

# The Role of Patriarchal Culture in Hindering Women's Participation in the Political Arena Especially in a Muslim-Majority Democracy

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## ABSTRACT

*Women's participation in politics is a crucial aspect of achieving an inclusive and equitable democracy. However, the strong presence of patriarchal culture in Indonesian society remains one of the main factors hindering women's involvement in the political sphere, including in Muslim-majority societies, whose socio-religious values often reinforce patriarchal norms in political and social life. This study aims to analyze how patriarchal culture limits women's access to politics and to identify strategies that can enhance their representation. Using a literature review method, this research refers to various sources discussing the relationship between patriarchal culture and the low level of women's political participation. The findings indicate that male dominance in political structures, gender stereotypes, limited access to political education, and minimal social support are the primary barriers preventing women from actively engaging in politics. To address these issues, strategic measures such as improving women's political education, implementing affirmative policies like a 30% women's representation quota, and providing organizational support through training and networking are necessary. With a comprehensive and sustainable approach, women's political participation can be strengthened to create a more representative and gender-responsive governance system.*

**Keywords:** Women's participation, politics, patriarchal culture, political education, affirmation policy

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that upholds democracy; in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is the country that best practices its democracy. This means that Indonesia adheres to a democratic system in decision-making, which must be carried out democratically (Ramadhan, 2021). According to (Kaban, 2000), Pancasila Democracy (1965-present) is

a system that combines democratic principles such as general elections, freedom of expression, and protection of human rights with the values of Pancasila as the foundation for state and government administration. In implementing governance, it is important for the government to listen to all aspirations of the community. The aspirations raised by the community are needs that must be taken into account in carrying out their duties. Furthermore, in decision-making, the government also needs to side with the community's constructive aspirations. Women's participation in politics is important to ensure that more voices are heard and for sustainable development. Women's participation in political decision-making will result in more accommodative and substantive policies, as well as strengthen democracy (Supanji, 2021).

Moreover, women's involvement in political decision-making at the local level is crucial to strengthen democracy and ensure inclusive development. By being actively involved, women can make significant contributions to decisions that affect various aspects of community life. Their participation helps ensure that all voices in the community are represented fairly. When there is balanced representation between women and men, the interests and needs of all members of society can be better accommodated, which is essential for maintaining diversity, respecting human rights, and addressing the injustices and discrimination often faced by women. In addition, women's participation brings different and valuable perspectives, as they often have unique life experiences, especially regarding education, reproductive health, employment, and gender-based violence. By having a voice in the decision-making process, women can advocate for public policies that are more responsive and sustainable to these issues (Pipit Mulyah, Dyah Aminatun, Sukma Septian Nasution, Tommy Hastomo, Setiana Sri Wahyuni Sitepu, 2020).

In this country of Indonesia, the patriarchal culture has been passed down through generations (Koes Afifah Quratuaini Putri & Adnalia Farha, 2021). Countries that implement a patriarchal system tend to give dominance to men, while women are often considered as the second party. In the context of the division of labor, men are usually the ones making the main decisions (Nimrah and Sakaria et al., 2015). Patriarchy is the concept that men hold power over all important roles in society and that women are disconnected from all access to that power. Patriarchal gender ideology places men and women in asymmetric positions. Men are positioned as the first and women as the

second. Men are the subjects and women are the others. Men as the powerful subjects and women as the subordinate subjects. Women in the domestic sphere and men in the public sphere. Men are expected to be masculine and women feminine (Oksiana Jatiningsih, 2023).

The participation of women, which is still very limited in elite ranks or top leadership in politics, is indeed hindered. Talking about how women 'seize seats' in a parliamentary realm that is still largely dominated by a patriarchal regime, even the political realm tends to be connoted as a masculine patriarchal domain (Kollo, 2017). This patriarchal culture prioritizes men in various aspects, including politics, so the role of women is often overlooked. This condition shows the existence of structural problems that need to be addressed immediately. Therefore, a more in-depth study is needed to identify the factors causing the low participation of women in the political arena and to formulate solutions that can enhance their involvement in the political process more equitably and inclusively.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

The method used in this study is a literature review method, where the author analyzes the issues raised by referring to various available literature, such as relevant books and journals regarding women's issues in a patriarchal culture. Through this approach, the study can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the limitations of women's participation in politics and offer solutions based on findings from various academic sources.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Factors Hindering Women's Participation in Politics**

