

Salasika

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Javanese Feminine Leadership during the Pandemic: A study of Sragen Regent's leadership style in overcoming the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe how the female Sragen regent practiced feminine leadership incorporating Javanese-Surakarta culture to deal with Covid-19 pandemic. Kusdinar Untung Yuni Sukowati is the first woman leader in Sragen raised in Surakarta's patriarchal culture. In some situations, a feminine leadership style that is attentive, humble, empathetic, and close to people is deemed more appropriate and impactful. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with feminine theory on political leadership styles and Javanese-Surakarta leadership philosophy. The finding showed that in successfully overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic, the Sragen regent implemented a feminine leadership style synergized with the leadership value of *Serat Wedhatama* entailing 5M, *Melek* (being attentive and introspective), *Milik* (having a sense of belonging), *Muluk* (fulfilling the daily needs), *Melok* (being empathetic), and *Meluk* (being close to the people). As a leader and a member of Sragen society, the regent worked with and involved people in socializing and supervising the implementation of health protocol to pursue social safety and welfare.

KEYWORDS: *leadership style, female, Javanese culture, Covid-19*

INTRODUCTION

In times of international crisis, such as a global pandemic, governments are urged to carry out instructions from authorized international health institutions to prevent the disease from spreading and minimize victims. This condition forces decision makers to find solutions quickly and appropriately. Political leaders' gendered leadership styles and

culture may influence their success in overcoming the pandemic.

In Indonesia, the Covid-19 pandemic forced people to foster a new system of life and modify social relations. The implementation of health protocols limited social interactions deemed to transmit the disease. Joko Widodo declared the Spread of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) a national disaster through the Presidential Decree

(Keppres) Number 12 of 2020 (Ihsanuddin, 2020).

Political leaders' sexes and gender-oriented leadership styles contribute to the success of overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic (Luoto & Varella, 2021). Considering the empirical evidence of leader performance at both central and regional levels in the first period (April to December 2020), several female leaders were assumed to implement a communicative, empathetic, populist, and empowering political leadership style suppressing the health and mortality risks due to Covid-19 pandemic in their region. Successful Covid-19 management is measured based on quick response, the number of infected people, mortality rate, and transmission indicators (Ma & Yang, 2020; Mubah & Anabarja, 2020).

Some journals, such as *The Leadership Quarterly* (Eagly & Heilman, 2016), *American Psychologist* (Chin, 2010), *Education Sciences* (O'Connor, 2018), and *Leadership* (Wilson, 2020), focus on issues of gender and leadership effectiveness. Several other journals like the *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* (Moss et al., 2022), *American Politics Research* (Byers & Shay, 2021), *Journal of European Public Policy* (Waylen, 2021), *Politics and Gender* (Johnson & Williams, 2020), *Leadership* (Wilson, 2020), *SN Comprehensive Clinical Medicine* (Bwire, 2020), and *Journal of Applied Psychology* (Sergent & Stajkovic, 2020) address the reluctance of masculine leaders to take Covid-19 seriously and implement mitigation measures to gain public trust.

Previous studies have shown that the leadership style displayed in the behavior and communication between masculine or feminine leaders and citizens contributes to success or failure in building citizens' trust (compliance) and solving problems (Waylen, 2021; Wood, 2016; Mendis & Silvia, 2017). For this reason, the leader should be a role model, ensuring followers realize the importance of sharing the organization's goals and values (Mendis & Silvia, 2017).

Previous studies on regional leadership have suggested that some female regional heads successfully cope with Covid-19, for example, the Mayor of South Tangerang, Airin Rachmi Diany (Zahra, 2020), the regent of Serang, Hj. Ratu Tatu Chasanah (Nurrohman & Ramadhan, 2020; Sultan & Tirtayasa, 2020), and regent of Jombang, Hj. Mundjidah Wahab (Wahyuni & Hertati, 2021). Those female political leaders demonstrate attentive, communicative, and populist leadership. Female political leaders focus more on preventing the acceleration of virus transmission, minimizing misery, and caring for the people infected with Covid-19 (Luoto & Varella, 2021). Their success in dealing with the pandemic maintained their political leadership (Johnson & Williams, 2020; Hogan, 2021). In addition, the Sragen regent is among the successful woman leaders as she adopted the Surakarta culture in her leadership style.

