

Women's Representation in Elections Promotes Democracy and Respects Human Rights in Indonesia

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Abstract: Women's political participation has become an important issue in the context of democracy and human rights. Elections are one of the main arenas where women's representation can be measured. Women's involvement in elections not only promotes inclusive democracy but also recognizes the equal human rights of all individuals. This study examines the role of women's representation in elections as a driver of democracy and respect for human rights. The qualitative and descriptive literature analysis will take empirical data from KPU data in Indonesia. This research illustrates that women's representation in political institutions creates a broader perspective, reflects the diversity of society, and strengthens the legitimacy of democratic institutions. However, challenges remain in realizing significant women's representation. Structural discrimination, gender stereotypes, and institutional barriers are some of the factors that hinder women's political participation. Therefore, continuous efforts are needed to overcome these barriers and ensure women's fair and equitable election representation. This research also highlights the importance of raising awareness of the significance of women's representation in promoting an inclusive democracy and respect for human rights. By strengthening women's political participation, we can strengthen the foundations of democracy.

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1. Introduction

In a country's democratic process, women's election representation is an important foothold to maintain a balance between women and men. Women who are actively involved in politics not only demonstrate gender equality but also help build a more welcoming democracy that respects human rights. A political party is a voluntarily formed group that has the same will and ideals to fight for and defend the political interests of members, society, nation, and state, as well as maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The struggle of individuals or groups to control social principles is known as politics [5]. One of the most important forms of community participation in building a democratic life that upholds freedom, equality, togetherness, and honesty is political

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organization. Maintaining “freedom” in speech, attitude, behaviour, and politics and “equality” in all forms, including competition and political participation. Upholding togetherness in building the Indonesian nation to become a great, dignified, and independent nation is not only the duty of men; women must also participate. Upholding “honesty” is very important in the eyes of society because if we are honest, we will be trusted forever. In this article, we will explain why women’s representation in elections is essential for the advancement of democracy and respect for human rights.

To achieve gender balance in decision-making, women must have sufficient representation in political institutions, including electoral processes. Because women’s involvement brings a unique perspective often overlooked in political decision-making, it represents the interests and needs of the entire population, including women and girls. Fair and inclusive representation of all sections of society, including women, increases the democratic legitimacy of electoral processes. When all segments of society feel well represented, confidence in the political process and democratic institutions increases, which reduces the likelihood of conflict and political instability. States must ensure that spaces for participation are fair for everyone regardless of ethnicity, religion, or gender. How women are increasingly involved in the day-to-day exercise of democracy, both as public officials and as election organizers, is one form of substantive democratic improvement. In addition, the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) provides an opportunity for women to contribute to improving the quality of democracy in Indonesia [19].

Historically, women have been involved in politics for a long time. Since the first Women’s Congress in Yogyakarta in 1928, women’s awareness has increased in history. In Indonesia’s first election, the 1955 General Election, the Election Supervisor (Bawaslu) demonstrated women’s political awareness and use of their political rights and exercise. This allowed women to contribute to improving the quality of democracy in Indonesia [6]. In the first election, women could also vote [20]. Women’s participation in elections was about voting or being elected and strengthening women’s role in the overall political process. Women can gain greater political and social empowerment through active involvement in political campaigns, voter education, and advocacy for relevant issues. Women’s presence in political institutions is linked to more responsive and inclusive policy-making. Therefore, women’s participation in elections can result in more effective policies to combat gender inequality, improve social welfare, and respect human rights. Respect for human rights, including the right to participation.

2. Review of Literature

An important step towards a more democratic, inclusive, and human rights-respecting society is encouraging women to participate in politics and ensure fair and inclusive representation. Regulated by Law No. 12/2003, the political right of women’s representation in legislative elections in Indonesia has changed several times until Law No. 7/2017 on General Elections, which also fulfils the principle of inclusion in the proportional representation electoral system for the election of legislative members. The political rights of women’s representation in legislative elections fulfil the principle of inclusion, and the proportional representation electoral system provides equal opportunities for all parties to get the largest number of votes. The open proportional representation electoral system sanctions parties not eligible for more votes [1].

