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Original Article

WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

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ABSTRACT

Background. This article discusses women's political representation in the 2024 Legislative Election (Pileg) in Indonesia, focusing on the involvement of women and the challenges they face in political structures. Despite significant progress, with 37.7% of all legislative candidates being women, patriarchal culture still affects women's participation.
Research Purpose. This study aims to describe women's representation among legislative candidates in the 2024 Legislative Election and to analyze, through Pitkin's four forms of representation, the opportunities and challenges for achieving substantive representation in parliament.
Research Method. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on secondary data. The data are the quota provisions in legislation, data on women candidates from the General Elections Commission (KPU) published by Indonesia Baik and Databoks Katadata, and literature on political representation. The data were analyzed with the theories of Pitkin and Phillips.
Findings. Of 10,323 candidates from 18 political parties, 3,896 (37.7%) were women, above the 30% quota. Nationally, every party exceeded 30%: Partai Garuda had the highest share of women candidates (41.4%) and PDIP the lowest (33.1%). The analysis shows that meeting the quota does not yet ensure substantive representation, which is also affected by patriarchal culture, candidates' political networks, and voter abstention.
Conclusion. Women's candidacy has increased, but representation must also become substantive. Political parties need to improve recruitment and support for women, and political education for women candidates is needed.

Keywords: Gender Representation, Legislative Election 2024, Political Representation, Women.

BACKGROUND

History shows that women have contributed significantly to movements, including the women's movement in Indonesia, which has been actively involved in various sectors, including politics [1]. Even so, gaps remain in women's participation and representation in formal political structures. This is largely influenced by the patriarchal culture that remains strong in Indonesian society. Patriarchy refers to a system in which men are regarded as the sole rulers and the core of everything. The dominance of the patriarchal system in societal culture results in gender disparity and injustice that affect various aspects of life [2].

Views on patriarchal culture and the stigma attached to male and female power remain deeply rooted in Indonesian society. As a result, gender equality often places women in a lower position than men. Yet as individuals and social beings, women have the same rights as other genders. From a human rights perspective, every citizen is entitled to legal protection, equality, and freedom from all forms of discrimination. Therefore, in upholding human rights, all citizens must be regarded as equal before the law [3].

The principle of gender equality has been supported since 1979 through the United Nations Convention aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, namely the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Convention focuses on equality between women and men, particularly in education, politics, employment, and social life. Indonesia ratified this convention through Law Number 7 of 1984 on the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Indonesia also took another step by ratifying a policy on women's political participation through the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, enacted by Law Number 65 of 1958 on the Ratification of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women [4].

Under Law Number 2 of 2011 on Political Parties, women are given the opportunity to develop their careers in politics. Article 2 paragraph (2) of the Law provides that the establishment and formation of political parties must involve women at a minimum of 30%. In addition, Article 2 paragraph (5) states that the national-level management of a political party must include at least 30% women. Women thus have the opportunity to be involved in party management. On the other hand, political parties are also obliged to carry out massive cadre development for women with great potential in politics. Furthermore, in the context of government, the role of women is regulated in Article 29 paragraph (1) of Law Number 2 of 2011, which states that prospective candidates for legislative members must meet 30% women's representation.

Women's involvement in politics has become an increasingly important issue in the context of modern democracy. For a long time, women's political representation in Indonesia has faced various challenges, from gender stereotypes and structural barriers to inequality in access to and participation in politics. However, through various initiatives and policy changes, more and more women are involved in the political process, especially in legislative elections.

The 2024 General Election (Pemilu) is an important moment in efforts to increase women's representation in parliament. Under Law Number 22 of 2007 on Elections,

political parties must include at least 30% women among their legislative candidates. This reflects a commitment to ensure that women's voices and interests are represented in decision-making at the legislative level. However, achieving this quota is not merely a matter of numbers; it is important to evaluate whether the presence of women in the House of Representatives (DPR) truly has an impact on policymaking that favors women and society as a whole.

Based on data released by the General Elections Commission (KPU), women's involvement in the 2024 Legislative Election shows a positive trend, with 37.7% of all legislative candidates being women. Some political parties even exceeded the threshold for women's representation, with Partai Garuda recording the highest proportion, at 41.4%. Even so, challenges remain, especially concerning substantive representation, namely whether elected women can voice and fight for women's interests in parliament.

