

## Conference Paper

# Role and Political Strategy of Women Village Heads in Development of Rural Politics

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## Abstract.

The current study is a research on the political roles and strategies of women village heads in rural political development. The study was conducted in Parenreng Village, Pangkep, South Sulawesi Indonesia. Women undeniably, play a strategic role in every area of village political development. Village women's work is not just "complementary development," but also the subject of a role that has "control and power." The research conceptualization used is structural-functional theory while the method used is descriptive qualitative approach. The research findings show that the work and strategies of women village heads are: (a) Village political development, carried out directly, with empathy for humanizing; (b) Putting the interests of a small and modest society above the interests of the advanced people; and (c) Urgent and strategic development of rural infrastructure. Economic empowerment must always be encouraged with the principle of togetherness and solidarity. The progress and political strategies of women village heads thus show that women play a crucial role in the political role of rural development.

**Keywords:** female village heads and rural politics

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## 1. Introduction

Women's progress in the political sphere is part of a modernist perspective, in fighting for women's rights, encouraging gender equality, as an egalitarian culture [1], without discrimination. In Indonesia, based on historiography, women's struggles in the political aspect have been carried out by heroines: Raden Kartni, Dewi Sartika, Andi Kambo, Opu Daeng Risaju and various other female figures who demanded emancipation, both in fighting the barbarity of the colonialists, as well as cultural constraints - driven by men as patriarchs [2]. The struggle or participation of women in politics is an important instrument [3], part of the historical dialectic not only fighting for women's rights but more broadly than that is the political independence of a nation, and women's independence in roles that are more dignified and dedicated, without "shackles" and exploitation. Women and politics are not things that have to be connoted as taboo, in political

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civilization. In Indonesian politics, awareness of women's political empowerment began around the 1980s. Indonesia is really well known as a society full of patriarchal culture packed with religious values. On the one hand, with the interpretation of religious dogma or patriarchal culture, placing women as passive beings, but at the same time the meaning that men and women (gender), each has an urgent role in the family [4]. women's participation in politics, in essence, the placement and acceptance of men towards women as equal partners [5] This dichotomy regarding the position of women is understood as a functional relationship and can be something that is accepted communally, not something to be opposed. Research on women and political development, is research that describes patterns of political relations and interactions with the placement of women as subjects of power, an exclusive role model of a gender identity [6]. shown by women.

Referring to the structural functional theory, the study of the role and political strategy of women village heads in development is part of an urgent element in managing the rural system. Political development as a dynamic in village development, is an institutionalized system fluctuation — and is part of the functional prerequisites [7]. Village heads as actors are expected to be able to integrate rural development messages and deny patriarchal cultures that allow for gender bias in society. In terms of social construction theory, the roles and strategies of women village heads are part of socio-cultural formations. Women's involvement in politics is justice and gender equality [8], which negates marginalization, subordination, stereotypes and discrimination. The social formation of gender equality is a public discourse on village politics, and must be constructed even through a long process [9].

The functional paradigm that is attached to the pattern of gender equality, men - women in the community is developing in an equal position, is a paradigm that places the role of women in the public world, as part of a rational effort to maintain harmonious relations between men - women in society. Men - women, in nature - culture are functional, equal partners - not something to be competed against, or discussed as a conflict. Gender relations between men and women are interrelationships, which must be constructed. This view constructs women as subjects - the main role equal to men, both in social, cultural, ideological and political (read: power) aspects. Equal male-female relations are a functional prerequisite that needs to be continuously encouraged [10]. Such an understanding shows that women's involvement in the public sphere (including political participation) is not merely a "complementary role", but a "life demand" for the sake of development.

