

Change And Opportunity For Women's Political Participation Before And After The Reform Era

(A Case study of Women's Representative of Local Parliament in West
Sumatera)

Selinaswati

Dept. of Sociology

Faculty of Social Sciences, Padang State University-UNP

Padang, Indonesia

selinaswati@fis.unp.ac.id, selinaswati@yahoo.com

Abstract- This article examines the involvement of women in Politics within two different periods in Indonesia. It is common to find the number of women's political participation across some countries that are lower than men. It can be affected by some factors including social, cultural and political situation. Before Reform Era, under Soeharto governance, women as Members of Parliament (MP) in many local parliaments in some provinces in Indonesia can be counted were few. It related to the number of political parties in Indonesia that were only three at that time. After Reform Era, it is assumed that this Era gave women's politicians greater opportunities to run for office. It is also expected that the political situation in Reform Era affected their electability that can increase the number of women's political participation in parliament and then will bring good impact on women's quality life through many women MPs and their public policies toward women. This paper uses the qualitative method. In-depth interview and observation of women's politicians who become MPs during two different periods have been done with eight women's politicians. The result shows that the changing political situation positively associated with an opportunity for women's politicians to participate in many different political parties, but only have less effect on their electability, public policies and women MP as decision makers.

Keywords- Social and political change, women MPs, women's political participation, local parliament, West Sumatera

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's political participation can be seen in many ways including participated as voters, involved in administration offices of government, took part in the election process as a candidate, and women can also run for political offices even being a Member of Parliament (MPs). In line with all of these activities, women's involvement in public space, especially in the political arena, is important to practice democracy and to implement justice and equality. Some efforts have been done to increase the number of women in politics including affirmative action policy through quota, electoral system and political parties' preference[1]. Nevertheless, women's political participation across the world is pondering less than men's politicians in which the average number of women MPs is one out of five men MPs[2]

Studies show that there are several aspects that keep women out of politics; such as women have less ambition than men in running for political office[3]. Women tend to connect with the gender issues and the gender gap in politics[4]. In contrast, other studies noted that the more women in parliament, the more possibility change for better women's life and gender equality[3]. Furthermore, the more women's representation might create for clean governance and less corruption[5]; the more women in parliament can alter the gender emphasis in public policies. It can also lead the change of the parliament discourse and would give an opportunity for women's political participation[6].

Indonesia experienced the changing political situation from New Era during Soeharto governance (1967-1998) to Reform Era after his ruining in 1998. During Soeharto regime for 32 years, people were fully controlled by some regulations and restrictions especially for those who engaged in activities in democracy and civil society. The changing political situation from New Order Era to Reform Era affected these activists regarding political participation including women's involvement in politics.

Assuming that the Reform Era gave lots of opportunities to involve in the political arena, women's involvement in politics can be seen through increasing number of women as MPs. Nevertheless, the fact showed that women political participation especially in local parliament did not have a significant number yet. As it can be seen in the local parliament in West Sumatera, even though some regulations pertaining to women's political participation have been enacted such as affirmative action by setting 30% quota for women as candidates and member of political parties; and this must fulfil by political parties that want to run for election, the number of female representation is still far from the idea of 30% quota[7].

Additionally, West Sumatera with its matrilineal culture had been known as a society which more egalitarian, friendly, and appreciating women to play roles in the outside of domestic space than people in the patriarchal culture. The society can be said positioned women as well as important for the continuity in their extended family [8]. This idea should support women to involve in politics also. Based on that situation this article describes and try to understand the phenomenon of women activities during two periods of time.

It also examines their process in political involvement in the Reform Era, including their electability and efforts to have a seat in the parliament, societal opinion as female candidates for election and the number of impediments during their political activities.

II. METHOD

This research put on qualitative approach with case study type[9]. The rationale is that the method is appropriate for the research namely to scrutinize the women's political participation within two different periods. The total numbers of an informant are eight female politicians who run for political office during new Order Era and in Reform Era in local parliament in West Sumatra. The data was collected through in-depth interview, observation, conversation, recording, taking picture field note and documentation from the library, online resources, and local newspaper. The data then is analyzed by reducing and classifying them into some themes, interpreting and synthesizing the findings and writing them to the narrative readable word[9].

