

Young Women and Political Parties: From Descriptive Participation to Substantive Representation

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Abstract

The low level of political participation among women in general, including young women, in Indonesia can be explained through three reasons. Firstly, women face a challenging playing field because politics is predominantly characterized by a masculine culture. Secondly, in their pursuit of political engagement, women encounter several obstacles, such as patriarchal structures, sexist and ageist views, and social class barriers. Thirdly, young women are also hindered by political nepotism, lack of party support, limited political knowledge, and financial constraints. This paper utilizes the conceptual framework of Women and Political Party by Lovenduski (1997), Squires (2007), Ann Phillips' theory of women's representation, as well as the works of Young, Mouffe, Childs, and Krook to examine the dynamics of young women and political parties in Indonesia from the 2019 elections to the upcoming 2024 elections. The focus is on the interconnection between descriptive participation and substantive representation. The research methodology employed involves a critical analysis of existing literature supplemented by interviews conducted with young women actively involved in five political parties qualified as participants in the 2024 elections (*Golkar, NasDem, PKB, Demokrat, and PSI*), including both ordinary party members and those who were elected as members of the DPR (People's Representative Council of Indonesia) in the 2019 elections.

Keywords: young women, political parties, political representation

Introduction

History has shown that the role and participation of "young people" can transform not only political systems, but also natural and human resources, and economic opportunities. However, many people still doubt the potential of young people and marginalise their role. In addition to being marginalised, young people face many structural challenges such as poverty, educational barriers, and limited access. In the 2024 elections, the electorate is estimated to reach 187 million people. According to the General Election Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum, KPU*), millennials and Generation Z will be the largest voters.

Generation Z and Millennials are the largest voting bloc in the 2024 elections. However, these two groups of voters tend to be apathetic and averse to politics, both formal politics by becoming political party cadres and active voters in elections (Rojab 2022). This is due to Generation Z and Millennials' low knowledge of Indonesia's political and electoral system. This assumption then leads to the lack of representation of Generation Z (1996-2015) and Millennial Generation (born 1980-1995) in the legislative sphere, especially the representation of

young women. In 2024, the Millennial Generation will be 29-44 years old, and Generation Z will be 19-28 years old. This means that these two groups will be the biggest voters in the 2024 elections.

Generation Z is often labelled as an egocentric and politically apathetic group. They do not think elections change much. Generation Z is a large electorate, but they are not involved in the decisions that affect their lives. This means that Gen Z's voices, aspirations, or demands are not heard by those in power and by policy makers. Meanwhile, they are also not encouraged to get involved in formal political activities, such as political parties. In fact, Generation Z is very critical. They pay a lot of attention to substantive issues that are important and strategic, such as anti-corruption, the environment including the climate crisis, human rights, and gender equality. They hope that there will be more discourse on government policies in the form of open forums outside of the presidential and vice-presidential candidate debates organised by the KPU or televised inter-party debates. Unlike Generation Z, Millennials have a different political experience from the older generation. They are the generation that grew up in the open atmosphere of

the post-reformation era and have almost no memories of the New Order, let alone the Old Order.

Millennials, despite their large numbers, think that politics is only for old-fashioned people or the older generation. Most tend to be apathetic and not very politically savvy. Based on CNN Indonesia's data, they are very tech-savvy and active on social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok. The data also shows that 80 per cent of Millennials access social media every day (Sinaga 2018). The information they consume includes holidays, entertainment, culinary, religion, politics, and sports. Millennials are also interested in new things, such as disruptive innovations.

At the same time, it was found that the number of female voters had reached more than 96 million, or 51 per cent - the majority - of the total number of voters. Borrowing data from Plan International Indonesia, the survey results shows that political participation is very important. Plan International Indonesia (2023) finds that 69 per cent of young women admitted to facing challenges when trying to participate in politics. Meanwhile, 29 per cent said that politicians generally do not listen to young women, and another 25 per cent said that politicians do not talk about issues that affect their lives. Finally, some 23 per cent of young women face barriers in the form of a lack of understanding of political issues. Plan International Indonesia's research also shows that poverty, unemployment, violence, and conflict are of greater concern to young people than other issues.

The voice and role of young people is important because they have the potential to bring new ideas, innovations, and idealism in the midst of today's political madness, which shows a series of corruption cases by state officials, the display of wealth by the State Civil Apparatus (*Aparatur Sipil Negara, ASN*), and the lack of achievement shown by policies that do not favour and respond to the needs of the community. At the same time, the representation of young people in parliament is still relatively low. Out of a total of 575 members of the People's Representative Council of Indonesia (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Republik Indonesia, DPR RI*) for the 2019-2024 period, only 20 are under 30 years old. This is a decrease compared to the 2014-2019 period, when there were 92 out of 560 members of DPR RI. Looking at their backgrounds, half of the young politicians in DPR RI today come from political dynasties. For example, Puteri Komarudin, Hillary Brigitta Lasut, or those who come from circles that not only have kinship ties within the political party but also large economic capital, such as Gerardus Budisatrio Djiwandono.

