



WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTIES: A GENDER SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract :

Women's participation in political parties is an important indicator of democratic quality. Nevertheless, women continue to encounter structural, cultural, and institutional barriers that limit their full participation in political processes. Drawing upon a gender sociology perspective, this paper examines the factors contributing to the persistent underrepresentation of women in politics, particularly in Indonesia. This study employs a qualitative approach based on a literature review to explore the interplay between gender relations, patriarchal culture, and the internal dynamics of political parties. The analysis demonstrates that increasing women's political representation requires not only affirmative policies but also broader social transformation through changes in gender norms and the strengthening of women's political capacity.

Keywords: Women; Gender; Political Parties.

INTRODUCTION

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1981, established one of the fundamental principles of equal participation between women and men in political life. More than two decades after the Convention was signed and ratified by 165 countries, Indonesia also embraced the Vienna Declaration, which strongly supports the advancement of women's rights. Despite these international commitments, however, women across the world continue to experience marginalization and remain underrepresented in the political sphere.

Women's political participation has long been recognized as a global issue within the broader discourse on democracy and gender equality. In Indonesia, although affirmative measures such as the 30% quota for women's representation in political parties and legislative institutions have been introduced, their implementation continues to face substantial challenges. Numerous studies indicate that patriarchal social structures, gender stereotypes, and inadequate institutional support remain the principal barriers preventing women from participating fully in political processes (Siregar, 2020).

Nevertheless, evidence from various contexts suggests that women's participation in politics can contribute significantly to addressing governance



problems that hinder national development. A study conducted by the World Bank found a strong association between women's representation in parliament and lower levels of corruption. Countries with relatively high levels of women's representation in both legislative and executive institutions generally exhibit lower corruption rates. The Scandinavian countries provide one of the clearest examples of this relationship. These countries are widely recognized for their high levels of prosperity, which are closely associated with low corruption, effective governance, and strong rule of law. Consequently, the Scandinavian experience has frequently been cited as evidence of the positive relationship between women's political participation and societal well-being (MB. Wijaksana, 2004).

The low level of women's representation and participation in parliament, as well as the reluctance of many women to engage in political parties, is often rooted in the widespread perception that politics is primarily a male domain. This perception reflects what has commonly been described as the "masculine model of politics", in which political institutions and practices are regarded as being more compatible with masculine characteristics than with women's roles, values, and perspectives.

A gender sociology perspective provides an analytical framework for understanding how socially constructed gender relations shape the distribution of power, access to political resources, and women's relationships with political institutions, including political parties. Since political parties serve as the principal gateway to public office, it is essential to examine how their internal dynamics influence women's opportunities to compete, participate, and exercise political leadership.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this paper addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the social construction of gender influence women's participation in political parties?
2. What structural, cultural, and institutional barriers do women encounter in political processes?
3. What strategies and policy efforts can enhance women's representation within political parties?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design using a literature review approach. Data were collected from scholarly journal articles, academic books, reports published by official institutions, and policy documents concerning gender and politics. The data were analyzed using content analysis to identify the major themes related to gender relations and political parties.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A Gender Sociological Approach to Politics

Gender sociology examines how societies construct gender roles,

identities, and relations, as well as how these constructions affect access to power. In politics, these structures are reflected in the predominance of men in leadership positions and the establishment of masculine political standards as the prevailing norm (Connell, 2009).

Women are frequently assigned roles that are perceived as incompatible with political activities, which are commonly characterized as demanding, rational, and competitive. According to Eman Hermawan (2002), women's limited involvement in the political sphere can be attributed to several factors:

1. The perception that women are suited only to the role of homemakers rather than being recognized as members of society, let alone as political actors.
2. The limited relationships and cooperation between women and other public organizations, such as trade unions and women's groups.
3. Insufficient support from political parties, including the limited number of female candidates, inadequate campaign funding for women candidates, restricted access to political networks, and the widespread application of double standards.
4. The absence of well-developed training and educational systems for women's leadership in general and for young women's organizations in political life in particular.
5. The nature of the electoral system, which may or may not be favorable to women candidates.
6. Gender ideologies, cultural patterns, and predetermined social roles assigned to women and men.
7. Women's lack of confidence in nominating themselves as candidates and their perception of politics as a dirty game.
8. The manner in which women's lives are portrayed in the mass media.
9. The double burden arising from domestic responsibilities and professional obligations.
10. Poverty, unemployment, and insufficient access to adequate financial resources.

