

Conference Paper

A Long Road to a Gender Equality in the House of Representatives in Indonesia

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Abstract

The issue of gender equality in Indonesia has been widely discussed, especially by the younger generations who are starting to become aware of the disadvantages of male domination. However, these discussions in the government sphere are only a ploy to gain a reputation for favouring women's rights. Thus despite the 30% quota for the parliamentary elections, the number of women in the legislative assembly never reached the target. The construction theory in the field of International Relations considers the discourse on gender equality to be closely related to the formation of social facts that occur in the community. The anachronistic idea that women's roles should solely comprise cooking fulfilling their husband sexual desires is unfortunately still entrenched in Indonesian culture. Using qualitative-deductive research methods, this study demonstrates that the Patriarchal system as a cultural heritage from ancient times is still adopted today. This is proven by the small number of women sitting in the power of the legislative body.

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1. Introduction

The issue of gender equality in Indonesia has been widely discussed, especially by young generation who are aware of the disadvantages of male domination in various sectors. But before discussing other forms of gender equality efforts, it is necessary to interpret gender and sex furthermore. Sex is related to the biological characteristics of humans which can be divided into two types of sexes, male and female, this is naturally gift from God. Men have prostate gifted as sperm discharge to fertilize women's uterus. Meanwhile gender is psychological and cultural term, which is used to distinguish normal creatures. Normal men have masculine behavior women usually behave according to their feminine side. The meaning of different gender identities was born as a result of knowledge and social construction, carried out in the middle of the community since young age (Stoller, 1968). The construction the nature of gender begins through direct interaction or experience, Oakley named it as the kinesthetic process which starts in

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the family (Oakley, 1972, pp. 174-175). According to this explanation, it can be concluded that gender is not a naturally given, but it is constructed from the cultural and social community.

According to the description above, gender differences create various gender characteristic. As an example, Indonesian generally assume that male tend to be logic and strong. Otherwise women with their feminine characteristic are considered as weak, irrational dan sensitive. These assumptions are actually not wrong, because the classification aims to differentiate both of sexes. However, this assumption presents gender injustice when this causes restraints the movement of both parties. Women are not trusted to be a leader because of their irrational personality while men are seen as unethical when unemployed and spend more time at home because they have responsibility to provide for their family members. It should be underlined that the grouping traits is not objectively applicable to all groups of ethnic, several might consider the opposite. But in general, there is a barrier between the roles of men who carry their masculinity and women with their feminine soul.

This issue was then increasingly discussed when modern states system was found through the Westphalia treaty 1648. Ironically, most countries implement it by maintaining a patriarchal system within their government, system with a social structure that gives men great power to exploit and suppress women. This situation causes turmoil in the movement of women when their numbers are equal, but they are in inferior position in this system. Women are deemed unfit to have the right to their leaders, even to sit in government members, both legislative, executive and judicial. Constrasting with democratic ideal system to provide equal rights for its citizens. However, the long journey of gender equality movement, so that women get the same rights as men, finally succeeded. In 1893, New Zealand was the first country to legalize women's suffrage. This was followed by United States which had just ratified it in 1920 through the Seneca Falls Convention 1848 (Skje sbaek & Smith, 2001). Still, there are still countries in other part of the world that prioritize the role of men and ignore the importance of women's right.

Indonesia, with its ethnic majority running a patriarchal system within its family, still cannot provide equal rights for women in various aspects, especially politic as the focus of this research. This seems to be strongly embedded in our culture. Several studies have discussed the causes of the low participation of women in politics, especially in Indonesian legislature. Research on Democracy and Continuing Marginalization of Women in Indonesian Politics chows that the position of social construction regarding only for men is still deeply rooted in social society. This is evident where as many as 55%

of 1984 research respondents answered that they would only choose men candidates, while only 11% of them would side with the female (Hara, Trihartono, & Viartasiwi, 2018). Hillman also mentioned that the cause of the low representation of women in Parliament was due to the reluctance of political parties to recruit them. This is quite ironic where the interest of women in the political sphere continues to increase. It was noted that as many as 1100 women in the Province of Bali had attended political training, but only four had managed to qualify for parliamentary seats (Hillman, 2017). Using Tenn Van Dijk's discourse analysis, Indonesia Women in Politics Research Critical Analysis of Portrayals in Online News Sites shows that the media plays a role in it. Where some media reported women politicians in the Reformation era such as Angelina Sondakh and Khofifah Indar Parawansa as weak. The view of women as a domestic group is seen in several articles published by national media. (Susilo, Sugihartini, & Arimbi, 2019).