Indonesia has provided constitutional guarantees through the provisions of Article 28H(2) of the 1945 Constitution, which states that everyone is entitled to receive ease and special treatment in order to obtain the same opportunity and benefit in order to achieve equality and justice. This provision was subsequently followed up in Law No. 2 of 2011 on Political Parties and the Election Law (PKPU No. 7 of 2019 on Elections), which provide for women's representation of at least 30 per cent in each electoral district at each level, and the list of candidates submitted by political parties must meet the provisions that for every three candidates there is at least one female candidate (semi-zipper). If the political party does not meet these requirements, then the political party is disqualified in the electoral district that does not meet the PKPU provisions. This policy was maintained until the 2019 elections. As a result, women's representation in parliament continued to increase from the 1999 elections to the 2019 elections, from 9 per cent in the 1999 elections to 11 per cent in the 2004 elections, then increased again to 18 per cent in the 2009 elections, decreased slightly to 17 per cent in the 2014 elections, and increased to 20.5 per cent in the 2019 elections. The percentage of women in legislative seats in Indonesia, while increasing, is still below the global average of 26.8 per cent.

Research Methodology

The research methodology is a critical analysis of literature studies complemented by online interviews conducted in June 2023 with young women active in the five political parties that qualify to participate in the 2024 elections (*Golkar, NasDem, PKB, Demokrat and PSI*), both those who are ordinary cadres and those who were elected as members of DPR RI in the 2019 elections.

Joni Lovenduski (2005) cynically argues that parliament is a repository of traditional political masculinity. This sentence can be interpreted as a description of conditions that are highly correlated with conditions in political parties as the main distributors of members in parliament. With ease and clarity, we can understand Lovenduski's point that as long as political parties never manage to carry out recruitment, regeneration, capacity building, promotion, and management - especially for women politicians - then parliament that will produce public policies will continue to have a masculine face like that of political parties.

Although provisions for women's affirmative action are included in Law No. 2 of 2011 on Political Parties and

Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections, and many political parties also have provisions for women's affirmative action in their statutes and bylaws, the discrepancy in women's representation remains a major problem to date. The problem is rooted in the internal conditions of political parties, which should be the upstream of all affirmative action. It turns out that they have not been able and have not been strongly committed to including women as strategic and useful figures. If the process of recruitment, regeneration, capacity building, and promotion within the political party is not optimally implemented, this condition indicates that there is no attitude of "mutual respect and interdependence between political parties and their women members".

Women's Political Interests in the Concept of Representation

Gender issues such as sexual violence, trafficking of women and children, high maternal mortality rates, inadequate health services, poverty with a female face, and vulnerable migrant workers are some of the many strategic issues of concern to feminist groups. Democracy and the fulfilment of human rights, as enshrined in the Constitution and its derived regulations, should enhance the dignity and fundamental rights of every human being. However, for the majority of women, including young women, the impact is negative and makes their lives and future uncertain. Cases faced by young people, both men and women, such as educated unemployment, employment, economic hardship, high housing prices, poor environmental quality, lack of security guarantees for their right to privacy, restrictions on freedoms of speech and expression, and sexual harassment are some of the strategic problems faced by the Millennial and Generation Z generations.

There are many factors that are not taken into account and make it more difficult for women to receive the same benefits and outcomes from their participation in political parties. Androcentric assumptions and claims of neutrality, objectivity, and inclusivity are still common. In fact, these issues are loaded with gender dimensions. Implicitly and explicitly, these assumptions favour one gender (usually men), and the standards and experiences used are those of men, which are considered normal and true.

According to Squires (2007), there are three strategies for achieving gender justice in the political arena: quotas (affirmative policies), gender mainstreaming (*Pengarusutamaan Gender*, PUG), and the establishment

of gender focal points in political parties (women focal points). Forms in the political parties vary, such as the *Kesatuan Perempuan Partai Golkar* (KPPG) Golkar Women's Wing (*Sayap Perempuan Golkar*), *Pergerakan Perempuan Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PPKB) PKB Women's Wing, *Srikandi Demokrat* (Democratic Party), *Perempuan Partai Solidaritas Indonesia* (PSI), *Garnita Malahayati Nasional Demokrat*, *Perempuan Indonesia Raya* (Gerindra), *Perempuan Partai Amanat Nasional* (PUAN), *Srikandi PDIP*, and *Wanita Persatuan Pembangunan* (WPP).

While quotas aim for numbers, PUG aims to ensure that processes in decision-making arenas incorporate gender-equitable principles. PUG focuses not only on women nominally, but also on gender justice to change unequal power relations. There has been much criticism of quotas and PUG. The main criticism of quotas is their potential to be essentialist, pursuing only quantity and marginalising quality of representation and gender perspectives. PUG has the potential to again marginalise women because it allows everyone to participate (integrationist) and is bureaucratic and technocratic in nature, further reinforcing neoliberal principles and moving away from the idea of gender justice.

So, how do we interpret women's political interests? How are women's political interests fought for by political parties? Existing feminist theory shows that there is no single explanation of the causes of women's subordination that can be used as the main basis for defining women's interests.