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As Indonesia change the political situation from New Order Era to Reform Era, the level of women's political participation is assumed changed. During New Order Era, women's opportunity in politics seems likely limited. It is because restricted three political parties (PDI-P Indonesian Struggle Democratic Party, PPP United Development Party, and Golkar Party) were allowed. However, in the early Reform Era in 1998, there were 48 political parties with lots of candidates who run for political office.□

This political change situation to some extends affect women's political participation. The more political parties, the more possibilities for women to engage in politics and become candidates MPs. Additionally, West Sumatra with its matrilineal culture is deemed would give an opportunity for women in the political arena. In another side, the pathway of women in the running for political office can be traced through 3 stages[10]; becoming a member of political parties, elected political elites to run for legislatures and elected as MPs by voters. This can be said that women's political ambition is only one part of some aspects that contribute to the electability of women MPs candidates. Beside voters, political parties' policy and preferences of political elites are determined candidates to be elected. Furthermore, social, structural-political contextual conditions also play important roles to have a seat in the parliament[11]. As such, it is believed that women political participation mostly affected by several factors including political parties and elites, changing political condition in one country, cultural, social, structural and political factors.

According to Krook, Paxton, and Hughes, the concept of supply and demand[11][12] examine that women's political participation is influenced by motivation and resources that they have (supply) and the political, structural, cultural and contextual situation surrounding them (demand).

It can be concluded that the involvement of women in politics might have two factors including external and internal factors.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is found from an in-depth interview that most female politicians are involved in politics since Reform Era. Of eight female politicians, only two starting to run for political office in New Order Era. As can be seen in table 1:

Table 1: Women and their involvement in Local Parliaments in W Sumatera

No	Name of Women politicians	Involvement in politics		Becoming MPs	
		Starting at year	Party affiliation	Two periods or more	One period
1	S	1995	(Golkar Party)	2009-2014, 2014-2017	
2	B	1992	(PPP)	2004-2009, 2009-2014	
3	Y	1998	(PBB)		2004-2009
4	F	1998	(PAN)	2000-2004, 2004-2009, 2009-2014	
5	K	1998	(PKS)	2004-2009, 2009-2014	
6	R	1998	PBB		2004-2009
7	E	1998	PDI		2004-2009
8	P	2006	Democrat	2009-2014, 2014-2017	

Source: Interview observation, tabulation by author

The table above describes that involvement of women in local parliament has a wide range from only one period to three periods of the election. It can be seen that during New Order Era women's political participation did not find as many as women's politicians in Reform Era. Even they already active in their political parties in New Order Era, but failed to be MPs during this era, except in the reform Era they existed for two periods of the election. This situation can be understood since during New Order Era the involvement of women in politics seems likely were restricted with the idea of 'State Ibumism'[13] from the Soeharto Government.

IV.1 Supporting Husbands: Women's Public Activities in New Order Era

During New Order Era, women's involvement in politics can be said slightly feeble. Their public activities tend to support government policies such as involved in

organizations like the Civil Servant's Wives Association (*Dharma Wanita*) and Family Welfare Guidance (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga, *PKK*). The role of women in this organizations can be said as complimentary role only. This is because these public activities tended to maintenance their husband careers and did not reflect the voice of women themselves. This can be understood as Soeharto regime had some regulations to limit the participation of women involved in political parties and other social organizations like NGOs. Thus, it is common that women public activities during New Order Era can be said as the long arms of domestic's task and supporting husbands oriented, rather than empowering women to speak for their interests.

