

Strengthening Women's Role in Politics, How Far Is It?

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ABSTRACT

The discussion on woman and politics is a global issue being the starting point of feminism inception to fight for woman's right in politics. In Indonesia, woman and political issue has actually been discussed by the nation's founder, Ir. Soekarno, and feminism issue in Indonesia has been an integral part of Indonesians' struggle since pre- and post-independence periods. Woman and politics issue is discussed more intensely in the presence of affirmative action policy concerning 30% woman quota in political area in reform era. This article addressed the reinforcement of women's role in politics conducted in Indonesia through its *suprastate* political and *infrastructure* political elements over times. The big question is how far and what is the output of the fighting for strengthening the women's role in Indonesian politics up to 2020. This article employed systematic review method with literature study. Data was collected from documentation of news, journals, governmental regulations, and books addressing woman and politics in Indonesia. The result of research showed that many regulations have been developed to govern affirmative action of 30% women in political area at both central and local levels. However, the result of review on previous studies conducted shows the less optimum political education to women and woman cadre building in politics. Additionally, not all society classes and households support gender justice and equality in political area. It can reduce the success of participation in both formal and informal politics. The author recommended the improvement of gender mainstreaming education within broad society in order to be integrated further into political area.

Keywords: *affirmative action; gender mainstreaming; politics, woman*

1. INTRODUCTION

Woman and politics always become interesting topics over times both in Indonesia and global levels. It is inseparable from the continuous existence of politics in human life. Borrowing the term offered by Aristotle, human being is called *zoon politicon*, having a deep meaning concerning the sustainability of human individual's life a large group order that has been a state/a city. At that time, Aristotle used the word *polis* to refer to state/city [1].

In addition to Aristotle's view, *politic* is basically very close to human's social life. Politics does not always concern the acquisition or the competition for power, but can also enter into informal political domain. Adult human will be closer to political behaviors, either male or female. However, the detail of experience with politics the adult women have is different from the adult men do. Power relation occurs between sexes in patriarchic culture. In patriarchic culture, it builds different constructions between sexes. Patriarchic culture in cross cutting issue making the gender problem a cross cutting issue occurs in political, educational, social, health, economic,

environmental fields, and etc, or it can be said in all aspects of life. Referring to the theory constructed by Aristotle about *polis*, any result of decision is on a city/a state's government. Politics will affect the result of decision in other fields. Therefore, politics may not be sexist or refer to one of sexes dominantly. Experience, problem, need, and aspiration of all population entities should be accommodated to enter into political process. For that reason, the discussion on the reinforcement of women's role in politics in Indonesia is still desirable and interesting to study until today.

Political formal can give outcomes, impacts and benefits to development, in which all community entities are entitled to feel the positive effect of development. Aspiration, experience, problem, and need of all population entities should be an input to a political system working. However, in reality, the gender-perspective development in Indonesia has not been integrated fully yet into development process and keeps experiencing a long process in the integration of gender into development. Development is the output of political system working. The violence-related women protection problem still occurs widely in Indonesia, e.g. the rape case with the

victim of Chinese women during social riots in 1998 has not been disclosed successfully and settled significantly despite the establishment of an institution dealing with women protection in Indonesia post-1998 in Indonesia, National Commission for Women Protection. Women and environmental issue still haunts the women's life; it can be seen from some natural resource management issue marginalizing women and make the women group receiving the larger consequence of environmental damage occurring due to industrial sector development. Human trafficking rate, particularly woman and girl trafficking, is still high particularly in Indonesia; the latest one is the *kawin tangkap* (forced marriage) issue in Sumba Island, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia.

The result of previous studies shows women issues in development including: gender gap in the term of women and men's positions as professional, manager, administration, technician, and representativeness in parliament [2], double burden of women both before and during Covid-19 pandemic time [3], women and maternal reproduction health and protection from infectious diseases such as HIV and AIDS [4]. How can public policy as the political output partial to the problem, aspiration, and need of women group likely be due to the representation of woman's role in politic. Public basically has discussed this since the feminism movement struggle period at international level, R.A. Kartini time in Indonesia, the emergence of Gerwani women movement in Indonesia, Reform in 1998 in Indonesia, and post-reform period until today. This study will explore it more in-depth to find out how far the reinforcement of women's role in politics in Indonesia is until today. Has there been an improvement in the latest output, status quo, or deterioration?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Politics

