

UDC 330

## WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LEGISLATIVE ELECTION: A CASE STUDY ON WOMEN IN ENDE, EAST NUSA TENGGARA, INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims (1) to describe the factors leading to the relatively low level of women's political participation in Ende Regency; (2) to elaborate voters' perceptions on women's participation in legislative elections; (3) to understand the role of political parties in increasing women's political participation in Ende Regency. The focus of the research is mainly on women's political participation in legislative elections in Ende District, voters' perceptions on the women's participation in legislative elections, and the role of political parties to increase women's awareness of political participation. The approach used in this study was qualitative approach. The results showed that the low political participation of women in legislative elections in 2014 was due to two factors: internal factors and external factors. Voter's perception towards women's participation in the legislative elections is still low. The role of political parties in increasing women's political participation is not yet optimal and effective. The political parties are not concerned with the low political participation in legislative election from women.

### KEY WORDS

Participant, politic, political participation, women, election.

Any discussion on politic should deal with two aspects of participation and representation. In specific, participation and representation are fundamental aspects on how politic has willingness to encourage and accommodate the diversity of people who have been marginalized, not to mention women. The political system should eliminate any kind of discrimination and subordination that is intentionally or unintentionally committed to the group of community. Like men, as part of citizens, women also need to be involved in political agenda because women have special needs that can only be understood best by women themselves (Huntington & Nelson, 1990).

The urgency of the involvement of women into politics is quite strong, dealing with some issues namely political, economic, social, and human right needs, particularly issues related to health and reproduction. As their representation in decision-making strategic institutions is likely still low, this imbalanced ratio of women involvement in political agenda has resulted in women being limited to policy recipients without having access and control to provide input, criticism or policy changes, with further impacts on economic inequalities, education, labor health, and women's social welfare. This gap can in fact also be regarded as a political gap. The gender gap in public life and politics is a global challenge that the world community continues to face in the 21st Century. Despite international conventions and commitments, the average number of women in parliament in the world is only 18.4 percent, from 190 countries members of United Nations, only seven countries where women become and have become president or prime minister. The presence of women as part of the existing cabinet in this world may or does not reach 7 and 8 percent (UNDP Indonesia, 2010).

### LITERATURE REVIEW

*Political Participation.* According to Djalal and Supriadi (2001), "participation" as decision-making suggests that groups or communities participate in the delivery of

suggestions and opinions, goods, skills, materials and services. Participation can also mean that groups recognize their own problems, assess their choices, make decisions, and solve problems. In encouraging the establishment of a conducive atmosphere for the holding of a peaceful, peaceful, orderly and smooth election. Thus it is concluded that, political participation is the involvement of a person with the purpose of certain goals in influencing and controlling government policies. In other words, the efforts of a person or group of people to actively engage in political life such as seeking and maintaining power, formulating and implementing public policy, in choosing direct or indirect state leadership to influence public policy or public policy for the common good. Activities in political participation include voting in elections, establishing relationships with government officials, attending general meetings, becoming party members, or one of the social movements, and so on.

There are some factors that may affect the political participation of the community: (1) socio-economic factors, of which they have income level, education level and number of families. (2) Political Factors (Arnestein, 1996), political participation of society based on politics to determine a final product. (3) Individual Physical Factors and Environment as a source of life including facilities and availability of public services. (4) Factors of Cultural Values (Almonds and verbs, 1990: 25), the value of political culture or civic culture is the basis for shaping democracy, essentially both political ethics and techniques (Soemitro, 1999) or public texts (Verba, Sholozman, Bradi, 1995).

According to Supriyanto (2004), claiming the variant of participation state with the other German are as follows: (1) Attendance; attendance is a first-rate participation variant that is easier to measure because if someone is present in an activity then he can be said to have participated. (2) Representation is the second variant of participation which is qualitatively higher and deeper when compared with the first variant. This includes problem-solving activities, problem formulation, formulation of methods and approaches and decision-making.

*Women's political participation.* Women's involvement in politics and government developmental program is supposed to be part of human rights which has been declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations and with international conventions that have been applied and ratified by the state members, including Indonesia.

There are some instruments that provide the opportunities for women's movement to advocate their rights in political participation; the rights are integral part of the instruments of International Human Rights of Women, among others: 1) International Women's (1975), 2) The 1<sup>st</sup> World Conference on Women (1975) held in Mexico City with the objective of the World Plan of Action for the promotion of women, to achieve the goals of the Women's Year of Equality, Development and Peace, with these three important issues emphasizing key targets such as gender equality, formulating basic indicators of women's positions, such as participation in politics, employment education and fertility and a global comparison of women's social economic position (Equality, Development and Peace).