Molyneux (1985) defines three concepts that are considered to be women's interests: women's interest, practical gender interest, and strategic gender interest. Women's interest is seen as a problematic concept due to the heterogeneous identity of women; it is impossible to generalise that there is a common women's interest in different places. Gender interest is the interest of women and men that is socially constructed through the social attributes of male and female gender. Strategic gender interests can be practical and immediate, and strategic gender interests require feminist awareness and take longer.

In addition to Molyneux, the concept of women's interests being different from men is also discussed by Iris Marion Young (1990). According to Young, women's interests differ from men's because of biological differences (sexual differences). Biological differences lead to differences in interests. This view has also been widely criticised for seeing women only in a homogeneous category. Anne Phillips (1991) argues

that women's interests are highly contextualised, diverse, unequal, and fluid because the category of women is not homogeneous. Phillips recognises that there are differences in the interests of women and men. For Phillips, however, the most important thing is to equalise participation by forgetting gender differences for a moment. Phillips is one of the political feminists best known for her idea of affirmative action in the form of quotas for women in politics.

Of course, Phillips' ideas have also been challenged and criticised as the idea of equalising participation through the pursuit of numbers often marginalising the presence of gender ideological perspectives in the realm of formal politics. Mouffe (1992) in Randall & Waylen (1998) came out of the sexual-biological interest and gender interest debate by considering the political arena as an open contestation. Women have both practical and strategic interests. Regardless of differences in gender, sex, women's interest identities, and gender interests, we should move beyond terminological debates for substantive democratic purposes. The link between identity and interests cannot be simplified by assuming a shared identity. There is always a struggle for interests. Therefore, political context and opportunity are two aspects that also need to be examined.

Young Women and Political Party Experience

A survey conducted by *Kompas* Daily shows that the younger generation's views on politics generally express a reluctance to participate in politics and join political parties. The Chairman of *OPP Perindo*, Michael Sianipar, for example, stated that there are structural problems in the political party that hinder participation in elections or in political parties, namely seniority behaviour, prioritisation of people with senior age or proximity to political party leaders, large capital ownership, the existence of many supportive fan clubs, and also the level of education (Nababan 2023). Young people in Indonesia are considered immature in terms of experience and ability to enter politics. If the young group is female, the barriers to entering politics are compounded by cultural norms in society. In 2019, the Constitutional Court rejected a judicial review by a young politician from the Indonesian Solidarity Party (*Partai Solidaritas Indonesia, PSI*) to lower the age limit for regional head candidates. Currently, the minimum age to become a governor is 30 years old, and the age to become a regent or mayor is 25 years old.

Similarly, adolescent girls consider women's participation important, but their participation is still very low. The majority perceive many barriers to participation, such as a political system that is not friendly to them, politicians, in general, who do not talk about issues that affect women, and mistrust and lack of confidence in voting in elections. From the formal political sphere, data on the representation of young people under 30 years of age is only 4 per cent. In fact, the projection of women as voters in the 2024 elections is estimated at 50-60 per cent (Saubani 2023). Through interviews conducted by the author on the experiences of young women in the Millennial generation age group who are actively involved in politics through the five political parties participating in the upcoming 2024 elections (*Partai Demokrat, Partai Solidaritas Indonesia, Partai Golongan Karya, Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, and Partai Nasional Demokrat*), there are multiple challenges that young women face when they are serious about entering the political arena through political parties. This section provides a reflective review of the interview activities conducted with the theoretical framework used.

On the *first* layer of challenge, sexism, almost all interviewees agreed on the different treatment and roles that men and women receive in formal political activities. According to an interviewee from *Partai Golkar*, being a woman in a masculine formal political environment is a burden, especially if you are young. It is an additional burden. The first obstacle women face when registering as a member of a political party is the support from the family, be it husband, children, or other extended family. If there are obstacles from the family, the woman is likely to be discouraged from participating in formal politics through political parties. If the married woman finally does enter the political arena, she will have to make many compromises. There are priorities that must be chosen so that the time to be present in the family is greatly reduced. There will also be a phenomenon of multiple roles that these women will experience. This situation is different from that of single women. When it comes to barriers to joining the political party, family factors are likely to be a secondary reason, usually these barriers are in the form of high political costs in terms of political capital and campaigning. After facing sexist opinions in the family sphere, women are also hindered by sexist activities in the political party sphere as a masculine institution (LAP from Golkar & TA from PSI 2023, interviews 11 & 12 June). All interviewees agreed that there are some sexist comments made by male political

party members, usually aimed at women's appearance. There are also jokes that cross the line and make female cadres feel uncomfortable. A young woman's status, personal opinions, and history in a political party can also be used to undermine her bargaining position as a cadre. According to one PSI cadre, there was resistance from members of other political parties when she loudly voiced disagreement with a policy formulated by a particular political party.