Political science basically is an old one, having been discussed by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle since Ancient Greek time. In ancient political philosophy, the word politics derived from the word polis [1]. The terminology was constructed by Plato and Aristotle. Polis is a state/city order within which there seems to be human group activity, in turn, generating *zoon politicon* stereotype against human beings. Aristotle's description on polis can describe a city area that should meet its citizens' needs independently; therefore there should be central focus or ruler that can govern collective life in the corresponding polis [1]. That is the origin of politics concept apparently having shifted along with time development. Currently, the definition of politics tends to be more normative, public sees politics as the distribution of power, the competition for power, and the decision making. Politics is identical with power. Meanwhile, an Indonesian senior political figure, Miriam Budiarto, defined politics as an attempt of

achieving a better society[5]. The author obtains the mapping on some definitions of politics suggested by society: firstly, a way or strategy of achieving an objective; secondly, politics can be seen as an art in government science scope, particularly in decision making. Who benefits from and who is harmed by a policy are a part of political science. Those arguments are similar to Harold Laswell's perspective stating that politics is about who gets what, when, and how to get it [6]. Therefore, it is not wrong that human action competing for power is considered as identical with politics.

Considering the culture occurring within society, the activity of competing for resource is humane and basic character of human beings. Competing for resource not only occurs in the terms of power and decision making, e.g. in Gunung tradition held by Javanese community during the religious celebration of Prophet Muhammad SAW's birthday, *gunungan* containing various food materials will be competed for by the people present in the end of its traditional ceremony. In Indonesian ancient farming tradition, traditional ceremony (rite) was also held during harvest time with a variety of traditional meals, in which the people present were pleased to compete for the food source presented in the end of rite. However, in politics, it belongs to strategic and tactic aspects in the attempt acquiring resource. Furthermore, from the explanation of the activity of competing for resource, it can be seen that politics does not always concern formal institution and formal power. Politics may also relate to the competition for natural resource and decision in both domestic or public domains that will provide effect and benefit. Therefore, truly politics is in both formal and informal scopes. Formal politics occurs in the activity of electing the ruler or electoral and informal politics may occur in daily activity of population entities including children, elders, males and females in the term of choosing activity, objective or using any kind of source, how, and when. Women can be involved in formal political activity and actually always relate to informal political activity. For example, in formal politics women are involved as electorates and/or elects in electoral political voting. In informal politics, they are involved in making simple decision such as choosing the basic materials to be purchased according to the financial resource they have for domestic needs. Informal politics can occur in social organizational activities and participation in social organization, particularly women in its environment. This study focuses on discussing the strengthening of women's role in formal politics.

2.2 Gender

The discussion on gender has been discussed widely by academicians, practitioners, Indonesian communities and global communities. However, gender perspective is often misperceived by some groups or even individuals. Some individuals or groups still defined gender as sex.

The author will redefine gender in this sub chapter, that gender is a social construction issue built within

society in putting and positioning the sex with that can be bound spatially and temporally [7]. Meanwhile sex is something given. Gender is different from sex, because sex that is given in nature is something not exchangeable. Women with vagina, uterus, ovum, menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, and lactating as reproduction organ, and men producing sperm and having penis, scrotum, and testis are God's natural creatures. God's creature is not exchangeable despite technology sophistication. Gender is man-made, the role of which can be exchangeable, men and women can play role in public and domestic domains, because there is no sex for either public or domestic domains.

Gender actually is not a problem as long as gender inequality does not occur: subordination, marginalization, gender-based violence, double-burden, and gender stereotype. However, the fact in the society shows that the manifesto of gender inequality still occurs. Society constructs public and domestic dichotomy in patriarchal culture growing for a long time in traditional and modern societies. Patriarchal culture is the one prioritizing one of sexes, in this case male. In contrast to sex discussing the given character created by God, gender constructed by community can build different construction between male and female sexes. The socialization of the difference of gender construction still occurring perpetually within society; therefore it is that becomes a perpetual part of patriarchal culture within society.

In patriarchal culture, power relation will emerge between the party considered as strong or feeling strong over the one considered as weak. Power relation can result in gender inequality manifesto in the form of violence, subordination, double-burden, stereotype, and marginalization. Gender issue is crosscutting issue, so that even in formal political field, gender issue is a strategic one. Gender construction constructed within society can be opportunity and threat all at once to the public to participate in politics as either electorates or elects.