The Javanese culture referred to in this research includes the culture of people living in Central Java Province and Yogyakarta Special Region, including Surakarta and its surrounding areas known as

Solo Raya (Surakarta, Sragen, Boyolali, Karanganyar, Sukoharjo, Wonogiri, and Klaten). Geographically, Sragen Regency is bordered to the north by Grobogan Regency, to the east by Ngawi Regency, to the south by Karanganyar Regency, and to the west by Surakarta and Boyolali Regency. Bengawan Solo River crossing the Sragen Regency region is a factor causing the gap in people's well-being. People work outside Sragen Regency, known as *boro* (circular migration) in the local language, and study in other cities to support their life. It brings practical implications to the social-economic development of Sragen in both the short and long terms (Subadi, 2004).

In socio-culture life, most Sragen people are Islam with *Kejawen* (Javanism) philosophy. People believe that *Kejawen* is a way to achieve safety and happiness, emphasizing inner tranquility, harmony, *narima* (acceptance but not submission), *andhap asor* (humility), *eling-waspada* (self-introspection), and *prasaja* (humbleness) (Siswanto, 2016). *Kejawen* manifests the unity between humans and God, called *Islam Kejawen* (Javanese Islam) (Yogiswari, 2020). For the adherents of *Kejawen* Islam, proximity to the ancestors and creators of the universe is the most important thing. Rituals or offering ceremonies are performed to worship God and honor ancestors (Munna & Ayundasari, 2021).

The fact that Surakarta borders Sragen Regency impacts the acculturation of cultural values. Leadership in the traditional Javanese cultural context is commonly represented by a man (male figure). The Patriarchic

Javanese community still regards males as ideal leaders. One example of an ideal male leader is Danang Sutawijaya, entitled *Kanjeng Panembahan Pasopati* from Mataram Kingdom, well-known not only for his superpower and courage but also for his populism, justness, wisdom, and ability to control his lust by uniting himself to God (Susetya, 2016). Male political leadership style influenced by local culture can be seen in some previous studies discussing the regent of Polewali, Andi Ali Baal Masdar (Fibriani, 2014), the regent of Sidenreng Rappang, H. Dollah Mando (Rasyid, 2013), and the mayor of Semarang, Hendrar Prihadi (Purba, 2015). However, during the crisis period, female political leaders like Sragen regent is considered capable of dealing with challenging situations.

The Sragen regent, Kusdinar Untung Yuni Sukowati or Mbak Yuni, is the first daughter of five siblings born to the couple of H. Untung Saroni Wiyono Sukarno (former regent) and Suparmi. As a Sragen native, H. Untung Saroni Wiyono Sukarno taught the moral values of leadership through shadow puppets (*wayang*) to his children and communities by *mendalang* (becoming the narrator of shadow puppet). As a daughter, dr. Hj. Kusdinar Untung Yuni Sukowati is trusted to implement Surakarta values in her leadership style as the regent of Sragen. The regent adopted local culture in her political leadership style, making it acceptable to and legitimized by the people she leads. She learned Surakarta leadership philosophy, especially *Serat Wedhatama*, from shadow puppet. Implementing Surakarta's leadership philosophy,

she harmonizes life vertically (the relationship with God) and horizontally (the relationship with the community and the universe).

Sragen Regent's leadership capability has been proven through her success in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic. In the first quarter of 2020, the people of Sragen Regency indicated a high risk of Covid-19 exposure, showed by its red zone status with a 24,755 exposure rate and 765 deaths in 10 out of 20 sub-districts (Masaran, Karangmalang, Sragen, Sidoharjo, Gemolong, Kalijambe, Plupuh, Kedawung, Tanon, and Sumberlawang).

