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Political Communication Strategies to Increase the Opportunity of Women's Political Representation in Indonesian Parliament

By Zaenal Mukarom

Abstract
Empirically, women's involvement in Indonesian politics still indicates a low participation level. This study aims to determine the political communication strategies undertaken by women and political parties which are considered to have a direct interest in women's representation in the legislature. The methodology employed included in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and participant observation. The study was conducted in the West Java Parliament representing the dynamics of national politics. The study found that the current political communication strategies undertaken by women politicians involved alternative strategies such as mainstreaming gender, encouraging affirmative action to have at least 30% women's representation, and offering political education to women through women's organizations or civic education. The study revealed that political parties utilized various political and media strategies, including messaging and a mix of political marketing techniques. The data and findings from the current study can be significant for: (1) policymakers in encouraging literacy and addressing gender issues in all development programs; (2) politicians and political parties to recruit women as the members of the legislature, as specified in the regulation concerning women's representation; (3) political communication studies to recruit future Indonesian leaders with the orientation and focus on gender sensitivity.

Keywords: Communication strategy, Gender, Gender mainstream, Legislature, Political participation

Introduction
The issue of women's political participation in developing countries, including Indonesia, is a complex phenomenon and relates to the dynamics and development of political systems. The participation level becomes the acknowledgment indicator of a political system developed by a country. The development of political systems in a nation depends on the level of citizen political participation without differentiating gender. Political participation can be classified into five criteria (Surbakti, 1992), i.e., observable activities or behaviors; 2. excitement, mobilized to influence the government as the maker and implementer of political decisions; activities that succeed and even those that fail to influence the government included in the concept of political participation; activities affecting the government that can be carried out directly or indirectly; activities affecting the government through reasonable procedures rather than violence such as voting in elections, petitioning, making face-to-face contact, writing letters, and means outside reasonable procedures.

Political participation is broadly defined as the action of a person or group to actively participate in political life, such as electing a country’s government and influencing government policy (public policy) (Poespawardojo, 1986). Political participation also includes voting in elections, attending public meetings, and becoming a political party and parliament member.

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Accordingly, political participation can be divided into autonomous and mobilized political participation (Zainuri, 2007). Furthermore, the variety of political participation activities also indicates different levels of complexity and dynamics of the participation. Based on this framework, women's political participation can be understood as the involvement of women in one or more political activities mentioned above, starting from the simple activity such as voting in elections to the more complex one such as becoming members or leaders of parliament. The more complex the participation is, the more difficult for women to participate in it.

Many studies examined that women's political participation in Indonesia remained low (Inwantoro & Herawati, 2014; Maherul & Puri, 2019; Muslimat, 2017; Sahi, 2016); this is especially the case for women's participation in parliament. These studies also identified that there were at least three factors that caused this low level of women's political participation in Indonesia. First, lacking support from political parties was an obstacle for women to be more active as parliament members. Almost all political parties demonstrated smaller proportions of female members than males. Second, there was a remaining cultural perception that women only deserved to work in domestic areas, especially as housewives, not political actors, let alone political party leaders. These cultural barriers created obstacles for women to participate in political activities. In addition, there was a preconception that women tended to lack confidence when they were involved in politics. Third, women had not taken on formally open opportunities to participate in political activities.

Closing the gap between women and politics has proved difficult. Although politics is an open space that anyone can join, it is not an easy matter for women in Indonesia. The involvement of women in politics remains a "big dream" for many women. A straightforward indicator of this problem concerns the representation of women on the political stage and formal political institutions such as the central and regional legislatures. This can be shown from the data of the last 2019 election results. Table 1 and Figure 1 indicate that the representation of women in the legislature remains deficient. Figure 2 illustrates that only 111 people or 19 percent of the total 575 positions in the House of Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat or DPR) in 2019 were held by women, according to General Election Commissions of Republic Indonesia or Komisi Pemilihan Umum. Although the representation of women in DPR has not reached 30 percent, the results have increased slightly from the previous period. In the 2014 election (KPU, 2014), the number of women elected amounted to only 97 people or 17 percent of the 552 elected DPR members (Figure 3). This data suggests that there was no significant increase for Indonesian women in occupying legislative seats in the last five years.