3. METHODS

This study was conducted using library study on some document sources such as journal, book, report, and news on the strengthening of women in politics and concerning the women issue in politics in Indonesia. Descriptive qualitative approach was conducted to collect the data by relying on secondary data completely. Data analysis was conducted in the beginning stage of data reduction, in which the author passed through selection process, concentration on raw data appearing from the timeline on the topic raised. Data reduced successfully gives more obvious representation and facilitates the data collection. Furthermore, in data display stage, the author presented a set of information organized. In this research, data display is presented in descriptive elaboration, photograph, and similar image or in other words data display is composed from the result of data reduction, and then presented in the form of narrative text. Data display is an attempt of organizing a set of information into a matrix or the more

understandable form. The last stage was conclusion drawing, by which the new finding never existing before is expectedly obtained.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Peter Carey, a guest professor for University of Indonesia, has ever written about Strong Women in Java in 18th-19th centuries. Peter Carey's writing showed that the historical fact recorded that women have considerable contribution to state struggle [8]. Carey indicated that women's contribution to political space has occurred since Indonesia in kingdom or pre-colonial time to post-reformation today[8].

In the 18th century, women in this Archipelago in upper-social class, i.e. the court family, have broader opportunity than their counterpart did in late 19th century during Raden Ajeng Kartini time (1879-1904). Javanese women in the 18th were given access to and control over, and participated in military and political world [8]. The history of kingdom also shows that woman figure also contributes considerably to leadership and politics, e.g. Ken Dedes and the presence of Korps Srikandi or Srikandi Corps in Java. However, colonialism time affected the position of Javanese women at that time.

During R.A. Kartini time, gender construction built restrained the women. Kartini revealed that at that time women benefit only a little from the development of knowledge existing and learning activity at school is taboo to women [9]. Patriarchal culture at that time engaged girls at home. However, R.A. Kartini, as elite, successfully deconstructed the patriarchal culture. Some notes reported that R.A. Kartini deconstructed patriarchal culture through education she attended and continued it through women empowerment in her time, thereby remaining to inspire women movement in Indonesia today.

Emancipation carried by R.A. Kartini inspired Soekarno, the proclaimer of Republic of Indonesia's independence and the First President of Indonesia all at once. An idea on strengthening women's role in social, economic, and political realms is basically not new but has been constructed by the nation activities. It means that nationality also has cultural dimension, creating nationality habitus, the practice of which should be implemented daily. The integration of right equality and unity has been presented by Siti Sundari in Women Congress on December 22, 1928, saying that: Women's duty in building nationality is to be teachers educating their children (in biological and social senses) in order to be a developed nation [10]. Indonesian people commemorate women congress as Mothers' Day. Mothers' Day was established by Soekarno as the marker of Indonesian Women's struggle.

Since the beginning of independence period, Indonesia has constructed a fair and equal development foundation to both male and female. In his book entitled Sarinah, Soekarno confirmed the importance of the development of women's role in state development, building women is to build society, he said. Soekarno's

book entitled *Sarinah* was published in 1947, 2 years following Indonesia's independence. Soekarno's perspective in early Indonesia organizing period saw the problem encountered by women as the part of his priority because women issue is people and state's issue [11]. Gender stereotype was more strongly intended to the women at that time, thereby can close women's opportunity and access to public domain [11]. Soekarno realized that gender inequality issue was getting broader in his early leadership, idea of gender mainstreaming has been offered by Soekarno, that women issue should be discussed by all elements of sex.

Soekarno highly supported the reinforcement of women's role in politics. Although at that time mainstream politics was considered as formal arena that was masculine in nature dominated with men participating in politics, public often articulated politics as having value close to the meaning of power and electoral process. *Sarinah* book is a series of materials presented by Soekarno in women course held in Yogyakarta post-proclamation. Women course and material later booked in *Sarinah* book were attempts taken by Soekarno in encouraging women's participation in Indonesia's struggle. In his struggling ideals, Soekarno sowed an expectation for the women to be able to enter into public and political domains without abandoning their maternity [11].

Women course held by Soekarno is considered as successfully strengthening women's role in politics later, so that finally they can participate bravely in and create women organization. However, the reinforcement of women's role in Indonesian politics does not always run progressively. There is a time when women's role is restricted again in politics. *Panca Dharma Wanita* (Women's Five Roles) formulated by government under Soeharto's reign successfully led to dichotomy between public and domestic domains. Women's career would follow their husband's. In New Order era, women kept participating in politics despite in very small percentage. Meanwhile, in Soekarno's reign era or Old Order, women's presentation in parliament was 6.25% in 1955[12].