Considering the background above, this article aims to study the gender-oriented political leadership style of Sragen Regent, dr. Hj. Kusdinar Untung Yuni Sukowati, adopting Javanese philosophical values of *Serat Wedhatama* and the 5M in dealing with the first wave of Covid-19. This study is significant since the contemporary political leadership implemented by this female regional head employed different leadership values in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

From a traditional perspective, political leadership relates to state and military sovereignty and security (Tang, 2017). Political leadership classically relates to legitimacy, influence, persuasiveness, charisma, or compulsion in undertaking the government's power and administrative hierarchy (Ahlquist & Levi, 2011). The characteristics featured in political leadership are the manifestation of the relationship established between the leader and

those led through attention, respect, loyalty, and obedience.

In the political domain, feminism is present to demonstrate the construction of gender identity by generating a normative idea about what a man or a woman can do. In this case, the difference between "sexes" should be reconfirmed as an inherent biological condition and "gender". Goetz and Cornwall (2005) state that gender is an abstract form of society's social structure resulting from individual experiences complexly focusing on politics. Gender is also understood as an assumption constructed socially, established based on the male or female body and visible behavior.

Eagly and Johnson (1990) state that there is a different political leadership style between masculine and feminine leaders. A more democratic feminine leadership emphasizes participation, while the masculine one tends to be autocratic, so masculine leadership often implements a transactional leadership style. Female political leadership leads to cooperation, collaboration, and problem solving based on intuition, empathy, rationality, and peace. Therefore, it is classified into transformational leadership style. The feminine leadership style generally demonstrated by women can be applied more peacefully in various situations and cultures (Kark, 2004; Sanjaya, 2015). Feminine leadership styles demonstrate delegation, conflict management, individual adaptation, objectiveness, and attentiveness (Burke & Colin (2020). Faizan et al. (2018) conclude that the feminine leadership style implemented by a woman usually

relies on network structure prioritizing synergy, cooperation, and empowerment, while the masculine one relies on hierarchic power.

In the Javanese cultural context, a leader does not only relate to secular problems but is also defined as a ruler, representative, or reincarnation of God (the Creator) (Kurniawan, 2019). A leader should possess three preconditions: mastering knowledge (rational domain), *ngelmu* (supernatural power including inner domain), and revelation element constituting nature legitimacy. The characteristics of a Javanese leader, according to Sunarni (2016), are monocentric (single figure), metaphysical (obtained due to revelation), inspiring, *pulung* (through revelation), leveled or bearing status (*nunggaksemi*), pragmatic (through asceticism, ritual, *lelaku*, asceticism), ethical (having high moral, capable of distinguishing the good from the bad), and syncretic (taking important concepts or values from various religions).

In Javanese culture, someone with power cannot always influence others to obey his/her will. Power in Javanese culture is meta-empirical, not based on power, influence, wealth, relations, or descendants but is the mandate of God. Thus, Javanese people in the past sincerely and wholeheartedly obeyed the king's orders regarded as an incarnation (Santoso, 2012; Irawanto et al., 2011). In Javanese culture, power occurs in the books of *Negara Kertagama*, *Pararaton*, and *Babad Tanah Jawi*, describing the majesty of Majapahit Kingdom's power as the ancestor of the Mataram dynasty

(Rohmatin, 2019). The ancient writings reveal that power tends to be undivided, absolute and bear geanological legitimacy known as *trahing Kusuma*, *rembesing madu*, *wijiling naratapa*, and *tedhaking andana warih* (descendants of nobles or ascetics). Therefore, the king's speech can be standardized as public policy.

Those conditions changed drastically when the Mataram Kingdom was divided into four autonomous kingdoms, Kasultanan Yogyakarta, Kadipaten Pakualaman Yogyakarta, Kasunanan Surakarta, and Kadipaten Mangkunegaran Surakarta. The Dutch colonial reduced the domination of power and the legitimacy of the four *praja kejawen* (Javanese kingdoms). The four autonomous kingdoms developed literary works, namely *Hasthabrata* (*Asthabrata*), *Wulangreh*, and *Wedhatama*, containing leadership teachings and regulating the relationship between the king and the people, including the obligation of a leader to subordinates. The three leadership philosophies teach leaders to set a good example, guide, and encourage their followers.