Therefore, reviewing from some of the research above, the author decides to discuss further the history of the role of women as inferior group in politics. This long process is then inherent as a shared knowledge through the process of social construction, as conveyed by Alexander Wendt.

2. Methodology/Methods

The research method used is qualitative-deductive by conducting a thorough investigation of particular phenomenon. To further analyze the social construction embedded in society, the author discusses the history of Indonesian politics. This is needed to discuss the significance of the patriarchal system. Data collection was obtained through literature study, literature observation from various sources such as reports, books, journals and legal framework made by the government.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. History of the Struggle for Gender Equality in Indonesia

During the Dutch colonial period, the issues raised were still about the struggle for equal education rights between indigenous women and the colonialist. The spirit of an indigenous Javanese woman, Kartini, was carried out as a form of frustration and disappointment due to the small attention of the colonial government towards indigenous women. Therefore, Kartini formed a women study group which was usually held in front of her porch in the 1880s. Other female leader who have the same concerns

then appear is Dewi Sartika. The concentration of the movement that carries is in the realm of education and social attention towards indigenous women in 1904. Dewi Sartika considered the social aspect is important, since at that time women still lack of knowledge related to marriage issue.

Their struggle is not without obstacles, the challenges from their own families arise due to embedded values in society that women are objects who only concentrate in the domestic realm of home. Women are only known as wife and mother to men. They also locked up in homes for nobles with high economic status and social standing. Knowledge of women is still ignored, so attention to them is also minimal. This is quite irony, according to Pluvier, given that many indigenous women who majority lived in poverty at that time had many big roles. Women at that time participated in facing difficult economic needs of the family by working hard in the fields, plantations and factories owned by the Dutch (De Stuers, 2008).

Kartini and Dewi Sartika's effort made us realize that Indonesian women had critical thinking to break up the order that bound their rights so far. Indonesian women with limited access to knowledge at that time had assumed that, their position to obtain education was equal to men even the Dutch. However, their movements are still exclusive where women can participate in these study groups, only those who come from noble classes. As is well known, both Dewi Sartika and Kartini came from wealthy families and had strong connections with the colonial. There was a dividing line between the middle class and lower class.

The formation of formal women's organizations during the colonial period come through the congress of *Permuafakatan Perhimpunan Politik Kebangsaan Indonesia* (PPPKI) on December 22-26 1928 by assembling the Indonesian Women's Association (PPI). The task of PPI is quite similar to that of the PPPKI but by inserting women's social roles such as the socialization of marriage for prospective brides and the establishment of regulations regarding the assistance of widows and orphans. This organization also demanded that the Netherlands increase the number of schools for women. December 22 as the day of PPI's birth was then set to be Mother's Day as a reminder of the struggles of women at that time. Because of these pressures, the Dutch gave recognition to women by providing a separate chamber for them in the *Volksraad* or *Dewan Rakyat* which was formed as consultative chamber to indigenous in (De Stuers, 2008, pp. 142-144). However, even though the *Volksraad* cannot give space for Indonesian in it, some issues such as the establishing women's suffrage are also discussed. Finally, on 1941, due to the persistent struggle, the Dutch granted suffrage to highly educated Dutch

women to vote at the insistence of Razouk in *Volksraad*. Although their direct role in the political system was still invisible.

History continues with the change of Indonesia invaders at that time, Japan. When they came, all the activities of political organizations including those who involving women were dissolves or restricted. According to Osahamu, the permission was granted only to sports and arts that did not threat their existence (De Stuers, 2008, pp. 45-46). Nevertheless, the situation then changed when chaotic global situation arose to the Japanese side as result of the attacks from allied group countries. The role of women is needed by establishing *Djawa Hokokai (Kebaktian Rakyat Jawa)*. This organization which imitated Japan's *Fujinkai* was tried to be developed in Indonesia in 1943, that must be followed by government bureaucrats' wife. The role of women is considered important to replace the role of men who were sent to battlefield. They must work in the social sphere such as helping Japanese activities and *Romusha* forced labour.