The reinforcement of women's role in politics is fought for by women and women organization continuously in Indonesia. The centralization of feminism and women movement arrived at simple transition phase in 1999 when Indonesia held general election [13]. In 1999, the proportion of women sitting on the Legislative Assembly (DPR) seats is 8.8 percents; it increased to 11.82 percents in 2004 Election [14]. The phase of transition to democracy occurred in 1999-2004, and then followed with democratic consolidation phase from 2006 to today [13]. In the last four election periods, the highest women representativeness in 2009 election was 17.86 percents, but it decreased to 17.32 percents of a total of 560 members of RI's Legislative Assembly in 2014-2019 [14]. In legislative election of 2019, the proportion of women in DPR is 20.5%, increasing more, despite not achieving the women quota in politics as specified by Government.

In post-reform era, Indonesia began to include women empowerment agendas into some policies. The

policies taken by government during reform era to bring gender equality and justice into reality has been specified in GBHN 1999 (Broad Guidelines of state policy), Law Number 25 of 2000 about National Development Program (Propenas 2000-2004), and confirmed in Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2000 about Gender Mainstreaming (PUG), ratifying CEDAW Convention into Law Number 7 of 1984 about the Ratification of Convention on the Eradication of any discrimination against women.

Indonesian government through its public policy expands women's access to and participation in political field to narrow gender gap between men and women in politics. In 2002, affirmative article was ratified, concerning quota of 30% women in politics through Political Party Law with Law Number 31 of 2002 about Political Party. Women quota is the manifestation of affirmative action to women. Affirmative action is given to gender inequality condition; if, in turn, one of sexes left behind has been able to achieve gender equality, the affirmative action can be revoked. Women's participation is desirable in electoral politic in public domain because of gender equality, women's interest, and women in trouble, need, aspiration, and experience different from those of men, so that it should be encouraged to be accommodated in public policy. Women's affirmative action is strengthened more and more in the next regulations. Affirmative Action of 30% women quota in politics is confirmed from Law Number 31 of 2002 about Political Party to Law Number 2 of 2008 about Political Party, then Law Number 2 of 2011 about Political Party, and Law Number 7 of 2017 about General Election.

Nevertheless, government and legislative assembly still produce biased gender policy or policy adverse to women and it reveals conservatism affecting the women either directly or through discriminative policy. Before the publication of PKPU Number 7 of 2013, the parties participating in election will not be imposed with sanction if they have satisfied 30% quota for women. Since the publication of PKPU Number 7 of 2013, there has been the provision on disqualification for political parties not satisfying 30% women quota in their leadership and legislative candidates.

The reinforcement of women's role in politics is currently conducted not only through its public policy and institution, but also non-government organizations operate in the program of strengthening women's role in formal politics. Many religious organizations in their women organization wings have built women cadres in politics. Indonesian women's access to and participation in politics has been stipulated in the state policy.

However, women still become a subordinated part in politics, reach vote or may participate in general election process in formality to those irresponsible in politics. Although legislative election of 2019 has successfully reveal politician women face and women's role in political stage and decision making, it should be strengthened then by cadre building and political education reinforcement to women. The reinforcement of women's role in politics should be reconfirmed by Indonesian stakeholders,

because the indication of women role's degradation and attenuation in politics begins to appear again today. It can be seen from the Draft Bill on Sexual Violence Removal not successfully and even removed from the list of legislative assembly's prolegnas, and then news coverage related to an insight into the dismissal of National Commission for Women Protection in the institution streamlining period in Indonesia in 2020. Women organization then follows it up by signing a petition declining the dismissal of National Commission for Women Protection and a petition supporting the ratification of Draft Bill on Sexual Violence Removal. In addition, Women's Role in politics should be strengthened to reinforce the legislative function and the budget function of female legislative member in policy development process. The State's negation against the reinforcement of women's role in politics is like rhetoric, if its position is on status quo.

5. CONCLUSION

There are three assumptions underlying the discussion on women and politics: politics exerts different impact and effect on men and women in public policy; political process can change gender relation between men and women; and there is a gap in political participation between men and women. The recommendation given in this study is primary and secondary elements are required to support women in politics. Primary element comes from political institution and state through its government in political education and political recruitment process. Secondary element comes from social, family, and economic environments that can support women in politics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thank to Universitas Sebelas Maret for funding Hibah Group Research.

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