From the three leadership philosophies, this article focuses on *Serat Wedhatama*. *Serat Wedhatama* comes from the words *serat*, meaning letter, *Wedha*, meaning *kawruh* (knowledge or science), and *tama*, meaning excellent, good, or perfect. Four *tembang macapat* (traditional Javanese song) (Pangkur, Sinom, Pocung, and Gambuh) in *Serat Wedhatama* represent the balance of knowledge between spiritual and physical lives (Boogert, 2015). *Serat Wedhatama* recommends the moral values Javanese leaders

should have, including *satriya* (brave, honest, defending truth and justice), *prasaja* (humble), *rila* (sincere), *setya budya* (competent), and *agama ageming aji* (obeying religious teachings) (Azhar, 2017; Kurniawan, 2019; Widodo, 2016).

In Sanskrit, the word woman comes from the word *per-empu-an*. *Per* means being, and *empu* means highly knowledgeable and noble. The definition of adulthood attached to the word woman is interpreted as a form of devotion bearing a higher value requiring loyalty and independence. It is a form of Indonesian "javanization" with the influence of the egalitarian Malay language but maintains its feudal spirit (Saraswati, 2016). Ancient Javanese community allowed women to participate in governmental politics as leaders/stateswomen (rather than the queen as the king's consort). Titi Surti Nastiti's (Nastiti & Sedyawati, 2009) dissertation, entitled *The Position and the Role of Women in Ancient Javanese Society (8th -15th centuries)*, explains that in that period, equality and shared opportunity existed between women and men, as 9 out of 14 areas under the Majapahit Kingdom were led by women. The stipulation in *Negarakrtagama*, *Sri Tanjung*, *Calon Arang*, and *Pararaton* shows that women were entitled to public positions (Munandar, 2015). Equality between women and men in politics from Mataram Kuno to Majapahit is rooted in Javanese culture, not distinguishing inheritance rights in society (Saraswati, 2016).

According to Sunarni (2016), Endraswara (2013), and Sari (2022), the Javanese female leadership style can be achieved through 5 M, *Melek*

(attentive and introspective), *Milik* (having a sense of belonging), *Muluk* (fulfilling the daily needs), *Melok* (empathetic), and *Meluk* (being close to the people). Nastiti and Sedyawati (2009) suggest that women leaders under the Majapahit Kingdom implemented a Javanese political leadership style. Female kings in Pekalongan and Jepara, Central Java, Ratu (queen) Shima and Ratu Kalinyamat, were well-known for their justness, attentiveness, empathy, humbleness, populism, and wisdom. Ratu Kalinyamat even fought against the Portuguese bravely (Ningsih, 2021; Aji, 2020).

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative approach as it aims to understand the social phenomenon in a specific context naturally, viewed from the research subject's action, speech, work, and perception. The descriptive qualitative approach is more appropriate for this research as it explores deeper, describes, and explains the policy change and its implementation to be adaptable to overcome the health crisis. The data was collected through interviews and documentation. In priority order, these informants were targeted in each community: 1) people from 20 sub-districts who had been exposed to Covid-19; 2) heads and available members of the regency council; 3) heads of health office; 4) heads of education office; 5) heads of women's empowerment office; 6) heads of industry, cooperatives, and micro, small and medium enterprises. Potential participants were informed that their names would not be disclosed in any report. Everyone contacted was freely invited to participate, and no one

refused. The interview was recorded with the participants' approval, and all transcripts were deleted after completion. Sragen regent, as the key informant with a relevant position and contribution during the Covid-19 pandemic, was selected as a data source for data triangulation. Interviews were conducted for 30-60 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed after getting approval from the interviewees. The research focused on regulations and circulars issued by the regent of Sragen from April to December 2020.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Sragen Regency is separated by the Bengawan Solo River, causing a gap in the community's prosperity and welfare. The northern part of the Bengawan Solo River is relatively less fertile because it is part of the Kendeng Mountains. This

condition contributes to poverty and difficulty in accessing clean water. Meanwhile, the central and southern regions are very suitable for agriculture and become the rice granaries of the Sragen Regency.