There is a need to consider efforts to increase women’s political participation in Indonesia in the country’s transition to a more democratic political system. Pursuing political equality for all citizens, including marginalized groups and minorities, is at the core of democracy. Although the majority of Indonesians are women, they are the silent majority. This large group is marginalized economically, politically, and socio-culturally, often not involved in decision-making processes. The electoral system is one of the main factors affecting the number of women represented in parliament. As a result, temporary special measures during the reform period were organized as affirmative action or a 30% quota for women on candidate lists. Affirmative action policies have increased the number of women working in the legislature, particularly the DPR [22].

Juridically-formally, many rules require the participation of women in politics, such as Article 28D Paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 46 and Article 49 of Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights and included in Law Number 2 of 2011 concerning Political Parties. These various regulations have provided opportunities for women to participate in political spaces. One of the requirements for establishing political parties, as stipulated in Article 2 Paragraph (2), is that the establishment and formation of political parties must involve a minimum of 30% women’s involvement. Article 29 Paragraph (1) confirms that candidates for DPRD members must fulfill a 30% quota for women [18].

Women have naturally acquired these values. The articles of association of a political party, also called Political Party Bylaws, are the Basic Regulations of a Political Party. Political Party finances are all the rights and obligations of a Party that can be measured in money, goods, or any wealth owned and borne by the party [13]. The inability of political parties at the national and regional levels to accept female candidates as cadres is a key issue related to the low representation of women in parliament. In addition, political party laws have not considered gender equality. Women parliamentarians represent women’s needs and interests in policies and regulations. However, Indonesia’s political system and parties are gender-driven, making it difficult for women to enter the political arena and contribute to policy-making. As a result, women and issues related to them in politics are undervalued. Women’s groups are not the only groups harmed by this failure of women’s representation; society is also

harmed. Women cannot participate in policy decision-making without concern for welfare, education, health, anti-violence, and environmental issues. Women must fight for what they want because of their unique life experiences and concerns. Since most men in the DPR do not experience or understand what women feel and want, they are expected to fight for women's interests [16]. Women believe that the number of female representatives in parliament can enable women to make policies, especially about strict gender policies, as women understand women's issues better than men. However, many political parties do not qualify candidates representing 30% of women MPs. Parties already have women's organizations and divisions that prepare female cadres to participate in elections fully, so it is important to research women's representation in parliament.

With the Constitution allowing women to participate in the management of political parties and having a 30% quota for legislative candidacy, the author hopes that all women will not feel guilty that other important rights have been neglected. For example, suppose married women want to participate and take on the role guaranteed by the Constitution. In that case, they must start by fulfilling their obligations as a good mother and wife, taking care of their children's needs so their children will become educated people and strong leaders. There are still many inequalities in the lives of women. Women are not effectively represented in legislative, executive, and judicial bodies, and the issue of their quality and participation in politics seems to play only a secondary role. Because of the injustices against women, women must be empowered. Therefore, political participation means that ordinary citizens make decisions that relate to or affect their lives.

Because of discriminatory attitudes and actions towards women as the lesser sex compared to men, women are left behind and underdeveloped. Article 16 of Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights (Human Rights Law) states that women as citizens must be guaranteed the space for freedom of organization and politics. However, Article 20 Paragraph 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that this ensures that the democratic system functions properly by exercising the human rights stipulated in the human rights law. United Nations Human Rights Office of The High Commissioner (1948). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are international conventions that recognize the protection of human rights by states [14].