*The role of women in politic.* According to Karam (1999) that women and politic have close relationship which has been stipulated in the 1975 Mexican Declaration on Equality of Women that women are as vital actors in promoting world peace, from family, community as well as women's participation in politics. As the politic has been characterized as "dirty, aggressive, dishonest"—which is then political behavior is seen as a masculine activities; while the stigma for women that they should be part "exclusive space" what we call as housewife (as mother or wife).

Political participation ideally cannot be separated from social position or status, as long this is in accordance with one's position to exercise rights and obligations. In particular for women, women had been positioned in subordinate class in family and in society, including in political participation. The perception of women's political participation has improved and gained positive changes and recognition that women have rights and obligations and have equal opportunities with men to participate in national development through political participation.

*Election.* Election is one of the fundamental rights of citizens in a democratic country. Therefore, as part of the implementation of human rights in a democratic country, it is a must for the government to carry out the election to gain the aspiration from the citizens. In

accordance with the principles that the people are sovereign, it must be returned to the people to determine it. It is a violation of a human right if the government does not make the election or hinder the process of the election (Kusnardi & Ibrahim, 1988).

Corroborated the definition, the election is conducted as a means of realizing the people's sovereignty in a democratic country by electing their representatives (member or parliaments), President and Vice President directly, publicly, freely, secretly, honestly and fairly. As the election is a human right, then the Election 2014, the eligible citizens have rights to elect their representatives. The objective of the election is to determine the member of parliaments (legislative election) and then the government (presidential election). In the Constitution 1945, Chapter VII-B article 22-E paragraph (2), the elections are conducted to elect the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional Representative Council (DPD), the President and Vice President and the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD). The regulation is explained through Law of Republic of Indonesia Number 15 of 2011 on General Election that the general elections are as a means of implementing the sovereignty of the people in accordance with the constitutional mandate that is held directly, publicly, freely, secretly, honestly and fairly within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

## METHODS OF RESEARCH

This is a qualitative research with the research was conducted in Ende Regency. Data collection was done by interview, documentation, and observation and were analyzed based on the concept proposed by Miles and Huberman, that the activities of qualitative analysis are carried out interactively and continuously at each stage of the research to completion. In order to obtain reliable data, the researcher employed triangulation technique as a strategic step in examining the validity of the data. The focus of research are, namely (1) women's political participation in legislative elections in Ende Regency, (2) voters' perceptions towards women's political participation in legislative elections, and (3) the role of political parties to increase awareness of women's political participation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Factors affecting the low political participation shown by women in Ende Regency during legislative election in 2014.* The low participation of women in legislative elections in 2014 was influenced by internal factors from the women themselves, whom have been characterized as individuals with weak attitudes and easily despair, lack of confidence caused by background and inadequate education, and they have not had experience in organization. On the other hand, the external factors played important role in influencing the women voters such as the lack of representation of women in the parliaments (as well as the government administration), and this is mainly influenced by the socio-cultural environment, family support, financial support and also political parties.

In such patriarchic culture, when men are considered as on higher position compared with women, it may leads into a belief that women in political and social position is lower and not equivalent to men; another stigma is that women are considered as the complementary for men. As the consequence, women are considered not important and significant to mingle in such activities outside their home. In addition, women are considered as lack of skill due to low experience as well as opportunity to enhance their career, particularly in political sector. Stereotypes always harm and may cause injustice for women in actualizing themselves and growing to become free human beings. Women are bound by the culture and traditions, thus political ideas are not the proper area devoted to women; restricting from entering the territory is the exclusion of women from formal political life. There was also discrimination against women in the political structure. Leadership and core management and the faction leadership are dominated by men; women have rarely been assigned in the strategic position in the core administration and as a leader of the faction in the legislative institution in Ende Regency.

In terms of the human resources among women, they need to obtain formal education and self-development training from various education and training institution in order to prepare qualified women, which in turn they potentially have influence in leadership and political constellation. The low representation of women in legislative election could also be seen from the aspect of readiness shown from the women, namely organizational experience and support from family and society in general. In today's democratic era, the government provides wide access for women to become leaders in various decision-making positions both in government and society. However, the accessibility has not been utilized by women optimally because there are still obstacles to domestic responsibility, cultural attitudes towards women in society, lack of family support, lack of confidence, lack of financial support, electoral parties and the people as their voters that may hinder women's progress, especially for women who want to become member of parliament (MPs) both at provincial and district level (IPU, 2010).