Women's progress in political development, and placing women as leaders in society cannot put women in a position that stays away from domestic roles. In the perspective of independence, the participation of women in the public world (including the political sphere) is made possible by various fundamental reasons, including: pressing needs and reducing dependence on the part of men. The involvement of women in such development is part of the dialectic of development, which demands the participation of all parties, regardless of gender differences, by distancing women from cultural patterns that marginalize them. Related to women's political roles and strategies in rural development, one of the interesting phenomena to study is the progress and political strategies of women Head of Parenrang Village, Segeri, Pangkep Regency, South Sulawesi Indonesia. The role and political strategy of the woman village head is a political act that is carried out directly, with empathy, prioritizing the interests of small and modest communities, developing urgent and strategic rural infrastructure and economic empowerment with communal principles and solidarity. The political gait and strategy of women village heads thus shows the construction of political gait that must be appointed, as part of a strategic role, to advance Indonesian women.

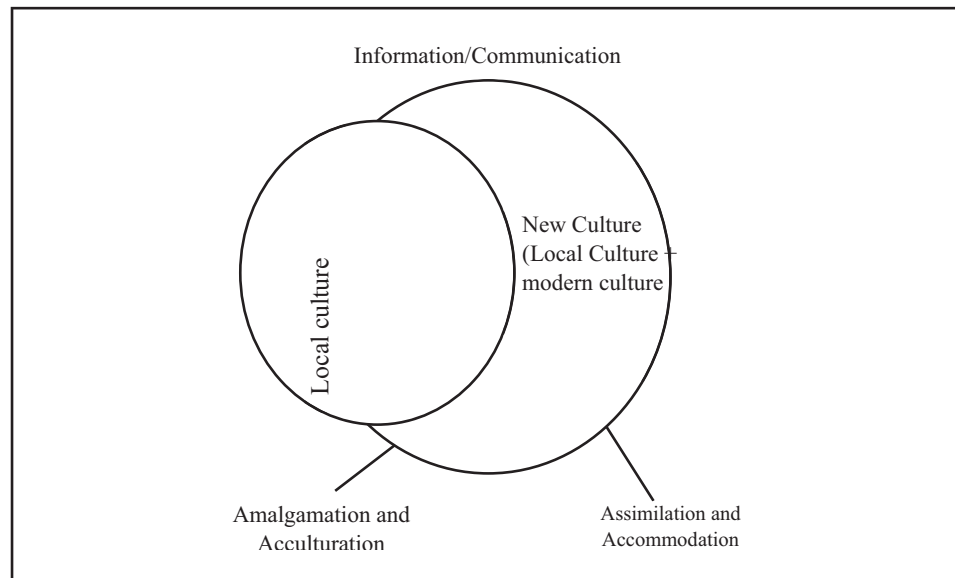
## 2. Research Methods

Research on the Political Role and Strategy of Women Village Heads in Rural Political Development is research conducted in villages led by Women Village Heads located in Parenrang Village – Segeri District, Pangkep South Sulawesi Indonesia. This village was chosen purposively — because the village was led by a female village head in the midst of a patriarchal culture that still places women as second-class citizens. Another reason for choosing this village is that this village has quite proven political development, as indicated by the election of women as Village Heads who are far from gender bias. In terms of approach, The research approach used is descriptive qualitative, namely a study that seeks to reveal research results with a deep enough examination of the subject of study by describing a number of up-to-date and valid data based on the meaning of an action, both emic and ethical [11]. The research orientation is an objective orientation of social reality that has a connection with: the role and political strategy of women village heads. Objective reality is social reality — contained in society which is centered on the study of social facts from a social action. In this regard, this study will comprehensively understand the research objectives, which place women village heads as subjects of in-depth study, based on the systematic role and political strategic steps of women village heads in political development.

