



Patriarchal Culture, Theology and State Hegemony in Issues of Gender Equality in Indonesian Politics

Heriyanto Heriyanto
Public Administration Doctoral Program
Makassar State University
Makassar, Indonesia
Heriyanto.radien@gmail.com

Abstract—This research is conducted due to Indonesian women's low participation in parliament and formal politics. The research aims to analyze the historicity of women's roles in political history in Indonesia and identify the factors causing the inferior political participation of women in Indonesia. This type of research is qualitative with a Content Analysis approach. The research findings depict that gender equality in the world of politics in Indonesia still faces significant challenges. Furthermore, the researcher also found factors that cause gender equality in the political field not to be optimal, namely (1) a patriarchal culture that is still profoundly rooted, (2) Conservative theological principles that are misinterpreted, (3) State hegemony through a series of intellectual products such as legislation and programs that appear to be pro-women but deepen the gap between masculine and feminine. From these findings, the researcher then concluded that gender equality in the political aspect of Indonesia is in opposition to patriarchal culture, conservative theology and state hegemony. Therefore, gender equality in politics must also be confronted with female politicians' integrity in fighting for more fundamental aspirations regarding women.

Keywords: patriarchy, theology, state hegemony, gender equality, and politics

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on World Bank data (2019), of all countries in Southeast Asia, the level of representation of Indonesian women in parliament ranks 7th, or around 21%. This figure shows that Indonesia is behind Singapore and Vietnam with 30% respective women's political participation levels and Timor Leste with 38%. Within Indonesia, the Central Bureau of Statistics has confirmed the data, which exhibits an increase of only 4% in the participation of women's representatives in parliament between 2017 (17%) and 2021 (21%). The Central Bureau of Statistics also verifies that the province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) has the highest level of women's representation in parliament in Indonesia, with a figure of 58.8%. Meanwhile, the provinces with the lowest level of women's representation in parliament are the Bangka Belitung Islands and the Riau Islands, with a respective figure of 8.89% [1]. In general, these two data from the World Bank and the Central Bureau of Statistics indicate that the level of participation of Indonesian women in formal politics still needs to be improved as it is even classified as less than the national figure set at 30%.

The causes of the low level of representation and representation of women in parliament in Indonesia can at least be divided into two general factors: internal and external. Internal factors are closely related to the interest and capability of female cadres to engage in practical politics. In contrast, external factors are closely related to the patriarchal culture, which still prioritizes various policies of political parties on considerations of masculinity. In its development, this patriarchal culture does not stand alone in its role as one of the critical pillars that sustain the issue of gender discrimination both at the global and national levels.

Hence, this paper will later unravel the historicity of women's progress in political history in Indonesia and focus on three main reasons why women's participation is still minimal in public spheres such as formal politics. In particular, the authors will explore how patriarchal culture is so embedded in Indonesian society that it gives women a paradigm as a second-class nation. Furthermore, in a theological review, it will also be seen what exactly the ideal concept related to gender equality is in the view of religion. In contrast, the state's hegemonic view in forming binary policies related to women will provide a complete perspective afterward. The authors hope this paper will provide complex insights and positive implications on the issue of women's involvement in Indonesian politics.

II. METHOD

The type of research is qualitative with a Content Analysis approach. Researchers identify relevant documents, such as constitutions, laws, public policies, and theological texts. This analysis is intended to see how patriarchal culture, theology and state hegemony are reflected in gender issues in politics. Therefore, researchers can determine the content of these documents to identify norms, values and practices that support gender inequality in politics.

III. DISCUSSION

With the various challenges accompanying it, efforts to achieve gender equality in Indonesia's world of politics will always encounter complicated challenges. Patriarchal culture, values that have been pragmatically adopted in conservative theology and state hegemony through public space policies and products in the form of sub-alternation programs, will resume being an obstacle to the struggle for feminism and efforts to fight for their emancipation. Women's politics in Indonesia has indeed shown progress with the stipulation of various laws that provide opportunities for women to be involved in it. However, in reality, the presence of female politicians in Indonesian politics is still

very far from expectations that can be utilized as a form of success in the struggle for gender equality. Even though in 2019, the representation of women politicians in the National Legislative Body reached 20.8%, this figure still has yet to reach the target of 30% [2]. However, the dynamics of the presence of women politicians also have their challenges, whether they come from the general public, male politicians who are their rivals, or even women themselves, who are the central communion they represent.