*Voter's perception towards female legislative candidates.* There should be an effort to educate voters by giving understanding to the public related to the understanding of the election objectives. For example the voters' attitudes in Ende Regency, they tend to voter particular and popular people because of the influence from their family. Another reason also is to vote particular candidates because of religion factor, similar affiliation, one neighborhood or one sub-district. Voters' behavior is driven and influenced by the closest group of people, especially women, including family and relatives and closest friends, and mostly they are decided by novice voters; the preference of the novice voters is mainly influenced by their parents. It can be assumed that the preference of the novice voters is mainly influenced the background of the environment where they live, including the influence form their family.

Such behavior of following the majority (mainstream voters) is mainly caused by their lack of understanding on the characteristics of the candidates that are suitable to their expectation. In addition, their political decisions are still unanimous and communal, causing their political choice is to easily gain influence from the environment and social groupings that are formed in their homes, especially in families and parents. However, such behavior cannot be separated from the issues such as the influence from family during their childhood.

*Perception of female and male voters who voted for male legislative candidates.* Voters in Ende Regency during the legislative election were more likely to vote for men candidates because of the local tradition "lio", in which women never lead—even though the opportunity for the women has now been guaranteed by laws and constitution. For this issue, voters may only support the equal opportunity for women in political election, but they do not vote for the women in the election. This is because the strong belief among community members that the traditional custom should be obeyed those men who should lead and stand in public. The cultural and customary factors among society have significant influence upon the voters' perception towards women and men in legislative election. In addition, for female voters, they preferred to look at the candidates with emotional similarity. In addition, the perception of other voters is influenced by the past history of the candidates, both in organizational experience and their social life experience. Practically, if the voters believe that the candidates whose qualification is good and has positive contribution in the community, it is obvious that the voters will vote for such candidate. Other factors such as promises given by the candidates upon something are not aspects of economic / rational factors that affect voters in legislative elections. For women candidates, the lack of socialization and campaign activities conducted by legislative candidates affected the public confidence and also the voters on women legislative candidates.

Based on field observation during the Election Day in four electoral districts, the number of male voters was 74,751 and the number of women was 89,910. Of those voters, many women voters did vote for women; with the bigger number of female voters in the legislative election in 2014, female legislative candidates had had the same or bigger opportunities compared with male candidates to sit at the Parliament. Unfortunately, in the districts, the women's political power has not been well consolidated; the female voters were still divided by some factors. The large number of female legislators who currently sit at the

Parliament facilitate and advocate for the social welfare and some issues related to women and children such as poverty and domestic violence.

*Perception of female and male voters who voted for female candidates.* Voters choosing women candidates tend to be based on emotional judgments such as the women are considered humble, have a good thinking and may be more flexible by accepting voters' suggestions. On the other hand, male (MPs) have been rarely giving attentions and advocating the needs of the voters and rarely returning to the electoral districts where their constituents reside. Even if the MPs have to come to the region where they represent, it was just only during the campaign and again give false promises. In addition to the case of issues related to gender equality or human rights between women and men in politics, it is mostly accessed only by people living in urban areas instead of suburban.

Based on the interviews and observation, female candidates gained lower votes in the legislative elections in 2014 in Ende Regency because of the low support from voters. This issue was mainly caused by the perception of the voters towards the female candidates such as family, customary and cultural values, and also voter's orientation. In addition, political parties have not been committed to increase women's political participation in election such as through political communication, political socialization, and political recruitment.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The low participation from women in legislative election in 2014 was mainly affected by two factors: a) Internal factor includes mental attitudes of the women who lack confidence because of the lack of qualification and experience in organization. b) External factors include patriarchal culture that tends to see and perceive women as a complement to men, financial resources owned by the women so that they are likely less supportive in their political activities, political parties have not given support to women to participate in politic as the party's recruiting policy for men instead of women.

The voters' perceptions towards women's participation in legislative elections are still low. This is influenced by the social environment, such as family and ethnicity, patriarchal culture and candidate orientation.

The role of political parties in increasing women's political participation is: a) The party has not been optimally to communicate about politic with women. b) Political parties have not been effective in disseminating political education. c) Political parties have not shown strong commitment in recruiting women to be elected as political party functionaries and selecting female candidates in the legislative body. d) Women's political participation in the 2014 legislative elections was low.

For decision-makers, they are expected to empower women by involving them in politics and development planning, both short-term and long-term cooperation, including gender-friendly products, budget priorities that embrace on women's interests, through systematic and planned planning policies to achieve equity and justice. In terms of equality, the role of men and women in family life and society should be accommodated well.

For political parties, they are expected to improve their role by providing women with responsibilities in leadership positions and other strategic committees, promoting political education through strengthening leadership capacity to improve the quality of women to be ready to compete as legislative members with a positive impact in democracy in order to achieve gender equality. Society should continue to raise awareness of the importance of participation in politics.

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