The role of women in the period leading the independence of the Republic of Indonesia later strengthened. Soekarno as the leader assumed that with men, they must continue to support independence. After Japan surrendered in 1945, the role of women was demanded to be greater by Soekarno, because according to him the role of men in maintaining independence would not be maximized without women. Various women organizations have re-surfaced, such as *Wanita Negara Indonesia (Wani)* who participated in assisting the revolution with its leader, Suwarni Pringgodigdo. This appearance was then followed by other organizations such as the *Barisan Buruh Wanita, Partai Wanita Rakyat, Persatuan Istri Tenta (Persiti) Kartika Chandra Kirana* and many more (Wieringa, 2010, pp. 155-156). But dispute then arose, after independence was maintained and Indonesian government system began stabilized. Men began to assume that women were their competitors. Women were indirectly asked to return to domestic issue and stop their political activities. They, once again, have limited political roles and access. This can be seen when *Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia)*, who supports all the government agenda, has a close relationship with the Old Order regime while other women's organizations are ignored. This was later seen clearly according to Stuers, when the Law of Marriage agreed that polygamy was permitted under extremely strict conditions. This has led protests from women's organizations such as *Perwari* in the late 1940s, who assume that men can arbitrarily cut off their responsibilities to the family by finding a new partner (Wieringa, 2010, pp. 184-185). Women are again in positioned as inferior actors including children.

Although women's access to government was quite limited, there was one female figure who was not tired to play a role in the legislative sector at that time. She is Salawati

Saud from Makassar who was a member of House of Representative in 1955 and re-elected again in 1959. He sat in as member of the defense and security chamber. As a person who has strong will, she was once head of the attack on the Dutch troops who were accompanied by allied troops, together with the youths of South Sulawesi known as *Masamba Affaire* in 1949. She also actively publishes women's newspapers, Surat Kabar Wanita and Surat Kabar Bersatu, which discusses the current issues of women (Maryam, 2003, pp. 186-187).

Entering the era of the New Order with a long period of government held by President Soeharto, the role of women declined once again. Many women's organizations in this regime suffered a setback due to the outbreak of the G30S PKI incident 1965, which according to the government version was caused by people who involved in the Communist party. *Gerwani* who had communist ideology was automatically dissolved, because they were considered to have assisted in the killing of military generals who were dumped in *Lubang Buaya* (Maryam, 2003). Some members who look prominent, considered as a threat, so they will be captured by the regime. The only organization that women can participate in, is *Dharma Wanita*, the association of wives of government employees (Maryam, 2003, p. 179).

3.2. Government Policy on Women in the House of Representatives

In the era of Reformation with the phenomenon of information disclosure, the issue of gender then becomes the world's main focus. As a response from various oppressions to women, and the momentum of the emergence of the United Nation Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 with the spirit of justice without distinguishing gender, the struggle on as international scale then emerged. Through UN, the world conference about women equality was held in 1975 in Mexico. Followed by 1980 in Copenhagen, Nairobi 1975 and last with Beijing 1995. UN also issued a draft of CEDAW convention (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) in 1979. Indonesia ratified it by issuing Act No.7 of 1984. However, looking at the history of women's participation on the Old Order regime above, it seems that the establishment of regulation did not have significant impact in boosting women's participation.

The demand for women's equality in the political sphere which initially to give quotas to women in House of Representatives. This is quite reasonable indeed, considering the contribution of women in legislature is still few in number since the independence. This demand was then responded by the government by creating affirmative action by giving

quota as ratification from Beijing Declaration and Platform Action 1995. In accordance with the article 181 which provides a proposal that women's need equal participation in political life, power and decision making, for the advancement of women (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995). Affirmative action is carried out by issuing Law 12 of 2003 with article 65, states that every political party which is participating in House of Representatives election in each region pays attention to the representation of women at least 30%. Although this regulation is only an advice and not a duty. The regulation was later updated with Law No. 2 of 2008 which states that the management of political parties must include 30% representation of women in management at the central level, which is then discussed further in Law No. 10 of 2008. Granting a 30% quota to women in decision making levels considered as an ideal number so that the role of women can be greater in politics in Indonesia. The law also regulates the Zipping system which contains rules on political parties who is joining in the elections that must at least involve one woman in it.

However, even though the struggle for gender equality activists has had positive results with the government's attitude which issued an affirmative action and zipping system, the involvement of women is still considered lacking and not meeting the target. Data shows that the involvement of women in the DPR has never been more than 20% since the implementation of the regulation. The following is the data on the involvement of women as members of the House of the Representatives since the first election was held, and in 2004 to 2019.