The Law No. 12 of 2013, which provides a 30% quota for women legislative candidates to run and fight in parliament to defend women's rights, does provide hope from an acknowledgement that women are given more renowned space to act in practical politics. Nevertheless, truthfully, what happened is that this 30% quota is just an image that does not match its true purpose. The granting of a 30% quota for women legislators actually has two contents which, if analyzed in detail, will again reinforce the policy subalternation strategy of state hegemony. On the one hand, the decision regarding this quota indeed illustrates the victory of women and the state's recognition of their political freedom, but if reviewed further, this quota can also become a limitation of the tremendous potential of the representation of women politicians in Indonesia itself [3].

In addition to the 30% quota, which has never really been fulfilled, it is undeniable that the political condition of women in Indonesia is correspondingly affected by the open proportional system in elections which provides opportunities for legislative candidates with the highest numbers (1, 2 and 3) to get the attention of voters. Numbers 1, 2 and 3 in the electoral process for the names of candidates are psychological numbers that will get more attention and have the opportunity to be voted on by the public, while serial numbers which are more than the first three digits are generally ignored more often. In this condition, female candidates are often not part of the name of the legislative candidates who get serial numbers with a psychological number that allows them to be elected in the election. In other words, it can also be conveyed that the names of female legislative candidates are continually in the same serial number. In psychological calculations, there will be significantly little chance of winning. The names of female legislative candidates are often used to complete the 30% quota requirement in terms of the requirements to participate in general election contests for political parties.

In contrast, in terms of providing real opportunities for female candidates to be able to win and be elected, this is a different matter. The reason for the names of female candidates to be placed at the bottom, apart from the psychological score of voter preference during the voting, is the consideration that women need to be more strategic figures to be elected. Women are also still losing popularity with male candidates, so the probability of victory for political parties that place female candidates in serial numbers 1, 2 and 3 will be more negligible. This action indirectly reflects how the patriarchal culture inherited from colonialism and imperialism is still deeply rooted in society, so its impact on the electoral process is still being felt today.

The second thing about the reality of women's politics in Indonesia is the contradictory dynamics of the struggle for

feminism between women politicians elected to become legislature members and exist in parliament with the real spirit they are fighting for in the narrative of the spirit of feminism. There is a synchronization between women's political aspirations which are fought for as the true goal of the presence of women politicians in parliament, with the representation and participation that occurred. Instead of entirely fighting for the aspirations of Indonesian women totally in parliament, the 30% quota also encourages women politicians who have already been elected to engage in unproductive activities oriented only to strengthen their existence in front of male politicians in order to gain recognition as good equivalent politicians[3]. The consequence, then, is that the aspirations of women, who are the homework to fight for to get the state's attention, actually do not run optimally. In the end, women's politics in the context of fighting for feminist rights as inflamed outside parliament feels like a mere ceremony that evaporates in the actual process. There have indeed been many pro-gender laws that have been successfully formulated against the struggles of women politicians. However, this is still unbalanced compared to the numerous non-gender laws. This unequal comparison then gives birth to a reality which portrays that the number of efforts to legalize pro-gender laws through female politicians in parliament based on the aspirations of women, in general, remains exceptionally minimal.

State hegemony that exists through policies, programs and products is still intensely affected by patriarchal culture, and conservative theology still restricts women from engaging more freely in the realm of public space such as formal politics. This reality may persist for a long time, and the struggle for feminism will continue to have a steep path to carry out. However, this does not mean that gender equality and resistance to political violence against women cannot be pursued. For example, Bolivia became the first country in the world to pass a law to criminalize perpetrators of political violence against women in 2012. This move by Bolivia became the first step which later sparked the emergence of the Inter-American Convention in 2015, which focused on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Political Violence against Women [4]. This movement supports an arrangement. It emphasizes that gender equality requires equality of security, where women and men must be protected from threats in politics[5].