### Table 1: Legislative Candidates Elected based on Gender According to the 2014 and 2019 Election Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party Name</th>
<th>Election of 2014</th>
<th></th>
<th>Election of 2019</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Golongan Karya</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Nasional Demokrat</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Amanat Nasional</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The underrepresentation of women in legislative bodies has been an issue since elections were held in post-independence Indonesia. This is evident in data on the development of women's representation in the legislature from 1955 to the 2009 election (Amanda, 2016), as illustrated in Table 2. Based on Figure 4, in 59 years since independence, women representatives in the legislature have not increased significantly both at provincial and district/city levels. In West Java, the representation of women in the Regional People's Representative Assembly (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah or DPRD) remains below 30 percent (data available in Table 2). Of the 120 legislators elected in the 2019 election, only 19% were women. Although women's representation in DPR increased by 3.55 percent nationally from the previous period, a similar condition did not occur in West Java. In West Java, women's representation in the provincial DPRD declined compared to the last period. In
the 2014 election, women's representation in DPRD reached 23 percent of 100 seats. Meanwhile, in the 2019 election, women's representation was merely 19 percent of 120 seats.

Table 2: Level of Women's Representation in Legislative Institutions based on Election Results in Indonesia (Amanda, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-1955</td>
<td>9 (3.8%)</td>
<td>236 (96.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-1960</td>
<td>17 (6.3%)</td>
<td>272 (93.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-1959</td>
<td>25 (5.1%)</td>
<td>488 (94.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-1977</td>
<td>36 (7.8%)</td>
<td>460 (92.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-1982</td>
<td>29 (6.3%)</td>
<td>460 (93.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-1987</td>
<td>39 (8.5%)</td>
<td>460 (91.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-1992</td>
<td>65 (13%)</td>
<td>500 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1997</td>
<td>62 (12.5%)</td>
<td>500 (87.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1999</td>
<td>54 (10.8%)</td>
<td>500 (89.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2004</td>
<td>46 (9%)</td>
<td>500 (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2009</td>
<td>65 (11.8%)</td>
<td>485 (88.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Graphics of Women's Representation in Legislation Since 1950-2009

Table 3: Composition of West Java DPRD Members of the 2014 Election Results Based on Political Parties and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party Name</th>
<th>2014 DPRD Election</th>
<th>2019 DPRD Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Keadilan Sejahtera</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Golongan Karya</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This data implies that the study of women's involvement in politics in Indonesia has become both crucial and interesting. This study was conducted to obtain complete information and describe the factors contributing to women's low political participation, particularly as legislature members. Investigating these factors will reveal objective data on the failure to attain a 30% quota for women's representation as mandated by the constitution.

Understanding political dynamics, including women's political dynamics, cannot be separated from the political culture adopted by society (Mukarom, 2008; Nurudin, 2006). This is because a person's involvement and participation cannot be separated from cultural values, norms, and perceptions. In this case, perceiving portraits and conditions of political culture is vital to gain factual information and portrayals of cultural aspects that presumably contribute to the low level of women's political participation.

Women's marketing strategies of political communication are no less important. Understanding these marketing strategies can deepen awareness of women's political acumen as well as encourage and increase women's political participation, especially in meeting the demand of 30% quota as mandated by the constitution.

Thus, this paper aims to investigate accurate and comprehensive data to read and map three critical issues related to the dynamics of women's political communication. In particular, this paper discusses women's political participation, political culture aspects that contribute to women's involvement, and marketing strategies of political communication to encourage and increase women's participation in political stage.

### Methodology

This study employed the case study method to determine the dynamics of women's political communication. Case studies are methods carried out intensively, in detail, and in-depth with a particular organization, institution, or phenomenon (Nurhadi, 2005, p. 161). Case study research strategies rigorously investigate a program, event, activity, process, or group of individuals. Cases are limited by time and activity, and information is collected using various data collection procedures in a predetermined time (Creswell, 2011, p. 20; Maxwell & Reybold, 2015).

Following the case study method, the events examined included political activities and communication behavior of women politicians in the legislature. The legislative institution as the object of study was the West Java Regional People's Representative Assembly (DPRD) since it was considered a dynamic representation of national politics (DPRD Jawa Barat, 2015). In addition, the representation of women as legislative members in the West Java DPRD was higher than in other provinces. The research subjects in this study included politicians from political parties and management.

Data collection involved in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and participant observation. In practice, in-depth interviews were conducted by obtaining information through dialogue from several West Java DPRD women politicians as the main informants. A Focus
Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted to obtain data as a comparison and analysis material (Manoranjitham & Jacob, 2007; Masadeh, 2012; Stewart et al., 2012). There were 8 FGD participants, consisting of 4 female politicians, two male politicians, one academician, and one communication practitioner.