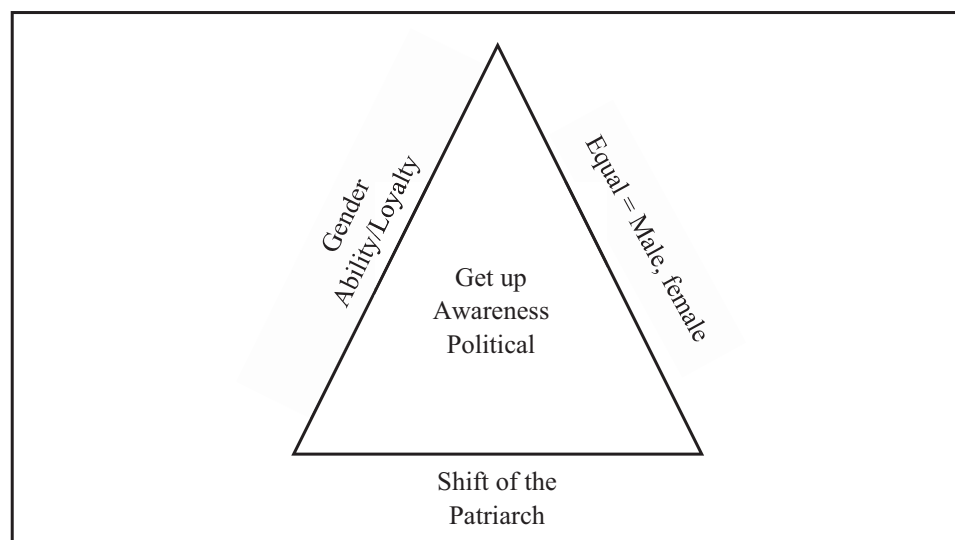
### 3. Research Results and Discussion

Parenreng Village is a farming village in Segeri, Pangkep, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The boundaries of Parenreng Village are to the north by Benteng Village, to the south by Baling Village, to the west by Segeri Village and to the east by Barru Regency. This village has an area of approximately 7311 Ha, which is used as residential land, agricultural land and animal husbandry land. This land produces rice, dragon fruit and other livestock products, cows, chickens and buffaloes. The population of Parenreng Village is 4348 people from 1050 families. The inhabitants of this village have religious observance. The cultural pattern of the Parenreng people is an open cultural pattern. An open cultural pattern means that people must accept foreign culture, which allows acculturation (including amalgamation), or cultural accommodation and assimilation (see Figure 1). This is due to geographical factors, the position of Parenreng Village is close to the city and the Pangkep-Pare-pare axis road. Likewise, the openness of Parenreng Village, due to the rapid flow of information and telecommunications, has entered Parenreng Village. In this case, Parenreng Village accepts cultural patterns from the outside with a tendency for local values to be increasingly shifted along with the cultural developments around Parenreng Village. On this scale, it tends to be considered a prismatic society, namely a transitional society and shifts towards massive and dynamic progress. The religion adopted by the Parenreng community is the majority Muslim, although this community belongs to, primastik but an indication of the obedience of the people in worship is quite high. There are indications that there is a taklim assembly, as a forum for recitation of the congregation and also as a place for hospitality. and 7 (seven) mosques in Parenreng village. This shows how obedient this community is in upholding the Islamic religious values that they believe in.

Parenrang Village, led by a female village head named Hj. Samsuarni. SH Hj. Samsuarni, SH, is a simple woman and completed her Bachelor of Laws from the Indonesian Muslim University. Armed with the entrepreneurial profession, and then with full soul calling, serving as village head — quite respected by the local community. When the researcher conducted the interview, the female Head of Parenreng Village, she stated her vision in participating in developing Parenreng Village was for the sake of building and providing community welfare. Devotion in its meaning is the noble goal of building oneself and society for the sake of benefit. This announcement was always echoed by the village head, on various occasions when meeting or having dialogue with the Parenreng community. In another respect, what also pushed the Parenreng Village Head to participate in the competition was the desire to manifest and show that the



**Figure 1:** Cultural Patterns of the Parenreng Community.



**Figure 2:** Building Political Awareness based on Gender Perspective.

role of village women in leading was unquestionable and equal to men. In this case, the presence of women in leadership is elegant and does not conflict with cultural patterns even though the Parenreng people’s tendency in domestic roles is still extreme with “fatherly” culture. Thus, it is quite evident that in the public sphere in the Parenrang community, there is gender awareness, which leads to the placement of leaders, on equality and empowerment, not on the patriarchal model (see Figure 2).