In addition to opposing patriarchal culture, conservative theology and state hegemony, the struggle for feminism and gender equality in politics in Indonesia must also confront female politicians' integrity in fighting for more fundamental aspirations regarding women. It is not just a struggle for the recognition of male politicians on the mere existence of female politicians in parliament.

Constrained by culture, thought, and religion, those are the three initial stages that can be seen how the progress of women in politics in Indonesia. To this day, the issue of feminism as an effort to achieve gender equality in Indonesian politics has a long way to go. Women politicians and women's movement activities need to meet the number comparable to men, and even existing women political activists still have to fight for recognition in the world of politics for themselves. [6] even clarified the theory of gender

issues regarding traditionally feminine roles where women are more often seen from the 'ideal image' that conforms to cultural expectations. This notion means that if they continue to represent themselves based on the ideal image that the people in that culture are pleased with, it will make them better placed in politics.

Undoubtedly, stereotypes about gender are conundrums that often occur in global politics [7]. As an illustration of this stereotyping, [8] provides an example where male politicians have always been associated with economic and military issues, while women are more often associated with health and education matters. This condition is indeed a long homework from the point of view of the gender orientation equality efforts in Indonesian politics. Representation of women's voices in parliament, which also impacts a series of pro-women legislative products, still has a long way to go to be recognized.

Explicitly classified, at least three factors can be presented as justifications for why the representation of women in formal politics is always far from everyone's expectations. The three reasons in question are due to the strong patriarchal culture in Indonesia, conservative theological doctrines that are still misinterpreted by the wider community, and state hegemony, which is frequently labelled as masculine dominance[9]. In their accounts, these three causalities are also closely connected to the emergence of violence against women in politics and how the colonial era provided further penetration for women to lead to the understanding of gender equality. As an implication, these three reasons also played a role in the many attempts at domestication, which later became a widely accepted culture, ironically both for women and men.

This prolonged issue certainly puts women in a disadvantageous position. Oftentimes, public attitudes that exalt patriarchal values, theology and state hegemony continually make women vulnerable to becoming the primary victims of political violence. This case will be particularly evident during campaign and election periods, where women will voice their opinions and express ideas that are directly involved with the general public [10]. The public might think that it was the physical violence that the women suffered since they are stereotyped as weak. Ironically, [11] believe that what women face in politics is more non-physical violence than physical violence to weaken women's involvement. These non-physical threats are customarily in the form of psychosocial and psychological violence.

According to [12], psychosocial violence occurs when patriarchs consider the competence and achievements of women in politics to be in contrast to the ancient image of women who are seen as mothers and wives who only take care of the household. The remarkable ability of women in politics is considered an 'insult' that threatens the existence of honor for men. As a result, these men will carry out psychosocial threats ranging from threats of divorce and social ostracism and spreading false narratives to the public that female politicians only 'use their faces and bodies to get to certain political positions. In short, women are falsely regarded as having no brains and qualified personal qualities to sit on an equal footing with men in politics.

Meanwhile, [4] points out that psychological violence focuses more on behavior that is carried out to vandalize women's psychological integrity, dignity and honor. This violence is typically found in the form of verbal harassment [13], cyberbullying [14], and death and rape threats[15]. In a country where social media is widely used, women involved in politics are constantly given malicious comments on their posts to tell them to withdraw from politics.

The patriarchal culture where men become leaders and women become submissive devotees is present in numerous places and for an extended period of time. In Indonesia, patriarchal culture is also commenced to dominate cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it also plays a significant role in perpetuating the impression of women's inferiority in front of men. [16]emphasizes that when conditions of patriarchal norms and expectations that are not ideal are rooted in people's lives, thoughts of misogyny or hatred of women will particularly proliferate. Women will be 'punished' for violating appropriate gender roles because, in many conventional understandings, women have been considered as a part that is closely attached to domestic household affairs where they are the party most responsible for these matters. Patriarchal culture is a foundation for the birth of concepts that provide a regulative function of men over women. Women are seen as parties who cannot stand alone without the help of men, so with this dependency relationship, men have the right to set regulations on women. In its development, this series of regulations gave birth to demystification, essentially an attempt to subordinate women through a series of methods in the form of rules, norms, and values based on the concept of masculinity[3].