The participant observation was performed by observing five on-site observational subjects/topics: 1) Actors, i.e., women politicians; 2) Activities carried out by women politicians; 3) Acts, i.e., the actions of women politicians related to their communication behavior; 4) Events, i.e., a series of activities undertaken by women politicians; 5) Feelings, i.e., the emotions expressed by women politicians in carrying out their activities.

Results and Discussion

The significant data demonstrated the dynamics of women's political participation in Indonesia, obtained through surveys and observations conducted by organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) of Indonesia, the General Election Commission (KPU), Inter-Parliamentary Union, Statistics Indonesia, Tirto ID, and Smart Politics. According to the data from these organizations, the percentage of women's representation in parliaments mostly increased in the last four elections of 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014 (Gerintya, 2017; Setiawan, 2019). In the 1999 elections to 2009 elections, there was a significant increase, amounted to about 7% of the total representation of women in parliament. However, in the 2014 elections, there was a slight decrease of around 0.54% of women's participation in parliament.

In addition to women's representation in parliament, another manifestation of women's involvement in political participation has been the right to vote in every election. All citizens, both men and women, reserve the same right to vote. Regarding women voters, data from Tempo suggested a fairly balanced number of voters between male and female voters (Rosana, 2019). The data showed that there was 96.271 percent of male voters and 96.557 percent of female voters in the 2019 elections. This data clearly indicated that, as voters, women had been active already in political participation (Rosana, 2019).

The Reality of Women's Political Participation

The reality of women's political participation in the West Java DPRD is still categorized as low. The low participation is due to several factors that hamper women's political participation, i.e., the lack of interest shown by women to be involved in practical politics, low competence, low ability to compete, and lack of political structure. These four factors are described further below.

1. Women's Lack of Interest in Entering Politics

   It is undeniable that some women still associate the political world with violence and masculinity (Paxton et al., 2007; Zazueta & Stockland, 2017), causing women to be reluctant to get involved in the political arena. Political parties claimed it was difficult to get women involved in political discourse and activities, let alone engaged in practical politics. Leaders of political parties stated that many women did not have political awareness since it was regarded as masculine (Mulia & Farida, 2005, p. 16). Furthermore, Widiastuti and Yuliawati (2018) found that approximately 52 percent of women voter respondents confirmed that there was a lack of people's trust in women's leadership, mainly due to the patriarchal culture in Indonesia. In this culture, men hold all power. Women are considered unfit to be leaders, leading to gender disparities in politics (Widiastuti & Yuliawati, 2018).

2. Women's Low Competence as a Result of Low Level of Education

   Women are considered to have no competence when it comes to the political stage, as
assumed by women themselves. They are confronted with the problem of taking care of children and serving their husbands as basic responsibilities, which are considered more important than pursuing higher education. They often discontinue their studies if their husbands and children can achieve success instead. This is exacerbated by patriarchal culture. In a society with a strong patriarchal culture such as West Java, women tend to be placed at a disadvantage, in which they handle the majority of household activities. Parents are even reluctant to send their daughters to school because “eventually, a wife will be solely responsible for household tasks” It seems to be a kind of irrefutable axiom passed down from generation to generation, creating a prevailing value in society that places men in a higher position than women. The low level of women's political participation is also caused by low level of political education. The level of formal education becomes a decisive factor that influences the level of women's political participation. Many Indonesian women do not prioritize education because, culturally, they are frequently identified with "housewives" who must focus on taking care of their families.

3. Women Politicians' Lack of Competitive Ability

An adopted electoral system applies an open proportional system (Sutarso, 2011). To become a legislature member, one must receive the most votes. This system does not always benefit women. Even though women are ranked in the leading ranks, winning the votes is not easy and requires significant financial investment in campaigns. Women consider this system to benefit wealthy and popular candidates. Since not all women have assets to invest in their elections, they are increasingly marginalized and find it challenging to compete openly with men. Admittedly, this system tends to ignore aspects of the quality and integrity of a candidate. Women's lack of financial independence makes them unable to advance politically as leaders.