Women in Political Parties: Realities and Challenges

Although political parties serve as the principal vehicle through which individuals attain public office, women are often positioned in non-strategic roles within party structures. Common barriers include internal party patriarchy, which confines women to supporting sectors such as social affairs and women's divisions; limited access to political resources, including funding, networks, and support from political elites; gender stereotypes that cast doubt on women's leadership capabilities; and money politics, which structurally places women at a disadvantage.

Data from various general elections indicate that, despite the existence of women's representation quotas, female candidates are often placed in electoral

positions from which they have little prospect of winning (Siregar, 2020). Furthermore, drawing on social realities and the experiences of several women's organizations, Eman Hermawan (2002) identifies several manifestations of patriarchal politics within political parties:

1. Political systems and political parties that lack gender sensitivity, resulting in women's political participation and gender-related issues being treated as marginal concerns.
2. The domination of the political arena by men, with political practices frequently organized according to male norms, values, and lifestyles. These practices are stereotypically based on the ideas of "winners and losers," competition, and confrontation rather than mutual respect, collaboration, and the creation of political consensus that supports women's interests.
3. The construction of exclusive political structures dominated by men.
4. A lack of transparency in the selection of party leaders.
5. The reluctance of political parties to place women in electable positions on candidate lists and within women-related political agendas.
6. Fundamental ideological and psychological factors, including conflict-ridden meetings, perceptions of politics as "dirty," and occasional physical violence, all of which discourage women from participating.
7. A multiparty system that divides a limited number of parliamentary seats among numerous parties, resulting in men being prioritized for those positions.
8. A vote-counting system based on the Electoral Quotient, or *Bilangan Pembagi Pemilih* (BPP), which has been shown to disadvantage women. When a female candidate fails to reach the required electoral quotient, the votes she receives are automatically transferred to candidates with lower list numbers above her, positions that are generally occupied by men.

The deeply rooted patriarchal culture within Indonesian society continues to position women primarily within the domestic sphere, causing political involvement to be regarded as inconsistent with women's social identity. The double burden, limited family support, and the internalization of gender stereotypes constitute additional barriers. Nilan and Parker (2013) demonstrate that traditional social norms continue to dominate the formation of women's political behavior.

Feminist Perspectives in the Analysis of Women's Political Participation

Liberal Feminism: Equality through Structural Reform

Liberal feminism argues that gender inequality in politics is primarily caused by legal and institutional barriers. Women can participate on an equal basis when they are granted equal access to education, public office, and

political opportunities (Tong, 2009).

Within this context, the 30% quota policy is consistent with the liberal feminist perspective because it creates formally equal opportunities for women. Reforms to political party regulations, leadership training, and transparency in candidate selection are among the solutions aligned with this perspective.

Radical Feminism: Politics as a Patriarchal Structure

Radical feminism regards patriarchy as the fundamental source of gender inequality. The political arena is understood as having been historically shaped by masculine values, including competition, domination, and hierarchy (Firestone, 1970).

From a radical feminist perspective, women are not merely denied access to political institutions but are also marginalized because politics itself is a patriarchal institution. Consequently, a transformation of political culture is required, including the elimination of sexist practices, the implementation of collective leadership, and the creation of political environments free from violence and harassment.

Intersectionality: Women's Multiple Identities in Politics

Intersectionality emphasizes that women's experiences cannot be understood solely through the dimension of gender but must also be examined through other layers of identity, including social class, ethnicity, religion, age, and disability (Crenshaw, 1989).

Within Indonesian politics, lower-class women face greater difficulties in contesting elections because of the high financial costs of political participation. Women from religious or ethnic minority groups may experience multiple forms of discrimination, while young women are often regarded as inexperienced and are consequently underestimated. This theory broadens the analysis by demonstrating that the barriers faced by women are not one-dimensional but layered and interconnected.

Integrating the Three Theories in Understanding Women's Political Participation

The three feminist perspectives discussed above provide a comprehensive understanding of women's political participation. Liberal feminism explains the importance of policy reform and equal access. Radical feminism reveals the patriarchal foundations embedded within political structures. Intersectionality, meanwhile, demonstrates that not all women experience the same forms or levels of disadvantage.