Second, the cost of politics is high. If a candidate has a lot of capital, many financial obstacles can be overcome. According to our interviews with *Partai Demokrat* and *Golkar* (LI from *Partai Demokrat* & PK from *Golkar* 2023, interviews 10 & 13 June), both interviewees agreed that having big political capital is a great privilege and makes it easy for both of them to become legislative candidates of the respective political party. In the prevailing field conditions, it must be recognised that there are logistical costs that must be met to ensure that a legislative candidate has a name that is recognised by the community in his or her constituency. Legislative candidates who do not have the capacity to bear the necessary political costs are automatically disadvantaged. From the interviews conducted, it appears that these disadvantaged parties consist mostly of "ordinary" young women, not celebrities, not related to political dynasties, with limited economic capital, who are active in the political party as legislative candidates or only as cadres, who may have a lot of knowledge and understanding of the strategic issues to be fought for, and who have social capital in the form of long grassroots organising work.

Third, the culture of seniority within the political party. If we are talking about a political party whose system is already strong, there will be a phenomenon of fighting over serial numbers and quotas to become legislative candidates. In theory, this situation can be resolved with the help of the solidarity of senior colleagues. However, in the interviews conducted, these seniors actually underestimated their political abilities. Seniors who should be inspiring role models instead become obstacles for young women who are new to formal politics. As a result, these young women have no choice but to participate in voluntary and unpaid party activities to support their vertical mobility in the party political order. One of the interviewees from *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB) said that the place that is usually used as an arena for young women who have just entered the political party is the women's wing (ZV of PKB 2023, interview 12 June). The activities of the women's

wing are closely related to social services and publicity. Young women, who should be given easier access to the political arena, are instead burdened with pro bono tasks that offer no certainty about their chances of becoming members of the legislature. Another problem is that not all senior women in a political party join the women's wing, increasing the possibility of young women being subordinated and exploited by their seniors and creating a gap that reinforces the culture of seniority in the party. In this context, young women do not have the agency to refuse because the selection of cadre nominees is controlled by more senior women through the requirement that 30 per cent of a political party's cadres must be women.

The phenomenon of recruiting young public figures as political party cadres is not new. Almost all political parties have cadres of young public figures based on the principle of reciprocity: cadres get political vehicles and political parties get massive publicity. Some political parties use these cadres of young public figures to win seats in the legislature by appropriate methods, so that the cadres are elected. However, this condition does not deny the practice of political parties using celebrity cadres for publicity purposes only. In an interview with one of the young public figure cadres, the political party did not adopt an approach of familiarising the cadre with the political arena (FD and MK from *NasDem* Party 2023, interview 12 June). What the party does is an approach that focuses on publicity. In addition, these young cadres who are public figures have fierce electoral districts and are not placed at number 1 because there are other cadres who will run again. This condition is very detrimental to young public figure cadres who have minimal knowledge of the political arena. However, to quote a legislative candidate nominated by PKB, he "did not feel that his position was being used for the party's interests" and instead felt that "the party was open and tended to guide him, who is relatively new to the political arena". There is a mismatch of knowledge and awareness of his position between the supporting political party and this legislative candidate with a public figure background.

Finally, the use of formal political participation by young people who are only used as party vote-getters. Based on the author's research in five political parties, there is a tendency for young cadres to be used as legislative candidates in order to fill quotas and not to be empowered. This condition is very detrimental to these cadres because the political party explicitly uses them to fill the shortage of legislative candidates in certain

electoral districts. Some of these young cadres do not even know the political issues to be fought for and the culture of the political party environment. This lack of provision increases the barriers for these young women to become active in the political environment. Quoting legislative candidates under the age of 25 interviewed by the author, they believe that “the party has been very good in giving access to young people to experience and enter the party and become legislative candidates in the 2024 elections” (FD and MK from *NasDem* 2023, interviews 12 June). However, further investigation revealed that the political party did not equip these young people with things that should be understood and fulfilled when running for the legislature, such as political costs. According to the author’s research, they assume that “the cost of politics is cheap because it only covers the logistical costs of moving around during the campaign process, which can be paid for by personal expenses, even if they are not from the upper class”. This statement shows that these legislative candidates were not warned that politics is a costly battleground and were allowed to run for office with an almost absolute possibility of defeat.

Some political parties see youth groups as “supporters” so that their cadres can qualify for nomination in each constituency. The activities offered by political parties to young people are very promising, such as social services, leadership training, and meetings with influential party figures. In the end, however, these young people are only used as cadres to fill the final serial numbers. It can be said that the political parties are still capitalising on young people’s lack of knowledge about how politics should be done and exploiting their enthusiasm for politics by providing false opportunities. Some of the young cadres we interviewed ran for DPR RI in highly competitive electoral districts and received last candidacy serial numbers. These young cadres are also unaware of the high political costs involved in becoming a legislator (FD and MK from *NasDem* 2023, interviews 12 June).

Ultimately, young women in the political party have to prove their ability and legitimacy before they can be recognised by male cadres or more senior female cadres. Some of the legitimacy that can bring women recognition are how many votes they can get that will help the party win, how much money they can help with the campaign, whether their family has an important position in Indonesia’s political order, and their closeness to central party figures. For young women, only those with privilege can enjoy the means to actively participate in party and electoral politics.