4. A Gender-Biased Political Structure

So far, women in political parties rarely hold key positions, including policymaking. Although women hold such positions in party organizations, they are merely involved in functions related to women's issues, for example, as the Chair of the Women's Affair or the Chair of the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Division. At higher levels, women serve as treasurers of political parties. Men always monopolize strategic positions in political parties such as a chair and secretary. Likewise, in the organizational structure in legislature, women do not occupy strategic positions such as the Chair of the Commission, Chair of the Faction, Chair of the Budget Committee, and so on. In the West Java DPRD, the role of women in the legislative structure is only represented by one person who serves as the Chair of the West Java Regional Parliament. Meanwhile, the leadership system adopted by the West Java DPRD follows a collegial leadership system, meaning that even though the women hold the top positions, the decision-making process is still carried out collectively.

Regarding women's involvement in the structure of political parties, women recognize that several obstacles prevent women from getting themselves involved more actively in political parties, among others:

- The dissemination of political parties for women remains deficient. Not many women actively take part in party cadres. Political parties barely include women's agendas in party programs.
- Men predominate over the leadership of political parties. In turn, they tend to nominate male candidates who presumably have a high potential to win elections.
- There is a tendency to select women candidates who have a close relationship with the authorities. Political parties are less transparent in the process of electing leaders. Hence, women's efforts to position themselves as candidates for leadership deserve to be acknowledged.
Elections are rare events and require access to significant funds. Not many women possess sources and independence to cover all electoral funding. In such conditions, political parties rarely help women candidates in raising funds.

The lack of mobilization for women and their inability to support each other have put them in a vulnerable and defeated position, in which they must be proactive in striving for their rights. Also, women have no a solid support base and any organization to build a support base for fellow women. This phenomenon results in the rarity of women holding strategic positions and roles in political parties. Women barely play a role as decision-makers; they do not have enough power to guarantee leadership roles in political parties because women are still considered complementary to political party activities.

Gender Patterns in Indonesian Elections

Women's participation in the electoral field is often hampered by several administrative, political, legal, social, economic, and cultural issues. Some of them are influenced by how elections are managed and implemented. In this regard, it is crucial for election administrators to identify and overcome these obstacles. Some of them, however, are more structural in nature, meaning that they cannot be fully addressed solely by the administrators.

An additional issue to women's political participation is women's lack of necessary administrative documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, or other official documents required to be registered as voters. To address this problem, administrators should have flexible policies regarding administrative requirements of women's participation in the election. For instance, they may allow another kind of legal proof for women who do not have the required documents.

Women's participation in politics is also hindered by predetermined gender roles, such as women's greater responsibilities in parenting and household matters. This often leaves women with fewer opportunities for political activities. Registering as a voter and voting often takes a long time in queues or requires long-distance travel, giving more difficult tasks for women with their household responsibilities. These barriers seem even more challenging for women with disabilities, pregnant women, the elderly, and women living far from polling stations.

In addition, poverty and lack of control over economic resources limit women's ability to participate as voters, candidates, party campaigners, election officials, or election watchdogs. Limited control over economic assets also restricts women's opportunity to run for parliament office because, in many cases, they have fewer resources to be used for campaigns compared to men. The limited control over economic resources is impacted by the fact that most economic activities, including at the household level, are run and controlled by men.

Gender roles are influenced by traditional cultural and religious norms, limiting women's freedom or discouraging women from exercising their right to vote. Some cultural stereotypes also imply that women have lower levels of education, literacy, and knowledge, which results in their low civil and political awareness. Patriarchal culture also affects the psychological condition of women who seek positions as leaders. Such culture undermines women's self-confidence and assertiveness to run for leadership positions. Finally, the competitive nature of the political process itself is commonly seen as a zero-sum game. It can limit public support for women to participate in public office.

In addition, women who intend to participate in political activities, such as being voters in an election, also encounter gender-specific security concerns. These include a lack of female security staff at polling stations. Hence, routes from one point to another are often dangerous and lack of infrastructure—all of these hampers women to participate in voting and limit their political outreach and campaigns when they run as candidates. Resolving these interrelated
obstacles requires an integrated approach throughout the electoral cycle.

Also, women are more likely to choose male candidates (legislative/president) than women candidates. A study conducted by Widiastuti and Yuliawati published in the Journal of Politics and Policy (2018) investigated women's resistance to elect women legislative candidates in the 2014-2019 Legislative Election in Banjar City. Further research should address the following issues: the reasons why women voters do not vote for women candidates; the lack of women voters at polling stations; the nature of the interactions when women travel to the polling stations, for example, they may experience pressure to vote for certain candidates.