Most Sragen people are Islam, who also practice Kejawen (Javanism). Sragen's cultural values have acculturated with Surakarta, its border neighbor, cultures. Since the Dutch East Indies, Sragen has been part of the *Kasunanan* Surakarta Palace under the *Susuhunan Pakubuwana* (Lilyana et al., 2020). Sragen or Sukawati was the name given by Prince Mangkumi, the nobleman of Surakarta (Rukmini, 2009).

The leadership of Sragen regent, Kusdinar Untung Yuni Sukowati, was tested when the Covid-19 pandemic spread rapidly in her area. Sragen Regency was one of the areas exposed to Covid-19. Kusdinar Untung Yuni Sukowati was the first female regent Sragen since 1861. She

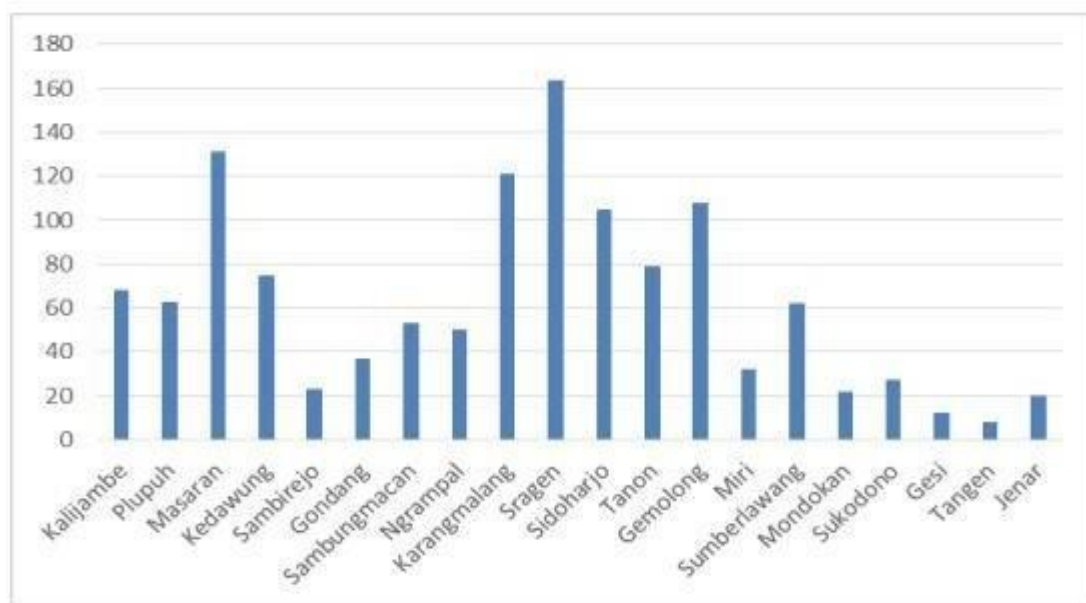


Figure 1. Mapping of sub-districts exposed to Covid-19 (June 27, 2020). Adapted from researchers from various sources

is the seventeenth regent after her father, Untung Saroni Wiyono Sukarno, who served from 2001-2011. She is the first of five children. She was a doctor before becoming a regent and politician. She establishes a hospital, which is a family business.

Her leadership style, as a woman, in overcoming Covid-19 was evident in the first wave, when people were unaware of the danger it generated. They were unaware that the Covid-19 pandemic relates to clean and healthy living behaviors (Mutmainah & Jamilatun, 2021). Some rural communities had difficulty accessing health facilities, were unsure of health protocol implementation, had low awareness, and distrusted the dangers posed (Prasetyo et al., 2021).