3.3. The Role of Social Construction in Gender Injustice

The theory of constructivism as one of the paradigms in the study of international relation has the basic premise that the position of ideas is more important than the material dimension in determining the actions of actors. Second, the position of ideas in this theory has a great influence in determining the identity and interests of the actors. Where this idea itself was formed deliberately through social construction, is not something that happens as is (given) (Wendt, 1999). Discrimination against women in the political sphere is not a natural gift from God, but rather the result of political engineering preserved in history. Wendt states that idea construction is formed through a social construction process based on three process elements. The first is shared knowledge which has the role to form ideas through the process of intersubjectivity or understanding. The process of shared knowledge occurs through various forms of social interaction so that a certain meaning can be accepted by the social community.

TABLE 1: Total of Women in the House of Representatives (1950-2019)

Period	Total of Women	Total of the House of the Representative Member	Percentage
1945-1950 (KNIP)	(not known)	137	(not known)
1950-1956 (The Temporary House of Representative)	9	236	3.8
1955-1960	17	272	6.25
1956-1959 (Konstituante)	25	488	5.1
1971-1977	36	460	7.8
1977-1982	29	460	6.3
1982-1987	39	460	8.5
1987-1992	65	500	13
1992-1997	62	500	12.4
1997-1999	54	500	10.8
1999-2004	45	500	9
2004-2009	61	550	11.1
2009-2014	101	560	18
2014-2019	97	560	17.3
2019-2024	118	575	20.5

Source: Data from various sources, processed by the author.

Language has a strong influence in it to spread the idea. The process of forming this knowledge will then influence the actor's trust or perception of the status of material resources. Finally, the formation of this discourse will be successful through a process that occurs within a certain period. In the sense that the formation of discourse will not be directly accepted by the public in short time, it takes time to continue to construct the psychology of an idea (Wendt, *Constructing International Politics*, 1995). Ideas inherent in the knowledge of society into something given so that it is inherent in being a culture or identity.

Although the theory of constructivism explained by Alexander Wendt rests on the science of international relations, the authors find that this paradigm is in line with the construction of the superiority of men and women as marginal actors in the issue of gender injustice in Indonesia. We can explore the social construction process of women's inability in the political sphere in our long-standing patriarchal culture, through the most basic environment, family. Although every culture in Indonesia has its own characteristics, the majority assume that men have a strong influence in the family so that there are forms of oppression against women that we know as a patriarchal system. Men with their masculinity are considered to have great strength, influence and responsibility in the family. This patriarchal system then enters the state system. A male

president is considered more qualified than a woman, perhaps that is why Indonesia only has one female president, Megawati. The ongoing ideas, plus the support of the authorities, influence the public's view of material resources. Normal women, which is feminine, tends to be weak will not be able to become politicians or leaders, so that forms of oppression are considered normal by society. Women who are identified with weak versus physically strong men, are directly successful in forming a language binary system which we consider to be something natural.

Even though Indonesian government participated in the 1995 Beijing Conference and CEDAW which was later ratified by the government into a rule of law, this effort could not change the inherent identity. Women's participation cannot reach the target of 30% although the quota and zipping system are implemented. The adoption of the government especially during the Old Order era, to eliminate forms of discrimination through Law No. 7 of 1984 only as a rational utility maximizer. Where material benefits are still very large influence in trusting an international regime according to the understanding of this view (Hasenclever, A., Mayer, P., & Rittberger, V. pp. 105). Indonesia's image in the world political arena will be in line with western countries that support the elimination of gender injustice in various aspects of life. The formation of affirmative action in accordance with UN recommendations has no major effect, women are still considered only able to be in the domestic sphere.

3.4. Political Ideas not Political Presence

If the implementation of the quota carried out by Indonesia comes from the government through Law, it is different for Sweden, the quota for women's involvement in political parties and parliaments is implemented directly by the parties without any advice from the government. The Green Party in 1981 was the first party to introduce it, followed by the Social Democratic Party and the Left Party. The quota of involvement of up to 50% of women in party management and election nomination becomes a weapon to win the women voters in the electoral process (Freidenvall, 2003). Although this is inseparable from the influence of the threat of women's activist groups in Sweden against political parties that they will lose their voices if they do not implement the affirmative action and zipping system. However, this pattern is not applied by all parties in Sweden, other parties such as The Conservative Party and The Social Democratic Party consider that quotas are indeed needed so that the concept of gender equality and the acquisition of women's votes can continue to grow, but political ability and education are also prominent issues (Freidenvall, 2003, pp. 13-18).