**Patriarchal Culture and the Political World of Women**

Political culture is a product of a societal culture, which reflects the lifeways of people living in a country. The dominant culture in Indonesia is patrimonialism (Kollo, 2017), in which the government is under the control of a person and his group (Sakina & A., 2017). As a strongly patriarchal culture, it places women in inferior positions. Patriarchy is a system characterized by men who predominantly hold higher power over women as a lower class (Murniati, 2004, p. 81) (Nurcahyo, 2016) (Bhasin, 1996). In this system, men are in power to determine actions, which is considered a reasonable gendered division of labor.

Patriarchal culture demands women to prioritize domestic roles. Women are burdened with greater responsibilities in the household management, care work of children, the elderly, and the sick, and the formal and moral education of children (Sihite, 2007, p. 138). Women’s role as breadwinners and their active involvement in community organizations and political parties are only considered secondary roles (Mukarom, 2004).

Some people in West Java who embrace patriarchal culture depict politics as a male-dominated world and masculine activity. The roles of men as the head of households, decision-makers, and breadwinners are assumed to be part of the political arena, connected to their roles of policymakers. A typical member is a man because men have sought political empowerment (Wijaya, 2001, p. 20). This culture creates an unequal view of relations between women and men, in which *gender as a culture* reflects an ideology (Widyani, 2005, p. 183).

Patriarchal culture is also highly influenced by party organizational structure. Women are subordinate to men, which limits their opportunity to hold strategic positions as policymakers. Oftentimes, women in politics are only provided with the chance to influence women’s issues. Gender-based tension between men and women is ongoing (Fromm, 2000). Women's opposition to men's power is inseparable from the unjust patriarchal system that places women as the shadow of men.

Patriarchal culture is a political, economic, industrial, financial, and religious organizational system that perceives men as the top of the hierarchy (Nurudin, 2006, p. 49). A country that adheres to a patriarchal culture promotes and maintains practices that directly and systematically oppress women (Saraswati, 2004, p. 31). The oppression of women can be seen from the structure of the family and household and the policies applied to both arenas. Policies are usually discriminatory or inhibit women’s freedom. In West Java, women are second-class citizens whose main task is only related to the role and function of domestic labor. In the Sundanese tribe in West Java, the following terminology is associated with women: "Tilu Ur" (three "ur"), namely "sumur" (well), "dapur" (kitchen), and "kasur" (mattress/bed)—realms far away from politics.

Patriarchal culture and political ethos are intensely denoted by masculinity. Men dominate the political arena, formulate rules of political play, and define standards for evaluation. Furthermore, political life is regulated according to masculine norms and values. Politics is based on the idea of win-lose or competition-confrontation. Thus, independent women in politics are not easily accepted. Women's political ambitions are deemed non-feminine behavior, making it difficult for women to succeed in politics compared to men. As
a result, women are unaccustomed to taking part in decision-making in the public sector.

Moreover, women are considered unsuitable for entering the harsh political world of men. It is because women are assumed to have gentle characters, unable to be firm. Women are also regarded unfit to be leaders of organizations and political parties, despite that they have attained high levels of education and abilities. As this patriarchal culture binds women, they are not interested in getting involved in politics, including becoming candidates for legislative members.

The political culture highly impacts the political orientation of the community, especially political parties in recruiting cadres and legislative candidates. Political orientation plays a pivotal role in electing legislative candidates at both the central and regional levels. With such negative perceptions about women in politics, women’s political orientation turns out to be negative as well and, consequently, keeps women out of the composition of legislative candidates. The opposite is true for men.

Women's Political Marketing Strategies

Strategies developed by women in encouraging their participation in the legislature remain partial and conventional so far (Mukarom, 2015). Self-socialization and vision of the strategies are incomplete because they are more individual and have not been integrated with political parties as the supporting institutions (Mukarom, 2016). Therefore, it is not surprising that a diametric difference between the vision and mission of women candidates is found with the vision and mission of political parties. This marketing model is recognized by women, considering that it is implemented solely to win sympathy and support from the mass of voters. It also appeared to be mostly done by male politicians. The orientation of a candidate's self-victory is far more prominent than the attempt to win a political party.

In practice, women attempt to utilize several forms of media to get closer to the mass of voters. Some include religious institutions such as majelis taklim (a center for learning non-formal Islamic studies), religious organizations, women's organizations, and so on. At the same time, to increase popularity, women still use conventional media such as the distribution of business cards, calendars, banners, t-shirts, pamphlets, and so on. Women confirm that using such media turns out to be very expensive. This marketing model results in high-cost politics to become a legislative candidate, a risky financial endeavor. "Nothing is free to become something" becomes a new axiom in Indonesian politics. It is indeed difficult to measure and test the effectiveness of this expensive political marketing model. In some instances, financial power has not yielded significant influence. Nonetheless, a costly marketing strategy is considered a sine qua non condition that must be carried out by anyone who intends to become a legislative member.