Against this background, this article examines women's political representation in the 2024 Legislative Election, focusing on women's involvement in legislative elections as well as the challenges and opportunities that exist. Through this analysis, it is hoped that a clearer picture can be provided of the extent to which women's representation contributes to changes in policy and to more inclusive political practices in Indonesia. This study aims to describe women's representation among legislative candidates in the 2024 Legislative Election and to analyze, through Pitkin's four forms of representation, the opportunities and challenges for achieving substantive representation in parliament.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on secondary data [5]. No primary data were collected, and no informants or respondents were involved. All data were obtained from published documents and publicly available sources by Indonesia Baik and Databoks Katadata, and literature on political representation.

The data consist of three groups. First, the quota provisions for women's representation set out in legislation, namely Law Number 2 of 2011 on Political Parties and Law Number 22 of 2007 on Elections, as discussed in the Background. Second, data on women legislative candidates in the 2024 Legislative Election released by the General Elections Commission (KPU) and published through the Indonesia Baik infographic [6] and the Databoks Katadata report on the final candidate list (DCT) [7]. The first source provides the national percentage of women candidates (Figure 1), and the second provides

the percentage by political party (Table 1). Third, the literature on political representation, consisting of journal articles, books, and book chapters listed in the references.

The analysis was carried out in three steps. The data were first compiled and tabulated by political party. They were then compared with the 30% minimum quota required by law. Finally, they were interpreted using Hanna Pitkin's formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation [8] and Anne Phillips's distinction between the politics of ideas and the politics of presence [9].

FINDINGS

Number of Women's Representatives in the 2024 General Election

In the 2024 General Election (Pemilu), the role of women in politics once again drew attention with significant achievements. The General Elections Commission (KPU) recorded that, of a total of 10,323 prospective legislative candidates (caleg) registered from 18 political parties, 37.7%, or 3,896, were women. This achievement shows that the majority of political parties have met the provisions of Law Number 22 of 2007 on Elections, which requires a minimum of 30% women's representation in the conduct of elections.

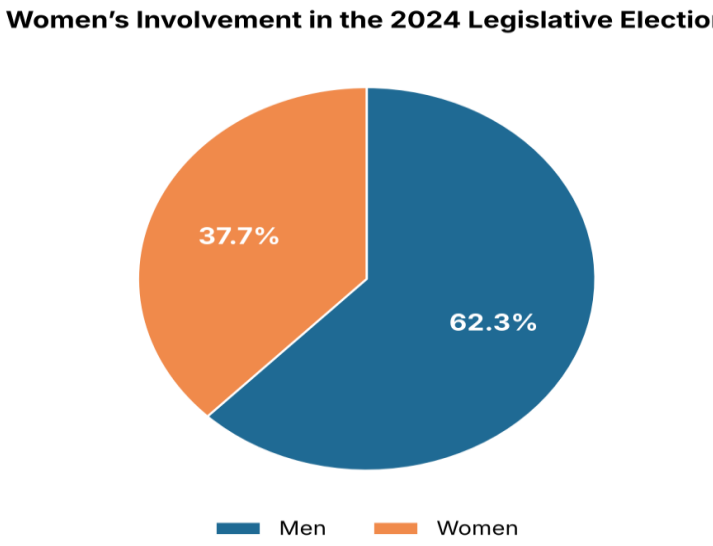

Figure 1. Percentage of Women's Involvement in the 2024 Legislative Election

Source: secondary data [6]

The diagram above shows the percentage of women's involvement in the 2024 Legislative Election. The following is data on women's involvement in the legislative election as nominated by political parties.