Many manifestations of demystification like this still occur frequently in Indonesia. One of the most apparent outlooks that have caught the attention of researchers, and the public is the tendency of these patriarchal people to shamelessly think of women as the only party responsible for household affairs, from maintaining cleanliness, taking care of children and husbands and even managing family finances. A woman's responsibility has been firmly embedded as a culture in society and accepted as an ideal condition. This demystification also contributes to the notion that women must be able to balance their professional careers with their natural duties as household managers. In many cases, when a woman is faced with the condition of having to balance standing with these two interests, they are unable to fulfil them optimally for each choice.

Aside from the patriarchal culture that has permeated society, the second constraint on women's role in the Indonesian public sphere comes from misinterpreted conservative religious doctrines. The majority of religious teachings in Indonesia are considered to have the power to subdue the position of women in the inferiority space by placing men as substances that have broader rights and authority than women[3]. Theological conceptions related to women have sufficient scope to be translated into gender equality. In practice, many translations and misconceptions of theological terms are used to explain the position of women and men.

One example that can be used in this context is the theological term 'men protect women', which denotatively

also contains the meaning that men have the right to take various necessary actions to fulfil their nature to protect women. This ambiguity culminates when entering the realm of public space where women, in some interpretations, are believed unfit to appear intelligent and bravely convey their own ideas in public. Women in the theological conception will be considered dishonorable if they dare to step ahead of men or speak louder than them.

The contribution of misunderstanding to gender equality in this theological framework comes from misunderstanding the concept of the term for women in the theology itself. True gender equality is essentially an equal condition between men and women in obtaining the same rights and opportunities as human beings to contribute to various complex lines of life, such as in the political, economic, sociocultural, legal and other fields [17]. Furthermore, [18] explains that ideal gender equality is the equal distribution of rights and obligations between women and men in terms of status, the balance of power, opportunity and appreciation for each person's achievements. Roller also stated that the operationalization of gender equality is a manifestation of three factors: (1) Equal rights in obtaining access and using resources; (2) Equal position in the context of community relations, status in the household, and participation in politics, and (3) Equal rights in obtaining security protection and freedom from physical and non-physical violence. Ambiguity and misunderstanding in the field of theology also have a significant role when synergizing with patriarchal culture, which in practice places standards of masculinity as a barometer and reference for various aspects of life, including those closely related to women.

The third attribute which contributes substantially to perpetuating the dichotomy of masculinity and femininity in Indonesia comes from the country's hegemony through a series of policies which ascertain that the Indonesian state itself still places women as entities that do not entirely have the same degree as men. This policy is reflected in various forms, both in public and in programs specially designed for women. There are quite a number of state policies that symbolically reflect how the hegemonic role of the state contributes in exploitative forms to women. Domestic programs have become a form of state classification to distinguish between men's affairs and women's affairs. Some examples of such programs in Indonesia are fertility programs, child reproduction, family planning, the PKK program or Family Welfare Empowerment, and the 'Dharma Wanita' organization, which is an organization for wives of civil servants to improve the quality of their family members' resources.

Indirectly, state hegemony like this has helped shape people's mindsets to see women as non-primary citizens compared to men [3]. As part of the equality barometer, the public sphere policy has yet to show significant progress. Even now, there is still a perspective embedded in some Indonesian society, especially men (and ironically even women too), that the role of women is only confined to subordinates behind men. Women in this context only carry out tasks as assistants, whereas the roles of examiners and administrators are in the hands of men. This negative effect on women, a combination of three aspects of patriarchal

culture, misunderstood theological concepts, and binary state hegemony, has stagnated efforts to achieve gender equality in Indonesia. It is exceptionally prominent in the public and socio-cultural sectors, such as formal politics. However, there are still considerable cynical perspectives when finding a woman determined to get involved in practical politics.

Even so, there are still groups of women trying to fight for their aspirations of representation in the political field like this; what is interesting is that it has its dynamics. To gain recognition in the struggle for women's existence, women who sit in parliament as politicians must also obey a set of rules oriented towards masculinity. On the other hand, the position of women politicians sometimes also becomes a passive voice that only agrees with various draft laws that male politicians mostly design. Even though there have been several drafts of pro-gender legislation due to the struggle for feminism, sometimes it only becomes legalization of a more structural demystification effort [3].