From the above problems, of course, representation in politics is needed in addition to human rights; this proves that women's representation plays an important role in elections and developing democracy in Indonesia. Of course, this problem has been carried out by other researchers who discuss women's representation in elections to encourage democracy and respect for human rights, and the research is: Although many opportunities are available for women to participate in politics, several challenges prevent them from doing so. Among these are incorrect beliefs about their gender and a sense of subordination of women involved in politics, a political culture based on patriarchy. These challenges are both individual and institutional, as well as structural barriers. The factors that prevent women from playing a role in national politics are not due to religion or culture; rather, some men in power in national politics use religion and culture to discriminate against women [2]. The political party regeneration system, women's desire to be involved, family support, and the high cost of politics are some causes of women's low interest and involvement in politics [18].

3. Methods

This research discusses women's representation in elections, especially the dynamics and conditions of elections that have taken place in Indonesia. Democracy and the understanding of human rights and their application in Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative approach, with the main source of qualitative research being KPU data in Indonesia. This research uses the literature review research method, which is a research approach that focuses on collecting, analyzing, and interpreting literature relevant to a particular research topic.

The main purpose of a literature review is to present a comprehensive understanding of the development of existing knowledge in a particular field of study and identify knowledge gaps or unanswered research questions. The main purpose of a literature review is to present a comprehensive understanding of the development of existing knowledge in a particular field of study and identify knowledge gaps or unanswered research questions [11]. A literature review is a procedure that involves reviewing a collection of different scientific literature to broaden insights, make critical reflections, create future research paths, and answer research questions [4].

The collected data and information were processed and analyzed to understand this research, which was then described. The researcher conducted a literature search using academic databases, scientific journals, books, research reports, and other sources relevant to the research topic. This literature search was conducted systematically to ensure all relevant literature could be found. The researcher then collected data from the relevant literature. This data can include key findings, theories, concepts, models, journal articles used as references, and other important information related to the research topic.

The results of the literature analysis were then synthesized and interpreted by the researcher. The researcher connects findings from different kinds of literature, presents a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, and identifies practical and theoretical implications of the findings.

4. Result and Discussion

Equal political participation between women and men is one of the important principles of democracy. In Indonesia, women have the same rights as men to be involved in the electoral process as voters and candidates. However, despite this, women's representation in elections remains a significant issue and concern in building a more inclusive and democratic political system. Since Indonesia's independence in 1945, women's political participation has experienced significant development. However, women's legislative and executive representation is still far from equal. Although the participation of women and men at the voter level tends to be balanced, the number of women elected to the DPR (House of Representatives) and DPRD (Regional People's Representative Council) is still far below the number of men.

Factors that contribute to women's underrepresentation in Indonesian elections include patriarchal social norms, gender stereotyping in politics, barriers to access to resources and campaign funding, and lack of support from political parties for women candidates. In addition, the high level of political violence against women is also a serious obstacle to increasing women's representation in elections. In this context, we need to understand more about the problems of women's electoral representation in Indonesia. By understanding the root causes and barriers women face in politics, we can formulate effective measures to increase women's representation in elections and strengthen inclusive democracy in Indonesia. In contemporary democracy, also known as representative democracy, political parties play an important role. Experts have repeatedly emphasized the importance of political parties and see them as a key indicator for measuring democracy, especially during transitions because "during transitions and subsequent electoral periods, political parties have emerged in these democracies to select candidates, mobilize constituencies, contest elections, and form governing coalitions" [3].

4.1. Democracy

As the world's largest archipelago with a diverse population, Indonesia has undergone significant developments in its political system since gaining independence in 1945. One of the fundamental principles on which the country is based is democracy, where political power is vested in the people and government is exercised through freely and fairly elected representation. Since its independence, Indonesia has upheld the principle of democracy in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945), which states that the country is a state based on the sovereignty of the people. However, the journey to a stable and mature democracy has not been easy. The country has endured many challenging periods, including colonialism, political conflict, authoritarianism, and political reform.

In recent decades, Indonesia has significantly transitioned towards a more inclusive and open democracy. Political reforms in 1998 paved the way for major changes in the country's political system, including the restoration of free speech, more open and competitive elections, and stronger enforcement of human rights. Today, Indonesia is one of the largest democratic countries in the world, with active political participation from its citizens. This democratization process is reflected in various aspects of political life, including regular elections, plurality of political parties, media freedom, and civil society participation in monitoring and advocacy.