Table 1. Political Parties by Percentage of Women's Involvement

Party	Women (%)
Partai Garuda	41.4
PBB	41.06
Partai Ummat	40.04
Perindo	39.9
PSI	38.79
Hanura	38.56
PKN	37.71
PAN	37.24
PPP	36.9
PKS	36.72
Gerindra	36.21
Partai Buruh	36.21
Gelora	36.11
PKB	35.17
Demokrat	34.83
Nasdem	34.48
Golkar	33.97
PDIP	33.1

Source: secondary data [7]

Data on women's involvement in the 2024 Legislative Election (Pileg) show significant variation among political parties. Partai Garuda occupies the top position with women's involvement of 41.4%, reflecting the party's commitment to promoting women's representation in politics. This figure shows seriousness in meeting the minimum threshold of 30% set by law and a strong effort to increase gender diversity in the legislative structure. It is followed by Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB) and Partai Ummat, which recorded women's involvement of 41.06% and 40.04%, respectively. Both parties show significant efforts to create gender diversity in the legislative structure and thereby encourage women's participation in politics. This shows that they are responsive to public demands for women's representation in parliament.

Meanwhile, Perindo, PSI, and Hanura recorded women's involvement of 39.9%, 38.79%, and 38.56%, respectively. These efforts indicate that these parties are trying hard to increase the number of women on their legislative candidate lists, in the hope of responding to public aspirations regarding gender justice in political representation. On the other hand, Partai Keadilan Nasional (PKN) and Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) recorded women's involvement of 37.71% and 37.24%, respectively. Although these figures are below 40%, they show a commitment to upholding the principle of gender justice. These parties show awareness of the importance of women's representation in political decision-making.

In contrast, Partai Demokrat and Nasdem, with women's involvement of 34.83% and 34.48%, respectively, show challenges in increasing women's representation.

Although still above the minimum limit, these figures show the need to evaluate the recruitment strategies and policies of these parties in order to further strengthen women's involvement.

Partai Golkar and PDIP have women's involvement of 33.97% and 33.1%. These figures reflect the need for both parties to evaluate their policies and efforts to achieve better gender representation. Although both parties remain above the minimum threshold, there are indications that they need to improve their approach to increasing women's representation.

Overall, the data reflect progress in women's involvement in the 2024 Legislative Election, although there are significant differences among political parties. The top-ranked parties show that increasing women's representation is a priority, while other parties may need to improve their strategies to achieve more equal representation. This underscores the importance of sustained efforts to promote women's involvement in politics so that the resulting policies are more inclusive and responsive to society's needs.

Women's Representation in Parliament

Women's representation in parliament is very important to ensure that the resulting policies can accommodate and facilitate women's needs in various areas of development. With 37.7% women candidates, women's involvement in politics increasingly shows that they have the capacity and ability to contribute to decision-making at the legislative level.

Based on Table 1, Partai Garuda recorded the highest proportion of women candidates, at 41.4% (236 of 570 candidates), followed by PBB at 41.06% and Partai Ummat at 40.04%. At the other end, PDIP recorded the lowest proportion, at 33.1% (192 of 580 candidates) [7]. These figures show that political parties are making more serious efforts to increase women's representation, although the differences between parties show that challenges remain in achieving gender equality in politics.

The Importance of Women's Representation

Women's representation in parliament is not merely about meeting a quota; it is also important for producing policies that are inclusive and responsive to the issues women face. Increasing the number of women in parliament can encourage policies that empower women and support women's participation in other fields such as education, health, and the economy.

Cumulatively, women's representation in legislative candidate lists already shows a positive trend. In the 2009 Election, women made up 34.6% of the final candidate list (DCT) for members of the House of Representatives (DPR), rising to 37% in the 2014

Election and reaching 40% in the 2019 Election. This shows significant progress in increasing women's representation, although much remains to be done.

DISCUSSIONS

Theoretical Review

In German, representation derives from the words *Vertreten* (to speak for) and *Darstellen* (to speak about or depict). When a person acts as a representative, he or she in fact only speaks for the group or individuals represented and speaks about certain issues. Its existence as political representation plays an important role in realizing the process of democratization. This representation is realized through efforts to absorb and channel the aspirations of society through open spaces of participation that provide equal opportunities for everyone [10].

According to Lovenduski, the existence of political representation supports the legitimacy of a democratic state [11]. The concept of political representation shapes institutional arrangements and definitions of citizenship. Anne Phillips divides political representation in democratic institutions, such as parliament, into two types: the politics of ideas and the politics of presence [9]. Phillips states that political representation today generally starts from the politics of ideas, in which political representatives bring the various ideas of the people they represent. However, in the current electoral system, voters tend to choose representatives on the basis of party rather than the individual [12]. As a result, those who sit in parliament represent the party more than the people. In addition, these representatives often ignore the aspirations of their constituents and prioritize the interests of certain groups close to them, such as a particular sex or race, to the detriment of minority groups with few representatives, such as women. On this basis, Phillips proposes the politics of presence as a more ideal form of political representation. She argues that a better alternative is to ensure representation that is random and reflects the composition of society, so that all interests can be better represented.