IV. CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to determine several efforts to preserve the feminism and gender equality in Indonesia, especially in public sectors such as formal politics. The researchers argue that there will always be a steep road in bringing this issue to light. The three main challenges that have the most significant influence on this effort are (1) patriarchal culture which is still deeply rooted in the mindset and perspective of the Indonesian people so that it influences their daily perspective in thinking and acting; (2) Conservative theological principles are mistranslated by many groups, thus justifying that women are indeed created naturally with different levels that are not the same as men, both in their role and participation in life; (3) State hegemony that perpetuates patriarchal cultural thinking through a series of intellectual products such as legislation and programs that appear to be pro-women but deepen the gap between masculine and feminine.

Women's revivalism efforts in Indonesian politics to re-engineer a strategic role in the public space as it did in the pre-colonialism era will still go down a long and winding road. Apart from facing perspectives born from the patriarchal culture of colonialism, strengthened by theological stereotypes and preserved by state hegemony through products of subalternation, women's politics must also fight in their internal realm to maintain the integrity of elected politicians. It aims to continue to prioritize the struggle for the representation of women's aspirations instead of focusing on individual recognition of their existence in the eyes of male politicians.

REFERENCES

- [1] Kemenppa, "Menteri PPPA: Dukung Partisipasi Perempuan Dalam Politik." Retrieved January 17, 2023, from <https://www.kemenpppa.go.id/index.php/page/read/29/3785/>," 2022. .
- [2] Kemenppa, "Menteri Bintang Optimis Keterwakilan Perempuan di Legislatif Capai 30 Persen Pada Pemilu 2024." Retrieved January 13, 2023, from <https://www.kemenpppa.go.id/index.php/page/read/29/3076/>," 2021. .
- [3] W. R. Jati, "Historisitas Politik Perempuan Indonesia." *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, 24(2), 2014.
- [4] M. L. Krook, "Violence against Women in Politics: A Rising

- Global Trend*," *J. Polit. Gen.*, pp. 673–710, 2018.
- [5] L. Olsson, *The importance of security equality for quality peace. Understanding Quality Peace: Peacebuilding after Civil War*, 44–58. 2018.
- [6] P. S. Hermson, "Women running "as women: candidate gender, campaign issues, and voter-targetting strategies," *J. Polit.*, pp. 244–255, 2003.
- [7] R. Hayes-Roth, *Truthiness Fever: How Lies and Propaganda are Poisoning Us and a Ten-Step Program for Recovery*. 2011.
- [8] K. F. Kahn, *Gender differences in campaign messages: the political advertisements of men and women candidates for U.S.* *Polit. Res. Q.*, 1993.
- [9] F. Nurland, "Strategies for Improving Women's Participation in Politics and Social Life. dalam AW Soetjipto (ed). Politik Perempuan Bukan Gerhana. Jakarta: Kompas." 2005.
- [10] E. Bjarnegård, "Making Gender Visible in Election Violence," *Polit. Gen.*, 65–95, 2018.
- [11] J. R. Krook, M. L., & Sanin, "The cost of doing politics? Analyzing violence and harassment against female politicians," *Perspect. Polit.*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp., 2020.
- [12] G. O'Connell, S., & Ramshaw, "Violence Against Women in Politics: Global Perspectives of a Global Issue," 2018.
- [13] R. Latcheva, "Sexual harassment in the European Union: A pervasive but still hidden form of gender-based violence. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 32(12), 1821–1852., 2017
- [14] S. Chemaly, "What women politicians' online harassment tells us about degraded democracy. Retrieved from <https://www.womensmediacenter.com/>, "2017
- [15] D. Feder, J. L., Nardelli, A., & De Luca, *Meet the Politician Getting Death Threats for Campaigning for Women's Rights in Italy*. Retrieved from <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lesterfeder/>. 2018.
- [16] K. Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- [17] E. Kusdarini, "Keadilan dan Kesenjangan Gender dalam Pandangan Hukum Islam. Retrieved January 8, 2023, from <http://staffnew.uny.ac.id/>," 2010. .
- [18] L. Roller, *Gender-related definitions*. New York: EngenderHealth., New York: EngenderHealth. 2012.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

