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**Women in Power and Decision-Making: Power Awareness and Enactment on Nonprofit Boards in South and Southeast Asia**

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**Abstract**

Nonprofit boards in South and Southeast Asia operate within deeply ingrained power structures that often remain unexamined. Existing governance literature, largely shaped by Global North perspectives, overlooks the nuances of power in these regions. This study explores how board directors understand, construct, and enact power within governance and decision-making processes.

Specifically, this research investigates:

1. To what extent are nonprofit board directors aware of different types of power?
2. What types of power exist within nonprofit boards in South and Southeast Asia?
3. How do directors navigate power dynamics in governance structures?

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study combines quantitative surveys with qualitative methods, including interviews, non-participant direct observation, and action research.

A conceptual framework integrating Goodwill’s (2020) power literacy framework, VeneKlasen and Miller’s (2007) expressions of power, and French & Raven’s (1959) power typology serves as a foundation for analysing power awareness and its impact on governance practices.

This presentation will share initial findings from the research, offering insights into how power is understood and enacted within nonprofit boards in the region. By making power structures more visible, this study aims to contribute to governance strategies that foster accountability, equity, and more inclusive decision-making.

**Keywords**

Power; boards; nonprofits; South Asia; Southeast Asia.

**Biography** **(150 words limit)**

Rani Pramesti (she/they) is a researcher, social designer, and advocate for gender-equitable leadership. As Executive Director of [Wedu](http://weduglobal.org/), a women’s leadership organisation supporting women leaders across South and Southeast Asia, Rani is committed to fostering more inclusive and power-literate governance.

With over 18 years of experience collaborating with systemically marginalised communities, Rani applies a systems-thinking approach to leadership. They co-design transformative learning experiences and impact storytelling initiatives that centre the voices of those often excluded from decision-making spaces.

Rani is currently completing a Master of Design Futures at RMIT University, where their research explores power awareness and enactment among nonprofit board directors in South and Southeast Asia. Through this work, Rani aims to challenge Global North-centric governance models and contribute contextually relevant strategies for equitable decision-making.

Rani is also a member of the Impact and Influence Advisory Committee to the board of Plan International Australia and a Board Member with a community-based organisation supporting communities of diverse SOGIESC in Indonesia. Connect with them on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ranipnews/).

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