Women's activities in public space during Soeharto Era is fully controlled by the government. It can be seen as women's role in public space only was set for assisting their husbands. As such, in this era, public policies about women's activities in public space generated women who were dependent on their husband and other men. Women's political ambition seems likely did not occur during this era. Even some women existed in the national and local parliament; their number was not significant. The small number of women as decision-makers also can be seen through other institutions as shown in table 1:

Table 2: The number of Male and Female in Some Institution in 1997 Election Period

Institution Name	Female	Male	Percentage
Assembly Member (MPR)	18	177	9.2%
National Parliament (DPR)	45	455	9%
Justice Court (MA)	7	40	14.8%
BPK	0	7	0%
Election Commission	2	9	18.1%
Governor	0	30	0%
Regency	5	331	1.5%

Resource: Divisi Perempuan in 2001

It can be understood that there was small number of women in the political arena during three decades of Soeharto governed (1965-1998). Some barriers regarding political condition existed, including political party regulations did not pay attention to women's political participation. As previously mentioned, government regulation tends to conditioned women to support their husband. Additionally, patriarchal mindset occurred as cultural barrier surrounding male decision makers and even women themselves. These political and social situation brought an impact on discouraging women from joining in political activities. This fit with the concept of 'State Ibuism' of Suryakusuma, that politically, socially and psychologically 'State Ibuism' withdrew social recognition of the autonomy of women, depriving Indonesian women of their agency[13]. It is obvious that women's activities during new order era seem likely far away from the political issues. They activities focused on their duty as 'Ibu' (mother) and tend to do a familial role. The same condition also happened in West Sumatera; even this area has a unique matrilineal tradition, centralized governance system during Soeharto era was more

powerful to draw the political policy. As a result, women's political participation in this area also did not show significant number. It can be seen from the period of the election in 1992-1997, at local provincial level, only two female MPs; both of them from Golkar Party. While in the early Reform Era, the high number of political parties had open the big opportunity to be MPs, as can be seen from the data that in 1999 election there were 43 women MPs and then in 2004 election increase 61 women MPs[14]. Nevertheless, to be MPs should meet the recruitment process that tends to regulate with the domination of patriarchy mindset. Thus still female politicians faced various obstacles on social cultural and structural issues in politics in the Reform Era.

IV.2. Impediment in Politics; Internal and External Factors

The deposing of Soeharto in May 1998 radically transformed the Indonesian political system and was initially expected to transform the role of women in the nation. However, even though Indonesian political parties and mass media have flourished under the 2001 decentralization policy, democratization and women's participation in political life was remains the problems. At first, it can be said that opportunity for women politician to run for political office and becoming MPs are greater than that during Soeharto regime, however, to be elected needs more capability of women politicians and supporting environment.

As the Indonesian government-supported women's political participation by permitting affirmative action for women in 2003, it is hoped that the number of women MPs increase. This affirmative action, called a 30% quota, encouraged political parties to place 30% of total party's candidates are women[7]. However, women politician largely just involve as a candidate; there is no guarantee for them to be elected as MPs. It is because the political parties put them in the high order number of candidates that affected their electability. Another obstacle of their electability is related to their capability and lack of experiences; their involvement in politics largely began in the Reform Era in 1998 while many political parties in this year occurred and required more members. Unfortunately, open recruitment as a member of political parties in the Reform Era did not fix with the requirement of parties who needed professional politicians.

It is obvious that their short period of experiences in politics during Reform Era affected their political experiences. As can be found from interviewing informants; some of them recognized that they were a new comer in politics; even though they already active in social organizations, they still need to learn a lot in political issues such as campaign strategy, lobbies and persuade colleagues and legal drafting. One informant state that her motivation being MPs as a common people (she is not a civil servant and did not work for the government) but she has the willingness to change situation getting better. According to her, if she became MPs, she would involve and change the situation as agency and decision makers for public policy.

Another informant stated that she has involved in her political parties since the early 1990s, but after the Reform Era, she was able to be successfully become MPs for the two periods (2004-2009, 2009-2014). The various experiences of women's politicians during their candidacy seems likely cannot be freed from supply and demand[11]. This supply and demand can also be defined as internal factor and external factors.

The Internal factors (or supply) come from the women's politicians themselves; including political ambition, motivations, and resources that they have such as money, capability, time, energy and experiences as politicians. Since they have to run for gaining voters' attentions to choose them, this means that they must be prepared to get voter's attention by campaigning to their constituents consistently. The problems from this factor can be seen through the less interest of women[3] as well as the idea of politics is an arena for men. Less capability and fewer experiences as politicians mostly found within eight informants, most of them starting as politicians in the Reform Era. Even though there is a quota policy, this is still have not shown the significant result to improve women's politician to seat in the parliament[15]. It means that as women's politicians, they mostly have to improve their capability and must work hardly twice compare to their male counterpart who already existed in the long period of politicians.