Recommendations

Based on the description above, women’s low participation in the political arena is a systemic problem requiring a comprehensive solution. It should not only be the responsibility of women but also involve many parties. Recommendations to increase women's political participation are as follows:

a. Revitalization and Optimization of Political Education (Civic Education): The first effort to prepare women to compete in the public world is to educate women so that they have basic knowledge about politics to be actively equal with men in the political world. Political education can be achieved through counseling, leadership training, seminars, or other scientific forums in disseminating egalitarian values and independence in social life in formal and informal institutions. In turn, these will encourage women to appear
confidently on the political stage. Women should be trained in solving various social problems ready to engage because they have equal abilities to men. Political parties should be responsible for the political education of women, especially concerning the fulfillment of the 30% minimum quota of women in parliament. Parties should offer women greater access to political education by distributing women in strategic positions in the organization.

b. **Gender Mainstreaming**: Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve gender equality and justice (Caglar, 2013; Daly, 2005; Meier & Lombardo, 2013). Gender mainstreaming aims to ensure that women and men gain access to, participate in, have control over, and get the same benefits from development projects. In addition to mainstreaming gender, the affirmative action mandate of the Election Law No. 08 of 2012 concerning the representation of women in at least 30% of seats should be realized. To achieve this goal, the election system must be reviewed. As long as an open proportional system relies on financial access and the power of mass mobilization, the affirmative action goals will remain an unrealized dream.

c. **Message Strategy**: Message strategy is the packaging of political messages in meaningful ways to citizens. An inclusive approach to religious messages can be employed as a counter-communication strategy for patriarchal cultural problems. The political message framed by a religious approach must express the importance of equality between men and women in all matters while retaining their dignity as wives and mothers. Religious leaders can be equal partners in teaching, explaining, and disseminating the importance of equality values between men and women. Moreover, politics concerns the interests of many people; participation of all citizens, both men and women, is required regardless of race, social status, profession, religion, language, culture, etc., all of which form an essential part of teaching religion.

d. **Media Strategy**: This strategy is implemented by selecting the appropriate media to convey political messages. It is necessary to diffuse messages through several proper media to ensure that all members of a social system are reached (Rogers, 2003, p. 35). In this regard, the diversity of media use in disseminating innovation plays a significant role. Political media should not be limited to "mainstream media," such as print and electronic media. Still, they can also utilize other channels according to the needs and characteristics of the target community. To promote women’s leadership, alternative media for prospective leaders should draw on social institutions, institutions of political party wings, and assistance programs.

As previously noted, the concept of political participation is fundamental in a deliberative democracy process and involves individual citizens influencing the government’s decision-making (Nimrah & Sakaria, 2016). For women, politics can be a tool to voice their aspirations and interests regarding equality and justice and gain equal positions in law, politics, the state, and society. Gender equality in politics means that the roles of men and women in politics must be the same (Tandang Assegaf, 2004). It also asserts that women can freely participate in politics despite their many obstacles and challenges. Political participation belongs to all citizens regardless of gender. In fact, the equality between men and women, particularly based on laws and regulations, has been legally guaranteed since the enactment of the 1945 Constitution, August 17, 1945, in Article 27 paragraph 1, stating that "all citizens shall be equal before the law and government and shall uphold the law and government without exception."

**Conclusion**

Women’s low representation in the West Java DPRD is one of women’s low political
participation indicators in general. Women’s low involvement can be likely attributed to patriarchal culture, which remains to be reinforced by some communities, and the use of the electoral system as currently implemented, making it increasingly difficult for women to compete openly with men due to its reliance on high finances.

The data and findings revealed in this paper are expected to have a contribution: first, for policymakers in encouraging and mainstreaming gender literacy issues in every development program; second, for politicians and political parties to become information material in the recruitment process of legislative members, as well as evaluation material for stakeholders to consider and reformulate a more adaptive electoral system following the characteristics and culture of Indonesian society; and third, the study of political communication should be primarily concerned with optimizing the role and function of political parties as institutions of recruitment of prospective national leaders sensitized to gender issues.

References


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