So far, gender issues have not been mainstreamed in political parties in Indonesia. Based on the interviews conducted, the average political party does not have an integrated programme for women politicians in terms of how to train them, build their capacity, and fully support their candidacy to win in electoral contests. Today, 20 years after the adoption of the affirmative action (zipper) policy in the Political Parties Law, the requirement of at least 30 per cent women in the executive structure remains difficult to meet. Cultural and social challenges are still an obstacle. The party politics we see today shows that political parties in Indonesia are still not used to the contestation of ideas between parties. The battle over an issue, its success or failure, is determined by the lobbying process, not by the battle of ideas and arguments. Political parties tend not to want to run on the same issues as other political parties. There is always a desire to be different. For example, the Domestic Workers Protection Bill (RUU PPRT) is not seen as an issue that responds to the demands of marginalised and vulnerable women, but the party sees it only as an issue and interest that will benefit the *NasDem* party. There was no discussion in terms of public learning and education about the socialisation of which articles were discussed or which components of the Bill proved to be problematic. According to the party, there will be parties that will specifically benefit from the issues they raise, and this will be very linear with the party’s victory in the 2024 elections. With this logic, it is not surprising that strategic issues raised by young people, such as employment, unemployment of educated people, and unaffordable housing prices, will never, or hardly ever, become party issues and will be fought for by political parties.

Bringing Women into the Formal Political Arena

The women’s movement has always faced the dilemma of whether engaging with political parties can change the deteriorating conditions of women, especially women from vulnerable groups, or whether engaging with parties will only provide legitimacy and perpetuate patriarchal power relations (Lovenduski 1986; Sainsbury 2004). Nevertheless, in the context of Indonesian politics, the choice to build relationships and work from within by joining political parties is the strategy of choice for the women’s movement after the 1998 reform.

In the history of the relationship between the women’s movement and political parties in Indonesia after the 1998 reform, according to the data found by the author, women’s participation and the inclusion of the women’s

movement agenda were accepted by almost all political parties in Indonesia after the regulation of the Political Parties Law, which began in 2002, and the General Election Law, which began in 2004. The affirmative action policy in the form of a minimum quota of 30 per cent for women was successfully included for the first time in Law No. 31 of 2002 on Political Parties and Law No. 12 of 2003 on the Election of the House of Representatives (DPR), Regional Representatives Council (DPD), and Regional Legislative Council (DPRD) and was implemented for the first time in the 2004 elections. Since its implementation, the affirmative action policy has become an important mechanism in the fight for women's equality in politics.

When we talk about the relationship between the women's movement and political party, of course the relationship between the two is not fixed and shows a dynamic of ups and downs. The discourse of affirmation for women in political parties has undergone several changes since the 2004 elections. In the run-up to the 2009 elections, Law No. 2 of 2008 on Political Parties and Law No. 10 of 2008 on Elections were passed. Both laws affirm that political parties must include at least 30 per cent women in their leadership. This decision is based on the view that the presence of women in the political party is beneficial in promoting political change and increased mobilisation of women in the party. In addition, this decision also aims to increase the number of women in strategic positions so that they can be positioned as role models to inspire other women to run for different positions at different levels. It is hoped that with this decision, women in parties and active movements will work together to continue to raise the issue of increased representation.

Elections Law No. 10 of 2008 stipulates a structure for candidate lists based on a modified zipper model. This means that there must be at least one female candidate for every three candidates. Experience in various countries has shown that the zipper system can rapidly increase women's participation in the political system when combined with a semi-open proportional electoral system. These improvements in party and electoral laws resulted in an increase in women's representation to 18 per cent (approximately 100 out of 560 members of DPR RI), compared to only 11 per cent in the 2004 elections. Elections Law No. 10 of 2008 has been successful in representing women and increasing their numbers in political institutions, central and local parliaments. It has also had a positive impact on increasing women's representation in political parties as administrators.

In the run-up to the 2014 elections, both laws were revised in Law No. 2 of 2011 on Political Parties and Law No. 8 of 2012 on Elections. Provisions on the 30 per cent party quota appear not only in the party management article, but also in articles on the nomination of women and the establishment of political parties. All of these provisions are complemented by the issuance of Regulation No. 7 of 2013, Article 27, by the General Election Commission (KPU), which states that the KPU will impose sanctions on political parties that do not meet the 30 per cent quota for female candidates. Due to party dynamics in response to the relevant regulations and laws, women's representation in parliament decreased slightly to 17 per cent in the 2014 election.

For the 2019 General Election, the provisions on women's affirmation in Law No. 2 of 2011 on Political Parties and Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections remain substantially unchanged. However, the implementation of the 2019 General Elections has been supplemented by PKPU (KPU) Regulation No. 20 of 2018, which includes sanctions for political parties that do not meet the 30 per cent women's candidacy requirement in certain electoral districts in the form of cancellation of the party's participation in the electoral districts. As a result of the addition of PKPU No. 20 of 2018, the results of the 2019 elections showed that the representation of women at DPR-RI increased to 20 per cent.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the description of the affirmative action policies journey is that the open-list proportional electoral system and the affirmative action policies adopted have been able to encourage women's participation and have a positive correlation with the strengthening of women's position in the political sphere, as shown by the increase in the number of women elected to parliament. As described in the discussion above, from the 2004 to the 2019 elections.

