

# Questioning the Low Participation of Women Politician in Neo-Liberal Democracy

Muhamad Supraja

Lecturer of Sociology, at Faculty of Social and political Sciences, GadjahMada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

**Abstract** - The affirmative action on women's participation in the Indonesian legislative body which allotted 30% of the seat for the women politician has not been fulfilled yet. Many hope that women can fill the allocated seat, but the political reality shows a different trend. This situation invites many questions regarding the reasons behind this occurrence. What factors that caused the low fulfillment of women's quota in parliamentary? Do the problem come from the influence of patriarchal culture, or does the political party mechanism cause it? Is there a possibility that women get less support from their party? In answering this, it is important to recognize the support that women politician need from their party. This could also mean that the candidate needs the support in the form of money, not only for campaigning but also for other operational matters. The 30% allotment for women cannot tell the huge difference between men's and women's behavior in the political world. Women politician can also act like the men politician; as they are also prone to the trap of money politics and corruption. Women politicians might face a complicated problems that can be explained as follows: first, the difficulties in overcoming their inferiority complex. Second, to manage the pressure of patriarchal culture in political life. And third, to handle the pressure which comes from their political parties. Maybe, regardless of gender, the problems are still the same. The neo-liberal democracy may serve as the cause which makes everything based on or depends on money.

**Keywords:** Patriarchal culture, political mechanism, and neoliberal democracy

## I. INTRODUCTION

Patriarchal culture as experts said, assumed as the cause of women's subordination in every field of life, both socially and economically[1]. Subordination of men to women has narrowed down

women's field of activity to only three domain the well, bed, and kitchen. Bed connected with the role of the women to fulfill men's sexual need, reproduction, and regeneration. Well symbolizes women's presence that is needed to achieve prosperity of a family, to do household chores like washing the dishes, clothes and so on. Lastly, the kitchen that portrays the women's role in providing food for the member of the family.

Woman subordination as explained above makes it difficult for women to develop themselves like what men do. Men can explore and develop their self without any limitation. While women cannot do that because of the social and cultural boundaries that restrict their progress. In the patriarchal culture, a man is a leader of the family; he has a role to protect and secure the family especially in economic and security matters. The position of a husband in a family is to present protection and provide comfort to all members of the family. Therefore, in the patriarchal culture men position is superior to women, that's why sometimes women are still put in the second place.

It is assumed that men have more capabilities compared to women, so it is common for a man to be involved in many social and economic activities. People also consider men as being more rational than women. Hence they can work more effectively and efficiently. On the contrary, women are assumed to be more emotional and irrational. This particular cultural construction of patriarchal system has existed in society for a long time, and there is a need re-interpretation.

## II. PATRIARCHAL CULTURE

The patriarchal point of view mentioned above causes the powerlessness of women, so this could lead to the misfortune of their political position. Women are not confident enough, so they are not entirely interested in involving themselves in public

sector, especially to join a political party and become a politician. The lack of self-confidence makes women have no guts to use their personal capacity. They often think that they are not good enough to be in the political arena because they do not have sufficient ability to be performed to the society. According to Martha Nussbaum [2], there are at least five capacities that important for a person, namely life; physical health; integrity; senses, imagination and thought; and emotions. Women's weakness in those capacities can be the barriers to their involvement in the political world.

Actually, if we track the issue further, the perspective of the patriarchal culture is not being implemented in Indonesia only, it reaches other countries in Asia too. The similar idea also can be found in the work of Greek's philosopher, (Plato, Aristoteles), Muslim Philosopher's (Al-Ghazali), Modern western of philosopher's (Immanuel Kant, Hegel) and many more. Besides the fact that the idea is institutionalized by the power of the society, it is also supported by the politic condition, authorities, and religion. Hence people assume that religion is the root of the emergence of patriarchal culture.

This kind of culture also hinders women's self-development. Hence, making men politician become more favorable in a political party. Several criticisms are addressed to this ideology, prominently by the liberal feminist movement who believe that subordination of women is the only source of the problems in the society. This movement does demand not only the equity between men and women but also other aspects that make the difference between the two. These aspects are usually forgotten. There are many of the feminist movements in the industrial countries that fight for the equality. But, the result of their movement is not always bringing an improvement that is comprehensive and fundamental to women's lives. For example, In Japan, women work hard to get the achievement and public recognition. Their intention is to make women get a broader choice, but when they got a wide range of choices the inequality is actually becoming more severe (Toshiaka, 2010) [3].