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin [8] states that representation is an important concept in modern democracy. According to Pitkin, there are four ways of viewing political representation, namely symbolic, formalistic, descriptive, and substantive representation. First, formalistic representation refers to the granting of authority to a representative who acts on behalf of another person, with a focus on formal relationships within an organization. Second, descriptive representation describes how a representative can "stand" for another party who is not directly present. The representative is regarded as a

substitute because of his or her resemblance to the person represented, whether in skin color, gender, or social class. This model emphasizes the descriptive similarity between the representative and the represented [13].

From the various definitions presented, it can be concluded that representation relates to two main aspects: authority and responsibility. Authority refers to the delegation of representation from one party (an individual or a group) to another. In other words, authority is given to the representative to act on behalf of the party represented. The granting of this authority becomes the basis for the actions that the representing party must take. However, because the authority is obtained from another party, there is a mechanism that must be observed, namely responsibility to the party represented [14]. This relationship must therefore be understood as two-way, in which the authority granted must be accompanied by responsibility to the party that grants it.

According to Nuri Suseno in his book *Representasi Politik*, the development of political representation can be seen in the extent to which a state implements its democracy, which is strongly influenced by changes in political phenomena. Vieira and Runciman state that all modern states today are representative states. Representation, which simply means "making present something that is absent or not present," is now undergoing change in the understanding of democratic political practice [15].

The role of the representative in political representation is crucial for the society represented. As mentioned earlier, a representative is a delegate who acts on behalf of the party represented, based on their interests. Society places trust in its representatives, and this trust is the main foundation of the system of political representation [16].

However, how can a representative be considered to represent if the party represented does not trust him or her? How can a representative be said to represent if he or she does not act according to their interests, or does not even know what the interests of the party represented are? To answer this, we need to examine how representatives should act and how the practice of ideal political representation should work [17].

First, a representative should act as a channel for the people's aspirations, be a good listener, and receive the complaints and proposals of the party represented. For this, representatives need to be close to the people so that they can truly convey their aspirations. In reality, however, things do not always match expectations. The people's aspirations are often not channeled because representatives pay too little attention or listen too little to what the people they represent want.

Second, a representative should fight for the people's interests through the policies proposed and made. In practice, however, the policies made often favor other parties rather than the people represented, and thus actually harm them. So what becomes of the people if the representatives who should represent them instead support other interests that harm them? Is the function of representation itself still working? Whom does the representative actually represent?

Third, a representative should obtain the people's trust through the electoral process. However, the elected representative is often not the choice of the majority of the people but of only a small portion. This is reflected in low public participation in elections, with the high rate of abstention (*golput*) as an indicator [18].

Analysis of Women's Representation in the 2024 Legislative Election

The analysis of women's representation in the 2024 Legislative Election (Pileg) can be carried out through the various lenses, or analytical tools, explained in the Theoretical Review above. These include the formalistic, substantive, symbolic, and descriptive views offered by Hanna Pitkin, as well as considerations of the political dynamics and social context in which this representation takes place.

Formalistic and Descriptive Views

From a formalistic perspective, women's representation in the 2024 Legislative Election can be seen in terms of the institutional structure and the electoral process. According to the data, many political parties meet the 30% threshold for women's representation, such as Partai Garuda with 41.4%. However, these figures should not be seen merely as numerical achievements; further analysis is needed of how parties' internal policies facilitate or hinder women's involvement. Partai Ummat and PBB also show significant figures, indicating mechanisms that support women's nomination. However, it needs to be examined whether women's positions in these parties give them real power and influence in the legislative process.