Nonetheless, challenges to building an inclusive and sustainable democracy remain. Corruption, social inequality, gender inequality, and limited access to political and development processes are some challenges that must be addressed. By understanding the history and development of democracy in Indonesia, we can better understand the country's political dynamics and the challenges and opportunities in building a stronger and more inclusive democracy in the future. Many scholars have stated the various capabilities that every citizen should have in a democracy [17].

Democracy is a decision-making system in which all group or association members have equal rights. Although Greek philosophers created the idea of democracy as a form of government, the modern application of this idea began with the revolutions in the West in the late 18th century. According to the classical definition, democracy means public policy, the common good, and the people's will. Locke and Montesquieu saw democracy as a constitutional government that could limit majority rule and protect individual liberties. In contrast to classical democracy, Schumpeter emphasized democracy as a process or method. He described democracy as a standardized process for making political decisions in which individuals obtain the popular vote through struggle [23].

Then, democracy will run well and require the participation of every citizen because there is a link between citizens' political participation and democracy itself. In her work on political participation, political parties define political participation as the activities of a person or group of people to actively participate in political life, such as choosing state leaders and influencing

public policy directly or indirectly [24]. The legitimate exercise of supreme state power by the people, also known as popular sovereignty, is demonstrated by their participation in democratic elections, also known as elections, in a democratic state [9] (Figure 1).

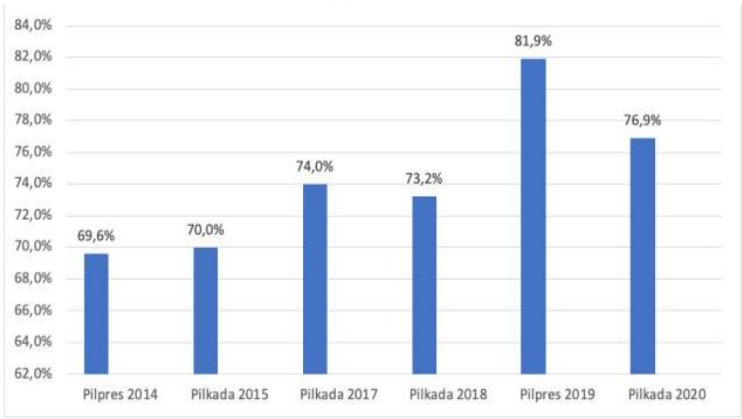


Figure 1: Voter turnout in the last six elections [25]

The following data taken from electronic media can show that the level of participation in democracy for every citizen changes. What initially increased was that in 2020-2021, there was a decrease in democratic participation based on the KPU data source. Box In 2019, there was 81.9% democratic participation; in 2020, there was a decrease of 76.9%. Then, based on other data, namely unpam.ac.id, in 2020, there was a democratic participation of 6.44%, and in 2021, it was 6.33%. Likewise, based on the data from Kompas and KPU, the level of democratic participation in 2024 has decreased. This means that democracy can run well and achieve goals that require the level of participation of its citizens (Figure 2).

