universities, the macro-level and micro-level pressures and processes are somewhat different. Nevertheless, the aspirations of the women in this study are similar in many ways to those reported in research about Western universities. It is now possible to see the ways in which the interplay of power and resistance influences women's identity work in both developed (Western) nations and nations of the



Global South such as Indonesia. Future investigations are needed to answer remaining questions about whether new and alternative identity work processes can successfully challenge and change dominant influences that limit the career and life aspirations of women.

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