In terms of village political development, the female village head of Parenreng has a very visible role. Women village heads, in carrying out political development, with the term “direct politics”, politics directly involved in society by blending in. With this

political development technique, the community feels that development control is so centralized, and full of empathy from the village head. The people feel cared for — and are more humanized, and feel full of intimacy, without any distance between the leader and the people. The direct political model carried out by the Village Head, in addition to having an impact on monitoring and ensuring the proper course of development, also allows democratization in a conducive manner, without neglecting the rights of other citizens, in order to achieve development goals in all fields. In this case, the direct politics carried out by the female village head also had an impact on the existence of the mutual cooperation tradition. With the tradition of gotong royong that is carried out, the community always feels bound to one another, in the corridor of village development. Such ties in the culture of gotong royong construct communal traits in society, without highlighting individualistic traits. This recognition is an inseparable part of the peasant culture, which still exists in society. Another excess of direct politics, which was carried out by the female village head, was to give birth to a society with high political awareness. The Parenreng community announced: (a). Men and women in leadership, there is no difference, differentiation lies only in competence and loyalty to community service. The culture of “fatherhood”, neglect and equality regardless of gender, is increasingly highlighted in the roles of society; (b). Parenrang villagers are increasingly understanding their rights and obligations as villagers, towards self-sufficient and modern self-sufficient society; (c). The creation of order and security for the community, the excesses of direct politics – as strict control from the village government;

*Head of Parenreng Village, mingling with the community, all residents who carry out the event are visited. All are equal. If there are residents with problems, at 01.00 at night if they are notified they will come (they have high concern).*

Another task carried out by the Parenreng village head woman is to give priority to a small/unpretentious community, above the interests of an advanced community. Such an excuse is quite evident in the strategic role played by the female village head. Information is known from the results of interviews that the Head of Parenreng Village does not discriminate between one resident and another. Not a few, even more attention is received by small communities or those with low economies. Among them: (a). motorbike crashers, many motor parts/spare parts are purchased, if the motorbike is damaged, some are even purchased for the sake of meeting the needs of the crasher's family; (b). if someone is sick and has no money for treatment, the village head pays for the medicine/treatment; (c). people - people who are less fortunate, made a house for the sake of living. The facts regarding this matter, as stated as follows:

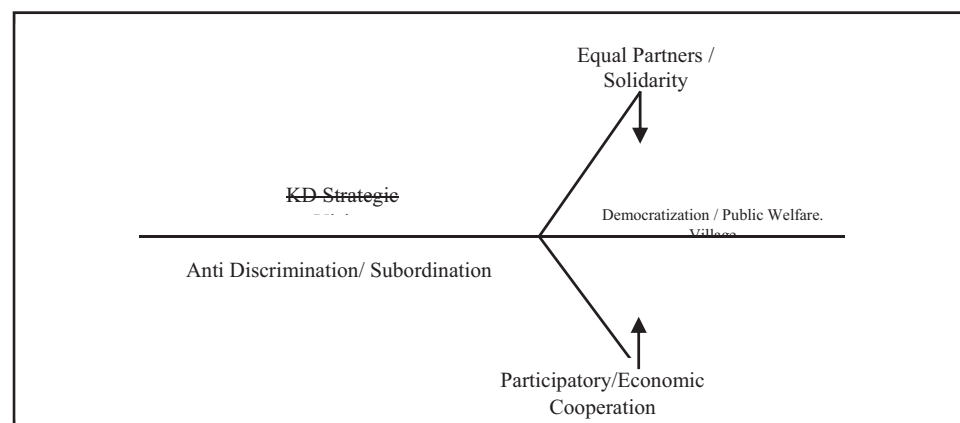
*The female village head really cares about her residents. Motorcycle taxi drivers, if the motorbike breaks down, the village head pays for it or gives money to repair it;*