Sragen regency was a red zone with a 24,755 exposure rate and 765 deaths throughout 10 out of 20 sub-districts (Masaran, Karangmalang, Sragen, Sidoharjo, Gemolong, Kalijambe, Plupuh, Kedawung, Tanon, and Sumberlawang).

In a critical situation with uncertainty and unusualness, people must adapt to the new normal life under a regional head's leadership. As the ruler, the regional head is expected to respond quickly and effectively to the planned disease management. In addition, attentive, emphatic, humble, and populist leaders with a sense of belonging are needed to prevent excessive reactions to the crisis.

Discussion

The presence of a political leader is not intended to confirm the competitive masculine male ruler with hierarchic authority, control,

and problem solving through analysis (Enloe, 2010). It is essential for the political leader to change people's life amid the crisis positively. By adopting the truth, firmness, love, and technology mastery elements in his/her leadership style, a political leader can successfully suppress the pandemic acceleration rate and its effect (Johnson & Williams, 2020). Therefore, the critical situation requires feminine character prioritizing interpersonal communication, discussion, compromise, warmth, helpfulness, and empathy generally featured by a female figure (Hoyt & Burnette, 2013).

Research on social roles suggests that role stereotypes guide the behavior of female and male leaders (Eagly & Wood, 2013). According to experts, women tend to be communal, communicate, and share, while men are agents and independent (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2019; Koenig et al., 2011). Women are unfavorably evaluated if they act inconsistently with gender role stereotypes (Vroman & Danko, 2020; Eagly & Karau, 2002). External and internal influences in each specific context (family and local culture) determine gender-driven behavior, such as social-cognitive theory, gender role development, and differentiation. Although much of human learning and adaptation is socially situated, women and men are not passive objects governed by the local environment and culture. On the contrary, just like men, women are agents of experience and self-thinking (Lent & Brown, 2017; Mazei et al., 2015; Sergent & Stajkovic, 2020).

For that reason, the regent of Sragen applied a feminine political leadership style incorporating Surakarta leadership philosophy, *Serat Wedhatama*. The Sragen regent also implemented 5M (*Melek, Milik, Melok, Muluk, Meluk*) in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic. The implementation of introspection and attentiveness (*Melek*) was evident in the regent's public policy. An example was the circular letter about the implementation of New Normal No. 360/002/038/2020 and the Regent of Sragen's Regulation No 33 of 2020. Article 3 of the Regent's Regulation stated that the implementation of new normal life order was intended to create a new life order based on the health protocols to establish a productive community surviving the transmission of the Covid-19 pandemic. To implement it, in her spare time, the Sragen regent actively vaccinated her people from door to door. The regent's initiative to visit people to vaccinate them was to deal with the fact that not all Sragen citizens want to be vaccinated. Sragen people believed that vaccines would not increase the body's resistance to the coronavirus. The people's fear and anxiety about vaccination due to fake news encouraged the Sragen regent to directly vaccinate her people, especially the elderly, district office staff, rural residents, school students, and village heads against vaccination. Sragen regent continuously reminded residents to implement health protocols, especially by wearing masks outside the house.

The Sragen regent demonstrated Muluk (fulfilling the daily needs)

through her direct participation in distributing basic need packages from the government to those infected with Covid-19. The Sragen regent distributed 59,087 daily need packages to each sub-district. To ensure the program ran well, the regent of Sragen attempted to meet the supplier of food staples directly to get a lower price and lead and escort the distribution process to those in need. Almost every night, the regent and Covid-19 task force visited the residents. The purpose of the visit was to find out whether vaccination in the community was successful. The regent also paid an impromptu visit to greet and remind people to obey health protocols.