For that reasons, a feminist who is an anti of liberal feminism ideology, RatnaMegawangi, does not agree with the idea of equality, especially if equality is assumed to be similar to similarity. It seems that everything around us fights for its equality, so it is only natural when man and women demand the similar position in many aspects such as economic, social and politic. She also added that despite the desire for equality, men have the different

innate capacity compared to women, and vice versa (Supraja, 2013: 139) [4].

### III. ALTERNATIVE AND SOLUTIONS

The fight to break the patriarchal culture is not really the right answer according to Ratnamegawangi because the problem of feminism does not lie on the structural transformation to create a more democratic and equal patriarchal culture. This culture actually allows men and women to complement each other (Supraja, 2017: 138). In this context, it is not a problem if women choose to do the domestic works even if their husbands allow them to get more public recognition. It is better if both parties complement each other rather than to fight or negate one another.

Most of the time, the demand of the liberal feminist group only focuses on getting the identical treatment in several aspects of life, especially in the political arena. This is also the background motivation of the 30% quota for women politicians in parliament. The spirit of this decision is to support women to get political equality, even though the government cannot make an extreme decision such as allocating 50:50 composition for the male and female candidate in the parliament. The 30% allotted space opens the door for women political participation with the hope that their aspiration can be directly and indirectly absorbed and articulated in the policy-making process. But we also cannot deny higher women's participation in politics as can be seen in the American and European countries also resulted in the higher number of divorce cases (Supraja, 2013: 139) [4].

Women also have to deal with the domestic violence, there are several causes that lead to it, but it is important to explore whether the ideology of patriarchal is the source of this violence and whether the discrimination against women is a natural or a nurtured act. Some critical arguments confirm that certain parts of this occurrence are regenerated from natural aspect while some other are constructed by the society. Hence, this leads us to questions about the way of balancing the innate capacity and social construction in the process cultural learning. Finding the difference between the natural aspect and the socially constructed aspect will show the side patriarchal culture that also gives power to women.

The cultural and social aspects of a family usually make it hard for people to eliminate the patriarchy bias. However, the blend of the natural character and parenting can construct women's

perspective about their self-autonomy and the right to get the opportunity to be involved in the political field based on the principle of freedom of action.

The construction of thought above becomes women's consideration in participating in the political arena (political party, or parliamentary). Beside motivated by an ideology which had been internalized through socialization and civilization process, women politicians also face the neo-liberal ideology. An ideology that now controls and organizes political culture in Indonesia. This ideology is also prominent in parts of the world uphold democratic values by following the American or European model.

Neo-liberal ideology is an ideology which marginalizes state role in many aspects of life, including economic and politic, and gives a very large space to capital or market to lead development. This ideology provides a place for big capitalist and capital owners as the core leader to achieve the wealth of the nation. The domination of capital owner can eventually hijack the power of government. The owner of capital can buy and demolish any kinds of political power, namely: executive, legislative and judicative (Chomsky, 2001). By capital domination as explained above, it is usual if several kinds of rules produced to support the interest of capital owner (corporation), but was not addressed to support the prosperity of the society.

Neo-liberal democracy is a democracy which bases on money as an important element in politics. Hence, it is not so strange that the current political election system consists of many stages. Starting from the local election to choose mayor and head of province to the one that is conducted to elect the president. There is a saying that "politic today is very expensive, business colored, and capital loaded, very different to one before; it relies on mass communication through media and the advertising business (Hertz, 2011: 134) [5].

The presence of money can make a person who is not politically qualified to stand for an election getting the support the constituents. A political figure who has qualification need to get political support not only from their constituent but also the political party that he/she belongs to (Aspinall and Sukmajati, 2015) [6]. A woman political leader also have to pass the same process with other candidates, although political quota for woman continually flourishes from one election to another.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

There are many considerations revealing why the 30% quota for women politician is not fulfilled yet. From apatriarchal point of view, First, it is possible for a political party to have a common orientation to follow the usual culture of choosing the man candidate. Second, in the view of the patriarchal culture, women have a low self-confidence which hinders them and makes it uncomfortable to communicate to the constituents. Third, women consciously do not want to involve their self in a political party because they assume that political world does not belong to them but belongs to the man.

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