The external Factors; (or demand) related to the role of political parties and the preferences of political elites in choosing them as candidates. In this case, most the political elites are male with patriarchy mindset. In this situation, women's candidates often on the position at the last number of the list party's candidates. As can be seen, their position only to fulfill the requirement of 30% candidates of political parties should women[16]. Beside their disadvantage capability compare to male politicians, this situation marginalized women's politician and showed that they have less bargaining position in politics. Also, voters, play an important role as demand factor that will determine the electability of candidates.

IV. CONCLUSION

Reform Era in 1998 had signed Indonesia as a new emerging democratic country. It is true that the number of women in local parliament (DPR) increase since then. But it is not a guarantee that it will give more opportunity for women's political participation success as MPs. Some obstacles existed during their process as candidates and often just put them as the candidate only, without successful to be MPs. For successful women candidates who won the seat in parliament also find the impediments about their role in deciding public policies. That patriarchal values are dominated within the MPs themselves; this situation influences their activities to voice their aspiration. It seems that regarding descriptive representation (the number of women MPs), women involvement in politics succeeded enough but regarding substantive description (the role and function of women MPs in parliaments), it is still questioned.

References

- [1] D. Dahlerup and L. Freidenvall, "Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to equal representation for Women," *Int. Fem. J. Polit.*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 26-48, 2005.
- [2] D. Stockemer, "Women's parliamentary representation: are women more highly represented in (consolidated) democracies than in non-democracies?," *Contemp. Polit.*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 429-443, 2009.
- [3] J. A. Karp and S. A. Banducci, "When politics is not just a man's game: Women's representation and political engagement," *Elect. Stud.*, vol. 27, pp. 105-115, 2008.
- [4] E. Gidengil, M. Hennigar, A. Blais, and N. Nevitte, "Explaining The Gender Gap in Support for the New Right," *Comp. Polit. Stud.*, vol. 38, no. 10, pp. 1171-1195, 2005.
- [5] D. Dollar, R. Fisman, and R. Gatti, "Are women really the 'fairer' sex? Corruption and women in government," vol. 46, pp. 423-429, 2001.
- [6] S. Childs and M. L. Krook, "Analysing women's substantive representation: From critical mass to critical actors," *Gov. Oppos.*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 125-145, 2009.
- [7] C. Fattore, T. J. Scotto, and A. Sitasari, "Support for women officeholders in a Non-Arab Islamic democracy: The case of Indonesia," *Aust. J. Polit. Sci.*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 261-275, 2010.
- [8] Selinaswati, "Women in Politics in Matrilineal Society: A Case Study of West Sumatra, Indonesia," Deakin University, Victoria, 2014.
- [9] L. Bloomberg and M. Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Roadmap from Beginning to End*. 2008.
- [10] R. E. Matland, "Concluding chapters Frequency and effectiveness," in *Women, Quota and Politics*, D. Dahlerup, Ed. New York: Taylor & Francise, Hoboken, 2013, pp. 275-292.
- [11] M. L. Krook, "Why are fewer women than men elected? Gender and the dynamics of candidate selection," *Polit. Stud. Rev.*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 155-168, 2010.
- [12] P. & H. M. Paxton, *Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective*. London: Pine Forge Press, 2007.
- [13] Ju. Suryakusumah, *Sex, Power, and Nation*. Jakarta: Metafor Publishing, 2006.
- [14] S. Sherlock, "Consolidation and Change: The Indonesian Parliament after the 2004 Elections A Report on Political Parties," Australia, 2004.
- [15] S. S. Bush, "International Politics and the Spread of Quotas for Women in Legislatures," *Int. Organ.*, vol. 65, no. 1, pp. 103-137, 2011.
- [16] C. Bylesjo and F. S. S. E. Seda, "Indonesia: The Struggle for Gender Quotas in the World's Largest Muslim Society," *Women, Quotas Polit.*, no. April, pp. 259-65, 2006.