Based on the experience of Sweden as a country with the number of women involved in parliament from 2009 to 2019 which is always above 40% based on data from the Human Development Report, quotas are not an important issue that must be emphasized by the government. Quotas will only be a political lift for women who do not have sufficient competence so that this affirmative action only threatens democratic values. Although in the historical process women are often underestimated and their involvement in political contestation is limited, but it must be remembered that in the current reform era the formal political arena is open to all groups. Stimulation of the provision of quotas to women must of course be used as much as possible.

Another things that must be considered are that women must interpret politics as a constellation of ideas (political ideas) not just demands of numbers between men and women in the House of Representatives (political presences) (Phillips, 1998). Recently, the political system in Indonesia seems to only pay attention to the amount of representation of women without seeing the ideas they want to achieve. The presence of women become meaningless and only complements of this institution that are still patriarchal in nature. This can be seen in the structural data of the Indonesia's House of Representative in 2014 to 2019, women have indeed been placed in commissions that require their presence such as Commission VIII (Religion, Social Affairs, Protection of Women and Children), commission IX (Health, Labor and Population) as well as commission X (Education, Sports, History). Commissions that are identical with masculine such as commission I (Defense, Foreign Affairs, Communication and Information, Intelligence) and commission III (Law, Human Rights and Security) still place few women in it so that the resulting policies cannot represent the vulnerable and excluded groups. Masculine issues such as defense and security are still considered the responsibility of men while women are still placed in the domestic sector.

The number of women population in Indonesia according to the Badan Pusat Statistik, reached 130.3 million from a total of 261.9 million, or close to 50% in 2017. This number is not balanced by the equality of representation of men and women in legislature. Political parties as an entry point for women to be able to sit in the legislative seat must provide adequate development space with an adequate regeneration system. Political parties should be a place for developing women's critical reasoning on gender issues so that these experiences can become the basis of knowledge and ideas, which will be their selling points in elections. Or women who already have sufficient experience about gender and marginalized people can use political parties as their tools to be able to seat at the policy makers. However, this seems to utopian in Indonesia considering the recruitment of political parties is very loose and nepotism. The data shows that

several major parties in Indonesia still do not provide a special space for women even provide an optimal regeneration process.

TABLE 2: Political Party that Implement Affirmative Actions

Parties	Affirmative Actions Rules
PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional)	Anggaran Dasar 2005-2010, Articles 23 paragraph 3: Every recruitment members in the management party for each level of leadership must pay attention to the representation of women, as far as possible 30%.
PDIP (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan)	-
PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa)	Anggaran Rumah Tangga 2005-2010, articles 21 paragraph 14. At each level of management the Tanfidz Council is required to accommodate the female element by fulfilling 30% quota.
Demokrat	-
Golkar (Golongan Karya)	-
PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera)	-
PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan)	Daily officers involved 7 women.

Source: Data quoted from other book (Soejipto, 2011, p. 60).

Recruitment is instant and is only based on the popularity of candidates without providing a maximum learning process so that the vision and mission carried by individuals is not substantial. The involvement of women in political parties and legislature is due to their strong networks and financial capabilities, political dynastic backgrounds, popular figures with the limited number of councils who fight from the bottom as activists who have experience the marginal groups needed.

Finally, the inherent social construction that women by nature is in the domestic sphere impedes the social sensitivity of women’s organizations to political issues. The presence of women’s organizations in the midst of society today, gives a different meaning related to women’s involvement in politics. The absence of influential women figures has resulted in the lack of literate groups of women on political issues. This resulted in their large voices being easily directed to one of the candidates without further assessing the representation of their votes in the policies produced by the government.

4. Conclusion

The phenomenon of gender injustice in Indonesia has occurred since the Dutch colonialism to present. The Patriarchal system as a cultural heritage from ancient times is still adopted today and continues to be embedded into the inherent social construction

of Indonesian society. This is proven by the small number of women sitting in the power of the legislative body. The same number of male and female populations does not occur in the membership of House of Representatives. Therefore, the regulations that are produced do not bring the representation of women and other vulnerable groups. Three important things must be corrected the government immediately. First, the quantity that has been regulated in the Law is not balanced with an increase in the quality of women's political ideas. Second, the instant recruitment system carried out by political parties. Third, the apathetic attitude of women's organizations towards political contestation due to cultural laws that lock their views so that they are trapped in domestic affairs. The three points above need to be resolved so that Indonesia is not trapped in a patriarchal system culture that has been firmly attached through the social construction processes, as in the view of constructivism theory.

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