In implementing *Melok (empathy)*, the Sragen regent interacted directly with the people or via social media, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. With her motto "*mbak yuni selalu dihati*" (Yuni is always in my heart), she created *#sragenpakaimasker*, *#guyubrukun*, *#indonesialawancorona*, *#dirumahsaja*, *#cucitanganpakaisabun*, and *#sragenbisa* hashtags to ease the community to interact directly with her. In building communication, the regent addressed the people directly to implement the health protocols and help those infected with Covid-19. In supervising health protocol implementations, the Sragen regent cooperated with village officials, volunteers, village midwives, Dharma Perempuan Kabupaten (regional women organization), Bintara Pembina Desa/babinsa (village superintendent), Bhayangkara Pembina Keamanan dan Ketertiban Masyarakat/bhabinkamtibmas (community police officers), and *jogo tonggo* (looking after neighbors) task

force from district to village level. Sragen regent also supported *pager mangkok* (a Javanese metaphor meaning sharing, caring, and taking care of each other) as social capital and community participation to share basic needs with those infected by Covid-19. All local government employees had savings in MATRA organization. The savings were a compensation fund to overcome poverty and crises, such as the one caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Another program empowered members of micro, small, and medium-scale enterprises (MSME) to make and distribute free masks, hand sanitizers, face-shield, and hand soaps to the entire community.

The Sragen regent demonstrated *Milik* (sense of belonging) through visiting and providing courtesy to those whose families died of Covid-19. *Milik* means providing infrastructure to improve welfare. The regent's program to improve community welfare through weaving, handicraft, and communication skill training funded by the council was prioritized for handling the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The regent implemented *Meluk* (being close to the people) to maintain the society's economy through women's empowerment. Citizens who lost their jobs were employed as delivery personnel for basic needs through three applications, namely Go Shop, Pasarmu, and Online Market cooperating with traditional markets and www.pasarayaonline.com (the online market system). The program allowed traditional markets to remain open by establishing health protocols. The regent of Sragen also provided a recovery fund to train

people to establish MSME by cooperating with cooperatives and modern markets, such as Indomaret. Through this strategy, women who did not work or lost their jobs could produce handicrafts while educating the public to adhere to health protocols by creating Covid-19-themed bags and doormats sold locally and internationally. The handicraft demand from Sragen increased by 80% during the Covid-19 pandemic (Maulani, 2021).

The Sragen regent demonstrated democratic values emphasizing participation, communication, cooperation, collaboration, intuition-based problem solving, empathy, rationality, and peace. Her parents, who have a Javanese cultural background, taught her these values.

The leadership style demonstrated by the regent of Sragenduring the Covid-19 pandemic embraced her people, put herself in the Sragen people's shoes, and relieved or solved the problems encountered by Sragen people through some empowering programs. The Sragen regent applied feminine leadership, incorporating 5M to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The feminine leadership style rooted in Javanese culture has successfully helped her deal with Covid-19. First, through The Instructions of The Regent of Sragen Number 360/440/0381/2021, she imposed Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM) Level 2 in all areas of Sragen Regency. The policy successfully suppressed the spread of Covid-19 in Sragen. Second, the Sragen government, through the cooperatives and

MSMEs office, won the 2021 Natamukti Awards as proof of its success in empowering and strengthening MSMEs during Covid-19 (Dinkopukm, 2021). Third, the door-to-door vaccination program and direct interaction of the regent of Sragen with the community led to the achievement of being a regency with the highest number of vaccinations in Central Java province. Sragen reached 84.3% for all vaccination stages (Sudarsono, 2022).

CONCLUSION

A regional leader's political leadership style impacts the people he/she leads. The leadership style of the female Sragen regent, formerly a physician, was influenced by Surakarta cultural values. During the Covid-19 pandemic, she implemented a female leadership style incorporating cultural values. Her attentiveness, responsiveness, empathy, sense of belonging, humbleness, and populism were the manifestation of 5M (*Melek, Meluk, Muluk, Milik, and Melok*). *Serat Wedhatama* can guide civil leaders to provide security, comfort, and welfare.

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ABOUT

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SJ is inspired by the need to put into visibility the Indonesian and South East Asian women to ensure a dissemination of knowledge to a wider general audience.

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