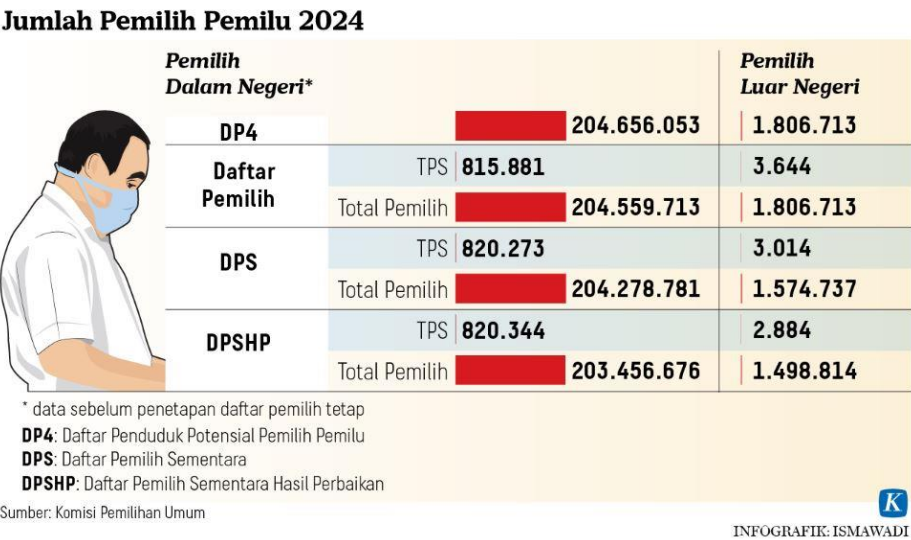


Figure 2: 2024 Election Voter Turnout [26]

4.2. Human Rights

National regulations, such as Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights (Human Rights Law), ensure that everyone is entitled to fair protection, legal certainty, and equal treatment before the law. Article 3, paragraph 2 of the Human Rights Law in 1999. Human rights are rights inherent in every individual as a human being that is protected and recognized by law, norms, and moral values. These human rights are considered universal and inviolable and apply to everyone regardless of race, religion, gender, or other background. The right to life, the right to security, and the right to be free from oppression are basic rights [8]. All people must respect these rights as they are universal. During the reformation period, the recognition and guarantee of human rights in Indonesia began to develop. This was demonstrated by the desire to amend the 1945 Constitution in four stages. The Second

Amendment brought major changes in the protection of human rights, with Chapter XA on Human Rights covering aspects of human rights from Article 28A to Article 28J [12].

Human rights encompass a wide range of rights, such as the right to life, liberty, equality before the law, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, right to privacy, right not to be tortured or persecuted, and many more. These rights are recognized in various international documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations in 1948. Human rights principles form the basis for establishing just and civilized legal systems in many countries. Protecting and promoting human rights is an important goal for a civilized society where everyone has the right to live with dignity and freedom intact. The state's obligation to fulfil human rights means that the state must take legislative, administrative, judicial, and practical policy measures to ensure these rights are fully met [21].

Human rights play a very important role in realizing equality. In the Indonesian context, human rights can work towards gender equality. Gender equality is when women's and men's social parts and spaces are equal, aligned, Harmonized, and adjusted. Fair treatment between men and women is possible when considering logic and other social circumstances [15]. It is then used to respect and appreciate each other and see each other as individuals without discrimination. When human rights are properly protected, the unity and integrity of the nation can be recognized. Pancasila, Indonesia's state ideology, and human rights are inseparable.

In addition, one of the five key principles of upholding human rights is equality. Respecting everyone's freedom is the basis of equality. Second, the Absence of Discrimination shows that no person can be excluded from existence simply because of their sexual orientation, race, colour, religion, language, nationality or citizenship, or political or ideological beliefs. Third, there is no division. Socio-cultural, economic, and collective rights and social freedoms or political privileges are integral to human rights. Fourth, Dependent on Others.

To some extent or fully, fulfilling various rights is necessary to fulfil human rights. Fifth, Responsibility: Every state, individual, and component must ensure and fulfil human rights [14]. It also implements the principles of human rights contained in the Constitution of Indonesia [10].

4.3. Women's Representation in Elections

Women's representation in politics refers to how many women are involved and represented in the political process, including in government, parliament, political parties, and other political organizations. Women's political representation is important because it reflects gender equity, ensures women's interests and perspectives are represented, and improves the diversity and quality of political decisions. However, women's political representation remains an important issue in many countries. Despite the progress made in recent years, many countries still face significant gender imbalances in political representation. Some of the factors that contribute to this imbalance include gender stereotypes, discrimination, lack of access to political and economic resources, and political systems that do not favour women's participation. Women's political representation measures how many women are involved in the political process, both as voters and as leaders or elected officials. Women's representation is important because it ensures women's voices and perspectives are recognized and represented in political decision-making.