For the upcoming 2024 elections, the provisions of Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections are still the legal umbrella for the simultaneous elections on 14 February 2024. The presence of Perpu No. 1 of 2022 on Elections is more to accommodate the presence of new provinces in South Papua, Central Papua, Mountainous Papua, and Southwest Papua. The provisions of the Elections Law still refer to the same Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections, as well as the Law on Political Parties, which is also unchanged and still refers to Law No. 2 of 2011 on Political Parties.

Young Women Party Politicians

The presence of affirmative action policies for women in political parties and elections has been met with mixed reactions from political parties in Indonesia. The parties' willingness to implement the quota affirmative action policy varies. For large parties, such as *Partai Golkar*, they stated that there were no difficulties in getting female cadres to be nominated as legislative candidates at various levels in the elections. However, for small parties and new parties, they expressed difficulties and felt that the quota would be difficult to meet at various levels, especially at the district/city (DPRD) level. They argue that if the provision is implemented, parties will easily use a cadre's wife, sister or other family member to fulfil the requirement.

All political parties want to win elections. In order to win and not be eliminated, they realise that women who are recruited or nominated must have electoral appeal. That is, these women are advised to be able to attract as many and as wide a range of voters as possible to support them. If the cadre system does not work, the shortcut is to recruit women from outside the party cadre.

Women who are recruited apart from the aim of filling the 30 per cent quota for women can also be used to support, strengthen, and expand the political party's voter base while at the same time not jeopardising the position or becoming a rival to the party's leadership or elite. If observed, more than 70 per cent of female candidates on the political party's permanent candidate list (*Daftar Calon Tetap, DCT*) come from the external sphere consisting of celebrities, public figures, or those who have a large following on social media. For the 2024 Legislative Elections, there are names from the parties' DCT, such as Krisdayanti and Tamara Geraldine from *PDIP*, Reza Artamevia and Anisa Bahar from *NasDem*, Desy Ratnasari from *PAN*, Arzeti Bilbina, Lyeth Bustami, and Zora Vidya from *PKB*, Ingrid Kansil, Arumi Bachsin, and Emilia Contessa from the *Partai Demokrat*, to Venna Melinda from *Perindo*. The same phenomenon is also true of male celebrities, such as Vicky Prasetyo, Jamal Mirdad, Norman Kamaru, and Opie Kumis, who work as comedians, singers, and film players who have a fan base. However, as politicians, their ability to be elected as legislative members is questionable. Are these names capable and have the capacity to carry out effective parliamentary duties or not?

Legislative candidates consisting of celebrities, public figures, or those who have many followers on social media are needed as magnets to attract voters (vote getters)

for political parties. The presence of celebrities, public figures, or those who have many followers on social media as legislative candidates gives political parties an advantage in the competition for media coverage. Based on the author's interviews with legislative candidates who fall into these backgrounds, he was placed in an electoral zone that was hard and difficult for his party. This condition was compounded by the death of one of his party's former ministers, who was also standing in the zone in the 2019 elections. According to him, such a placement is based on the reason of attracting voters who are not too interested in political practices. From the party's point of view, celebrities from the entertainment world have the ability to build relationships and closeness with fans who are far away from them through fan networks (fan clubs).

The party as a gatekeeper plays an important role because the cadres who become legislative candidates should be those who have sufficient political capacity and ability and deserve to be elected. Being a legislator is not an easy role because they will be performing representative duties and playing a political role in DPR and DPRD. Legislators will face various problems. For example, how to develop a political agenda in accordance with the needs of the community, how to position themselves in the debates of the factions and commissions, how to manage the aggregation of the interests of the constituents they represent, and how to make important political decisions that have a broad impact on society.

However, not all legislative candidates with celebrity backgrounds, public figures, or those with large social media followings are of low quality or incompetent. On the contrary, some of the interviewees have ideas and directions that qualify them to participate in politics and become members of the legislature. Some of them also understand their position as linear women with their obligation to fight for strategic issues related to gender equality. According to the interviewees, their ability to participate in politics requires broader support and a deeper "pool" (in this context, a political party) to reflect their ideas in the legislative sphere.

In addition to celebrity candidates, another phenomenon that raises concerns among voters is the presence of candidates who are related to party leaders or elites at the central and regional levels. These legislative candidates usually already have an electoral base inherited from their families and have no obstacles in channelling political costs. They also tend to have an

easier path because party elites support their candidacy. In an office-seeking party system, the centralisation of power in party leaders and elites and the patronage culture are very strong. Therefore, the practice of recruiting family members of party leaders or elites is easy to carry out and difficult to control. Political dynasties are generally integrated with economic power and political capital in electoral contestation.