Patriarchal culture is still entrenched in society where men are positioned at the top in every matter or task. Based on the results of a literature review with articles meeting the criteria, patriarchal culture has a significant impact on the position of women in society, where women are often regarded as the second party and marginalized. As research by (Huda, 2020) shows, women from the Samin community fighter group still demonstrate their contribution under the control of patriarchal culture. Cultural products that have become customary systems and traditions, whose ties have

been derived from the teachings of the ancestors of the Samin community in the past. Furthermore, (Sobri et al., 2019) emphasizes that patriarchal culture hinders women's access to education, which contributes to the low literacy rates of women compared to men. This indicates that inequality in education directly affects women's participation in politics. Research results (Susanto, 2016) also note that although there is a demand for gender equality, patriarchal culture still dominates and hinders women's roles, with hope to realize gender equality through education and women's participation. This shows that education is key to empowering women to participate actively in politics. Research findings reveal (Fujiati, 2017) it is added that patriarchal control over women's sexuality results in them lacking authority over their own bodies, as well as there being stigma and negative stereotypes associated with women regarding sexuality. This contributes to women's low self-confidence in getting involved in politics.

Banjarnahor (2020) emphasizes that the structure within political parties often does not support women's representation, where women do not have the same access to leadership positions. This is exacerbated by the double burden faced by women, as homemakers and workers, which makes it difficult for them to find the time and energy to participate in politics (Kahpi et al., 2024). Violence and intimidation against women involved in politics also pose a significant hindrance. Threats and acts of violence can prevent women from voicing their opinions and taking an active role in the political process (Kahpi et al., 2024).

From various discussions about patriarchal culture, it can be concluded that the strong patriarchal culture in Indonesian society is one of the main factors hindering women's political participation. To enhance women's involvement in politics, there needs to be a change in social norms, better political education, and support from political parties and society. Men are positioned at the top compared to women, who are positioned at the bottom. This leads women to feel unsupported in the political arena. The author analyzes that women's lack of self-confidence to enter the political arena is due to patriarchal culture. This patriarchal culture is still deeply ingrained in society, where women are viewed as not requiring higher education because they are expected to ultimately become housewives. In fact, education is also a bridge for women to understand the political arena and enable them to be active in politics.

From various discussions about the factors that hinder women's participation in politics,

it can be concluded that the strong presence of patriarchy in Indonesian society is one of the main factors that restricts women's political participation. To increase women's involvement in politics, changes in social norms, enhanced political education, and greater support from political parties and society are needed. Patriarchal culture tends to position men above women, causing women to feel less supported in the political arena. The author analyzes that the lack of self-confidence among women to engage in politics is influenced by patriarchal culture. In society, women are often perceived as unnecessary to pursue higher education as they are assumed to become housewives. However, education is a bridge for women to understand the political arena and actively participate in the political process.

### **Efforts to Increase Women's Participation in Politics**

Based on the results of a literature review of articles that meet the criteria, namely discussing and relating to efforts to increase women's participation in politics, further analysis has been conducted. The research (Adriani & Maulia, 2024) emphasizes that political education for women can strengthen their participation by enhancing the knowledge and skills needed. In line with this, research by Nursyifa et al. (2023) reveals that support from organizations, both in the form of training and networking, significantly contributes to encouraging women's involvement in the political sphere. Additionally, affirmative policies such as a 30% quota for women in political parties are also expected to improve women's representation in parliament, although implementation still requires improvement (Priandi & Roisah, 2019). Thus, an integrated approach between political education, organizational support, and affirmative policies becomes a crucial strategy in strengthening the role of women in participation in the political arena.

From various discussions on Efforts to Increase Women's Participation in Politics. Various efforts have been made to enhance women's participation in politics, one of which is through political education. Political education plays an important role in improving women's knowledge and skills, which in turn can strengthen their confidence to engage in the political arena. With a better understanding of the political system, political rights, and decision-making mechanisms, women are expected to be able to overcome various barriers that have historically limited their participation. Therefore,

political education functions not only as a means of empowerment but also as a strategic instrument in achieving gender equality in the political sphere.

## CONCLUSION

Indonesian society still has a strong patriarchal culture, which is one of the main factors hindering women's participation in politics. Men are dominant in a patriarchal system, while women are often viewed as a second party and marginalized. In addition, gender stereotypes, lack of access to political education, and male dominance in political parties further impede women's representation in the political world. As a result, women face structural and psychological challenges that reduce their confidence in participating in decision-making processes.

A more comprehensive approach is needed to increase women's involvement in politics. Political education is crucial to raise women's awareness and skills so that they feel more confident to participate in politics. In addition, women can be encouraged to become more active in the political arena through organizational support via social networks and training. One strategic step to enhance women's representation in parliament is affirmative policy, such as a 30% women quota in political parties. It is hoped that women will have a more equal opportunity to participate in the political process and nation-building by using an approach that combines affirmative policies, organizational support, and education.

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