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Women as First Successors in Indonesian Family Businesses: A Two-Case Qualitative Study in Minangkabau and Javanese Cultural Contexts
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Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2026 | Diunduh dari http://etd.repository.ugm.ac.id/

ABSTRACT

This study examines women as first successors in Indonesian family businesses through a two-case qualitative study in Minangkabau and Javanese cultural contexts. The research focuses on how women are positioned and legitimized as successors, how successor readiness is developed, and how cultural context influences leadership transition in family businesses. The study was conducted in two family-owned gas station businesses in West Sumatra, involving seven informants consisting of female successors, founders or parents, and employees. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis.

The findings show that women's position as first successors was not formed through formal succession planning or direct appointment, but developed gradually through continuous involvement in daily operations, family trust, and increasing responsibility. Successor readiness was mainly shaped through experiential learning, mentoring, and direct exposure to business activities rather than structured training. Leadership legitimacy was also built progressively as the successors demonstrated competence, consistency, and the ability to manage employees and business operations. Cultural context influenced the way succession was understood and negotiated, but it did not directly determine the succession outcome. In the Minangkabau case, the matrilineal context provided symbolic support for women's role in family continuity, while in the Javanese case, family hierarchy and respect for senior family members shaped the transition process. However, in both cases, practical involvement, readiness, and demonstrated capability were more decisive in gaining leadership acceptance. This study contributes to a more context-sensitive understanding of women's succession in Indonesian family businesses and highlights the importance of gradual preparation, trust, and family support in sustaining intergenerational business continuity.

Keywords: Women Successors, Family Business, Succession Planning, Leadership Legitimacy, Successor Readiness, Minangkabau Culture, Javanese Culture.