From election to election after the 1998 reform, dynastic or family politics has emerged in all political parties. The 2024 elections will certainly not be much different. The negative impacts are, of course, hindering fair competition in elections and increasing the possibility of corruption. In most cases, dynastic politics also undermines proper political practices, erodes voter confidence, and leads to apathy towards political activities, and abuses affirmative action policies that should not be allowed to grow.

By having a political network in the government, investments or projects carried out by certain parties will be passed easily. This phenomenon leads to unequal opportunities for entrepreneurs. Political dynasties are also seen as a shortcut to winning the contestation. In the 2019 elections, many legislative candidates with a political dynasty background managed to secure seats. While in office, these lawmakers prioritised policies that benefit themselves and their families. If political dynasties continue to grow and there is no oversight or control, the political system will only become a place to fight for and maintain power. There will be more cases of families of regional heads occupying legislative seats, and more massive cases of families of legislative members "continuing" their positions by participating as members of the DPR RI/DPD/DPRD.

News about female legislative candidates that is discussed in the media is mostly not about their ability to perform political functions in formal political institutions. The news that appears highlighted the colour of lipstick, clothes, make-up of the legislative candidate, the price of shoes, bags, luxury goods, and brands worn by the legislative candidate. This condition plays a role in gathering critical opinions from the public regarding the competence of existing female legislative candidates. The public should be able to know the background,

vision, and mission of the legislative candidates, not their *Dior* or *Yves Saint Laurent* shoes.

More than a few young women elected to parliament have stumbled into cases of corruption, ethical violations, or reprehensible behaviour. The cases against young female politicians such as Angelina Sondakh (*Partai Demokrat*) and Rita Widyasari (*Golkar* Party) are examples that the public and society never forget. This political corruption usually occurs when political decisions are made by abusing authority and manipulating policies, procedures, or rules for the benefit of themselves and their groups. In fact, there are no women politicians with dynastic political backgrounds who have the capacity to act, argue, and make smart decisions in formulating good policy decisions in politics. There are several legislative candidates with dynastic political backgrounds who can effectively and competently formulate appropriate policies and several times go directly to the community to educate them.

If we scroll through the news on social media, the number of conversations about young female politicians is less than or not equal to the number of conversations about a male figure, for example on Twitter. Trending topics tend to be about male politicians, such as Adian Napitupulu, Masinton Pasaribu, Rian Ernesto, Dave Laksono, and Faldo Maldini. When it comes to female politicians, there are a few names that come to mind, such as Tsamara Amany. Other competent female politicians, such as Hetifah, Nurul Arifin and Isyana Bagoes Oka, are rarely mentioned. Statements made by male political figures are also more echoed, discussed, and accepted by Twitter users than statements made by female political figures. The statements of female political figures are usually responded to with sexist remarks and tend not to highlight their competence or way of thinking. Audiences tend to impose their views that women should not be vocal or critical in dealing with political issues.

Descriptive Participation, Substantive Representation

A question often asked is when does descriptive participation become a substantive practice of political representation. Political representation does indeed have a hierarchy and levels, as shown in the illustration below.

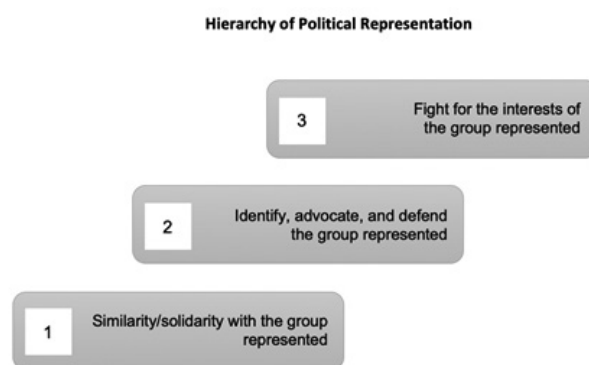


Figure 1: Hierarchy of Political Representation

Source: Processed by the author

In the early stages, a politician generally tends to associate themselves as similar to the group they represent. For example, female legislative candidates also target female voters because they feel they have something in common. In the second stage, there is a higher level of political awareness that encourages a person to recognise the group to be represented and to defend its interests regardless of similarities. For example, you do not have to be a worker to recognise the problems faced by workers and defend their interests against exploitation. The third stage, which acts as the top of the hierarchy, is consistent with the scope of political representation practices that explicitly lead to the struggle to defend the interests of vulnerable and marginalised groups in society (Gaol & Panjaitan 2023). Thus, full representation can only be practised when a representative understands the foundation of his or her work, which provides the prerequisites for sensitivity, responsiveness, and willingness to act in defence of vulnerable and marginalised groups.

A number of studies have shown that descriptive representation (standing for) does not guarantee substantive representation (acting for). This means that if today's parliament has 20 per cent women out of 580 seats, it does not necessarily guarantee that more legislation will be produced on the issues of marginalised groups and minorities. If only descriptive representation emerges, then the quota is only a roof and an umbrella, not a foundation that will become a solid force for women legislators to transform political life in the future.