*Some of the benefactors bought bentors, because the woman head of the village understood that this person could not buy bentors, in order to make ends meet;*

*Many people here, who really don't have money, are helped to build houses – all with the knowledge of the village head;*

*The village head's attention to his residents shows when there are problems with his residents. Even though it's the middle of the night, if the residents need it, let alone the lower class people come and help.*

In other matters, the work of the female village head has a strategic vision that avoids anti-discrimination and subordination and views that men and women are the same. An announcement that is certain in relation to social aspects, can encourage equal partners and social solidarity. Likewise economically, in the domestic or public sphere it will make it easier for participation and cooperation to take economic roles – in order to improve the family economy. The policy of the Parenreng village government sided with the interests of harmonious democratization and increased community welfare (see Figure 3). In this connection among the policies that guarantee democratization and welfare are: (a). meetings that are held involve all parties regardless of differences in gender and status, (b). patriarchal culture, does not become a requirement in determining a decision depending on the correctness of a decision; (c). appointment of village officials, depending on ability not because of nepotism or collusion; (d). a decision on a problem in the countryside is made by deliberation; (d). the functioning of the BPD is a channel for rural democratization and humanization; and respect every guest who comes regardless of status.



**Figure 3:** Strategic Vision of Women Village Heads

Another task undertaken by the Parenreng village head woman is infrastructure development and community economic empowerment. Infrastructure development is intended as development related to agricultural infrastructure. A number of developments related to the infrastructure being built, namely the construction of irrigation irrigation, the construction of roads (including farm roads and farmer bridges) and a number of other infrastructures. This infrastructure development is understood as an urgent development because it involves the livelihood of the village community. Information obtained from informants (community members) that the village government pays sufficient attention to community infrastructure. During almost 2 (two) periods as Head of Parenreng Village, Andi Hj. Syamsuarni, has built various infrastructures to facilitate access to processing and developing village agriculture.

*During her tenure as Village Head, Mrs. Hj Samsuarni, has carried out various constructions of rural infrastructure/facilities, including quite a number of farmer's bridges being built.*

*While in office a lot of physical buildings were carried out, later during the covid 19 pandemic, there were only a few physical buildings, because a lot of the budget was diverted from coping with coping.*