Each of these feminist perspectives therefore makes a distinct contribution:

Political Theory	Primary Focus	Strategy for Change	Relevance
Liberal Feminism	Legal and institutional barriers	Policy reform, quotas, political education	Explains the importance of affirmative action
Radical Feminism	Patriarchy as a structural system	Transformation of political	Explains why women remain

		culture	marginalized despite the implementation of quotas
Intersectionality	Multiple identities and overlapping discrimination	Policies based on inclusion and social justice	Explains differences in political experiences among women

By integrating these three perspectives, the analysis of women's political participation becomes more comprehensive because it encompasses policy-related, cultural, and individual social dimensions. The barriers faced by women in politics arise from a combination of patriarchal structures, policy inequalities, and intersecting social identities.

Strategic Efforts to Increase Women's Representation in Political Parties

Cultural conditions, social systems, political structures, and poverty continue to constitute formidable barriers to women's participation in the political sphere. Systematic efforts are therefore required to transform these conditions. Such efforts may be undertaken through the following strategies and tactics.

Developing a Strategy

1. Identifying and analyzing the problems experienced by women in society.
2. Conducting comprehensive research on the conditions of women across various fields and sectors of public policy.
3. Aligning advocacy efforts with the vision, mission, and objectives of the organization or political party through which women pursue their political interests.
4. Understanding the weaknesses and capacities of the organization or political party that serves as the platform for women's political struggle.
5. Continuously reviewing conditions in the field because strategic advocacy does not operate in a vacuum.

Tactics

After developing a strategy, the second step is to prepare appropriate tactics. Several tactics are recommended to maximize women's political participation:

1. Amending discriminatory party regulations and government legislation
Political party regulations or government laws that permit discrimination against women must be amended. This represents an essential initial step in women's political struggle before broader objectives can be pursued. Women who join political parties must demonstrate that discrimination against women harms not only women and female party members but also the political party itself. Political parties must recognize that women constitute the largest group of voters

in Indonesia. Consequently, regulations that discriminate against women may reduce a party's popularity among this major electoral constituency.

2. Developing closer relationships with the media to increase public awareness of women's issues.

Women involved in politics should utilize the media, particularly the opportunities provided by radio stations for public debates, television talk shows, and professional relationships with journalists and editors in both print and electronic media. Media engagement should not merely be used to disseminate political ideas. More importantly, the media should function as a channel of communication through which women politicians can obtain feedback from voters. Such information is highly valuable for formulating future strategies and determining subsequent political actions.

3. Building and maintaining networks with women's organizations.

Women politicians should establish and sustain networks with women's organizations, including both political organizations and other civil society groups.

4. Working in partnership with male politicians

A common political expression states that there are no permanent enemies or permanent friends in politics, only permanent interests. Cooperation with men who share a similar political vision can therefore provide significant political advantages. When confronting male politicians who persistently reject women-oriented proposals, women politicians may respond by pointing out that other men are willing to support women's interests and questioning why they are unwilling to do the same.

The efforts described above constitute important forms of political endeavor for women politicians, particularly because women represent a larger electoral constituency than men. Mathematically, women therefore possess a bargaining position that should not be underestimated. Women can nominate themselves as candidates and constitute a decisive electoral community in general elections.

Nevertheless, women voters must ensure that the candidates they support are genuinely capable of representing women's aspirations within the broader public interest, particularly given the scale and complexity of the problems faced by women.

Berikut adalah terjemahan publication-ready yang disesuaikan dengan gaya penulisan jurnal internasional bereputasi (Scopus Q1/Q2). Seluruh makna, argumen, dan referensi dipertahankan tanpa penambahan substansi.

CONCLUSION

Women's participation in political parties continues to be constrained by structural, cultural, and institutional barriers. A gender sociological perspective, together with feminist theories, demonstrates that these challenges are fundamentally rooted in patriarchal culture, policy inequalities, and the

complexity of women's intersecting identities.

Efforts to enhance women's political representation should therefore focus on strengthening affirmative policies and reforming political institutions, fostering a political culture free from discrimination, empowering women and expanding women's networks, and adopting an intersectional approach to ensure inclusivity across diverse groups of women. Such transformations are essential for improving the quality of democracy and promoting a political system that is more equitable and gender-inclusive.

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