From a descriptive standpoint, women's representation can be analyzed through the demographic characteristics of legislative candidates. Looking at the composition of women candidates across parties, it can be seen that many women candidates come from strong political backgrounds, including political dynasties. For example, in Partai Nasdem, although many women candidates were elected, there are indications that they come from established networks. This shows that although the number has increased, the diversity of experience and background among women candidates still needs to be improved so that the existing representation better reflects the diversity of women's voices in society.

Symbolic and Substantive Views

In the symbolic context, women's representation also means recognizing that the presence of women in the legislature is not merely a number but also an important symbol of social change. For example, women's participation in politics is expected to bring issues closer to women's experiences and needs, enabling them to play a role in fairer decision-making. Parties with a high proportion of women, such as Partai Garuda and Perindo, not only show good figures but can also serve as symbols of hope for increased women's participation in politics.

From the substantive side, the presence of women in parliament must have an impact on policymaking. Are they able to fight for agendas that benefit women, such as welfare policies, the protection of women, and economic empowerment? In this regard, it is important to analyze the concrete actions taken by women representatives after being elected. If women in the legislature cannot influence the policy agenda, or if they fail to voice women's broader interests, then their representation can be considered non-substantive.

Political Dynamics and Social Context

The political dynamics in the context of the 2024 Legislative Election also need to be considered. The high rate of voter abstention (*golput*) can affect the legitimacy of the women representatives who are elected. When representatives do not obtain broad public support, their strength and influence in parliament may diminish. It is therefore important for political parties to increase voter participation, especially among women voters, to ensure that their voices are well represented.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on women's representation in Indonesia. Aspinall et al. [13] identify patriarchal attitudes and structural disadvantages as barriers to women candidates, and show that some women rely on the political and financial resources of relatives. This is in line with the indication in this study that many women candidates come from established political networks. A difference is that Aspinall et al. studied the 2019 election using candidate and voter surveys, whereas this study uses secondary data on the 2024 candidate lists and cannot measure the backgrounds of individual candidates.

A second similarity concerns the gap between candidacy and election. This study finds that 37.7% of legislative candidates in 2024 were women, but women won 127 of the 580 seats in the DPR for 2024–2029, or 21.9%. In the previous period, 120 of 575

members, or 20.87%, were women [19]. The share of women in parliament has therefore risen only slightly and remains below the 30% benchmark, so a quota at the candidacy stage does not translate automatically into equal representation in seats. This supports the argument of this study that numerical compliance is not the same as substantive representation.

The literature also offers a different emphasis. Hessami and da Fonseca [14] review studies on whether women's presence in politics changes policy outcomes, which is the question raised by the substantive view of representation. This study cannot answer that question, because it analyzes candidate data and not the policies produced by elected women. The findings on candidate numbers should therefore be read together with later research on women's legislative work and policy output.

Study Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it relies only on secondary data from the KPU as published by Indonesia Baik and Databoks Katadata, and it did not interview candidates, party officials, or elected women. Second, the data describe candidates, not elected legislators or policy outputs, so the analysis of substantive representation is conceptual and has not been tested with evidence on legislative work. Third, figures on candidates may differ between sources and between stages of the candidacy process; for example, another report gives 3,676 women among 9,917 candidates [20]. The national and party figures used here may therefore differ slightly from other published counts. Fourth, the statements on candidates' political-dynasty backgrounds rest on indications in the literature and not on a systematic review of candidate profiles. Future research should combine candidate data with interviews, candidate profiles, and analysis of legislative products.

CONCLUSION

Women's representation in the 2024 Legislative Election shows significant progress, with 37.7% of 10,323 legislative candidates being women. Several political parties, such as Partai Garuda and Partai Ummat, have shown a strong commitment to increasing women's representation, even exceeding the minimum threshold set by law. Even so, challenges remain, especially regarding the substance of the policies produced by women representatives. It is important to evaluate the extent to which women representatives can influence the policy agenda and ensure that their presence is not merely symbolic but also substantive in decision-making.

In addition, social and political factors, including voter dynamics and the challenges of patriarchal culture, remain significant barriers to achieving gender equality in politics. In this context, political parties are expected to evaluate their recruitment policies and to support increased participation by women not only in nomination but also in making policies that are responsive to women's needs.

The author recommends more intensive political education programs to raise women's awareness of their political rights and the importance of their participation in the electoral process. This includes leadership and communication skills training for women legislative candidates.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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