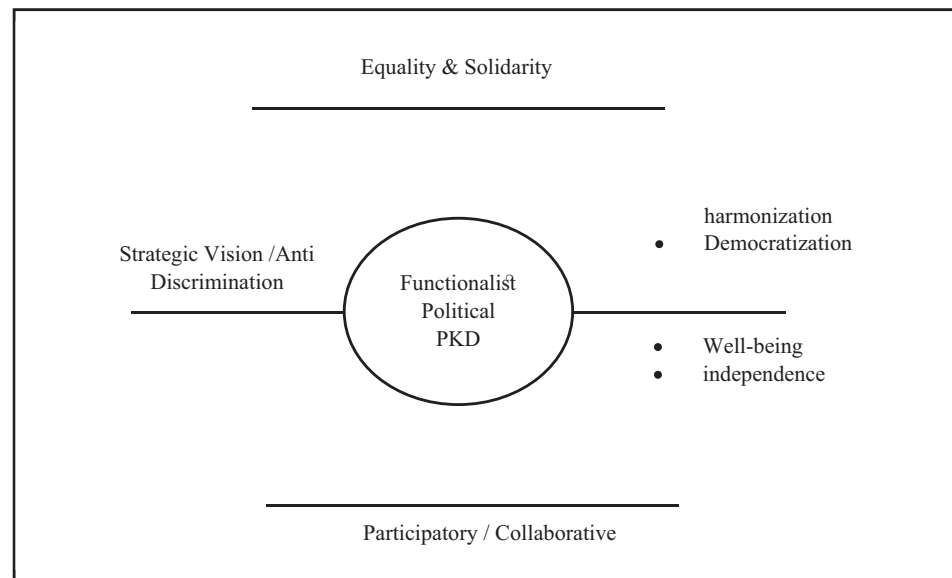
Another task carried out by the woman Head of Parenreng Village is empowering the economy of the village community. The female village head carried out the economic empowerment, through programs that were so systematic and directly felt by the people of Parenreng. The economic empowerment program is carried out by considering real aspects and in accordance with the potential in the village community. Village economic empowerment is carried out by involving all stakeholders in the countryside. Implementation of empowerment by realizing development that touches all levels of society in need. Empowerment is carried out through the stages of program planning, program implementation and program evaluation. Among the empowerment carried out to support the family economy in rural areas is the provision of livestock assistance in the form of cattle, chickens and other livestock, as well as assistance with agricultural seeds in the form of corn and rice seeds, or assistance with agricultural tools or business tools. Socially this assistance can improve family welfare, but politically it is part of the village government's efforts to bring community members closer to the village government. Of course the political impact is quite large, namely: (a) fostering a sense of togetherness in supporting rural programs (village stability); (b). increase solidarity and participative attitude in supporting government programs; (c). reduce the act of "defiance" of government programs (tolerance).



Referring to the research results, by using a functional paradigm that is attached to patterns of gender equality, the work of the female Head of Parenreng, is part of a rational effort/strategic vision to keep away discrimination/subordinate relations between men and women in society. Functionally, men and women complement each other, not things that have to be competed [4]. Parenreng Village, with a female leader — shows a role that is not gender biased, instead astonishing and “confusing” [12], with its female nature. Characteristics that value equality and solidarity make men and women mutually participatory and cooperative in building commitment and developing the village regardless of differentiation, towards harmonization, democratization, independence and prosperity (See Figure 4). Functional gender is a relation, being something that is accepted collectively, as Coataes [2]. Mentions, can be found in Parenreng Village. This view constructs women as subjects - the main role - equal to men, both in social, cultural, ideological and political (read: power) aspects, and shows women as important factors in society [13]. Equal male-female relations are strategically crucial for instilling the value of justice [14], which is constructed in a sustainable manner. Such an understanding, very precisely, shows the involvement of women in the public sphere (including political engagement) — not merely a “side role” but a development need. Women’s progress in the political sphere, as in Parenreng Village, is part of the efforts of the feminist movement, —in fighting for women’s rights—to be equal, without any discrimination. In political development in the village, things that are gender bias are barely visible in the development of Parenreng Village. Village government policies remain in the corridor of highlighting aspects of the ability of community members in holding positions as village officials. Even though the village head is a woman, she does not highlight female gender in selecting village officials.

## 4. Conclusion

The role and political strategy of the women Head of Parenreng Village, is a role that leads to harmonization, democratization, independence and community welfare. Such roles and strategies are indicated in a number of political roles and strategies such as: (a). Village political development, carried out directly, with a sense of humanizing, involved directly, understanding social problems. Its excesses do not create a distance between leaders and the community; (b) the female Head of Parenreng Village, puts the interests of the small and modest community above the interests of the advanced people. A number of financial assistance received by small communities, ranging from medical expenses to building houses; (c). Development of a number of strategic infrastructures,



**Figure 4:** Political Functionalization of Women Village Heads.

including construction of farmer's bridges, main roads or other facilities that support the livelihood of rural people (d). Economic empowerment, namely by promoting the local community's economy, such as assistance with rice/corn seeds, provision of means of production and others. Such assistance indicates the partiality of the village government, on the empowerment of the village community in driving the village economy towards harmony and prosperity.

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