Childs and Krook (2014) propose a change in approach in examining women's substantive representation in two respects: an approach that does not wait for when/if women will make a difference, but how women's substantive representation can occur; and an approach

that does not focus on what women do, but what specific actors or critical actors do, not critical mass. Not just standing for but acting for. Critical actors are people who act either individually or collectively to bring about policy changes that are favourable to vulnerable groups and minorities, including women. These critical actors then drive the change in women's representation from descriptive to substantive. These critical actors can be played by women and men who are gender aware.

Despite proposing a shift in approach to critical actors, Childs and Krook recognise that the concept of critical mass is still needed. Critical mass plays an important role in mobilising legislators who belong to the passive critical mass category to support policy reforms that favour vulnerable and marginalised groups. In conclusion, we should pay more attention to what these critical actors do, rather than what women legislators do (Adelina & Soetjpto 2014).

Closing

There are several personal reflective notes that the author has obtained through research on young women of the Millennial Generation and Generation Z as a new generation of women politicians who are active in political party institutions. The roles observed are party cadres, party administrators, and elected legislators in parliament. Their presence must be supported because they are an illustration of the future of Indonesian politics, and in their hands lies the challenge of realising gender justice and equality.

The *first* observation is that political parties remain a challenge for the new generation of women politicians. The challenges of seniority, sexism, patriarchal culture, masculine politics, and multiple barriers with economic and political dimensions are faced by many young women

when entering political parties. There are many challenges and difficulties they face. They take different forms, such as the nomination process to become legislative candidates, the election to the executive committee, and how to increase their political and electoral knowledge and understanding of the issues that they need to learn for the purposes of campaigning to win voters' votes, as well as their performance and work at the parliamentary level. Despite all these difficulties, it is encouraging that Indonesian women legislative candidates are able to compete in the electoral context to win parties and seats in parliament. Quantitative data in the form of increased female representation is irrefutable evidence.

The *second* observation is that women's political quotas are critical to use as a tool to accelerate change. In Indonesia, although provisions on women's political quotas have been included in Law No. 2 of 2011 on Political Parties and Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections with all its derivatives, the challenge of implementing these two legal frameworks remains a problem to date. Dominant groups that have enjoyed a central position of power do not give up easily and continue to try to weaken women's political quotas in various ways and strategies, such as PKPU No. 10 of 2023 on Quotas for Women Legislative Candidates.

The *third* observation is that young female cadres in the political party must first prove that they are better than the existing male cadres in order to be considered. Young women in politics must not only have strong self-confidence, but also experience and knowledge. They are also expected to be output-oriented role models and to be able to deliberate ideas in order to assert their positions and views in faction meetings. Gender mainstreaming in political parties is still a difficult obstacle to overcome. If our parliament cannot produce good policies, this condition can be interpreted as a description of conditions that are highly correlated with conditions in political parties as the main distributors of members in parliament. Unless political parties manage to recruit, regenerate, build capacity, promote, and manage - especially women politicians - the parliament that will produce public policies will continue to have masculine faces like those of political parties. Gender-responsive policies will be difficult to produce.

The *fourth* observation, when we talk about issues related to popularity and political dynasties, the question that is often asked is whether popularity and kinship are guarantees for increasing party votes? It seems that, from the existing cases, this correlation is not entirely correct.

Dynastic politics is a serious problem for both women and men. Therefore, dynastic politics should not and should never be associated with women in politics. Dynasty is a serious issue when we talk about political recruitment in Indonesia, as it is in other continental Asian countries, especially in Southeast Asia. Political dynasties are seen by the author as a reflection of serious disparities in wealth and welfare (educational access gap, economic gap, rural-urban residence gap). Dynastic politics has been around for a long time, and today the practice of dynastic politics has transformed into a high-cost politics that can only be fulfilled and carried out by certain groups in the form of groups with strong financial capital. Political dynasties therefore need to be seen in the context of the political recruitment process. Preliminary data from this research shows that there are a number of women who are identified as dynastic but have good work achievements. They consciously try to prove themselves worthy of being elected and have capacities that are not held hostage by kinship ties. Further research is needed to find out whether this phenomenon also applies to men with political dynasty backgrounds.

In this study, the author's perspective is one of support for women's representation in politics. This paper describes the author's approach to the issue, emphasising that substantive representation is closely related to the realisation of human rights, especially for women. Based on this perspective, the paper has several limitations. Firstly, by looking at the broad issue of women, gender, and political parties from the perspective of institutional liberal feminism, this paper only highlights the internal dynamics in terms of party relations and women within them. Secondly, this paper does not discuss the dynamics of the women's movement and political parties. Thirdly, this paper only discusses formal political activities through political party institutions, so there is no discussion of young people's political activities in informal ways. Nevertheless, this paper offers a novelty in the study of women and political parties by describing women through multiple layers of identity and experience. Writings on the subject usually discuss women as a single identity. In fact, women are individuals with multiple experiences and roles. The findings of this study also show that the role of youth in the formal political arena is limited by a number of barriers to substantive participation. Only a small layer of youth with oligarchic advantages such as wealth, kinship, and status are able to participate in the formal political arena.

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