Some of the reasons why women's representation is important in politics include:

- **Gender Equity:** Women's representation is a form of gender equality. Equal representation in the political power structure ensures women's interests and experiences are recognized and considered.
- **Improved Decision Quality:** Research has shown that the presence of women in political decision-making processes can improve the quality of decisions. By having multiple perspectives, more holistic and diverse solutions can be generated.
- **Democratic Legitimacy:** Balanced representation of different groups in the population, including gender, is important for maintaining democratic legitimacy. It helps create a sense of fairness in the political system and gives the public confidence that their interests are being represented.
- **Inspiration for Future Generations:** Women's representation in politics can inspire younger generations of women to get involved in political life and fight for their rights.

Although the importance of women's representation is widely recognized, many challenges still need to be overcome to increase women's representation in politics. Some of the challenges include gender stereotypes, unequal access to political resources, cultural barriers, and political systems that may not favour women's representation. To overcome these challenges, a concerted effort is needed from the community, political parties, and the government to fight for gender equality and women's representation in politics.

The regulation of 30% of women's representation in parliament is an affirmative action, or temporary measure, to redress inequalities towards fairness and balance. This policy ensures that certain groups, including gender and professional groups, receive equal opportunities in the same field. The passing of Law No. 12/2003 on Elections for DPR, DPD, and DPRD started an affirmative policy towards women in politics. For example, article 65 paragraph (1) of the law states that: "Each political party participating in the election can nominate candidates for members of the DPR, Provincial DPRD, and Regency / City DPRD for each electoral district by taking into account the representation of women at least 30%. In the political sphere, positive actions towards women are occasionally refined.

Examples are Law No. 22/2007 on Election Organisation, Law No. 2/2008 on Political Parties, and Law No. 10/2008 on Elections of the DPR, DPD, and DPRD, each of which regulates the requirements for women to actively participate in the legislative election process as an act of political parties. Hopefully, these affirmative actions will resolve the gender imbalance in political activity by allowing women to play a role in society according to their abilities and talents. This will help create opportunities for women to gain positions monopolized by men. Suppose positive action is not implemented in a country. In that case, women will be considered incapable of moving freely to contribute their energy, abilities, ideas, and talents within their community, nation, and country. In this case, when women become representatives of the people in the DPR RI, there will be legal or legislative products in the form of laws and regulations that outline why legislation is needed. Thus, the considerations are based on various aspects of interest, so women's participation will represent aspects of interest from a female perspective [7].

Women in the political arena symbolize justice for all Indonesians and show the collapse of patriarchal culture in Indonesia. This justice is still not fully realized, but this is also influenced by how politicians communicate about this issue as they want to involve women fully. Women's representation in elections is given a 30% quota in Indonesia, meaning that government policymakers consider women's voices and rights. Of course, this 30% quota is scattered among various elements as candidates for legislative members both in the House of Representatives and in the House of Representatives at the central and local levels. It is possible that looking at women's struggles in the public arena to eradicate patriarchal culture can be considered a shining light for gender justice. Women continue to struggle to have their voices heard and recognized. Likewise, women struggle to gain seats in the DPR to make their voices heard.

The General Election Commission (KPU) has determined the number of seats and legislative candidates for the House of Representatives (DPR) elected in the 2014 General Election on 14 May 2014. The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) has the highest number of seats in the DPR, with 109 seats (19.5%), followed by the Golkar Party with 91 seats (16.3%), the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) with 73 seats (13.0%), the Democratic Party with 61 seats (10.9%), the National Mandate Party (PAN) with 49 seats (8.8%), the National Awakening Party (PKB) with 47 seats (8.4%), the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) with 40 seats (Figure 3).

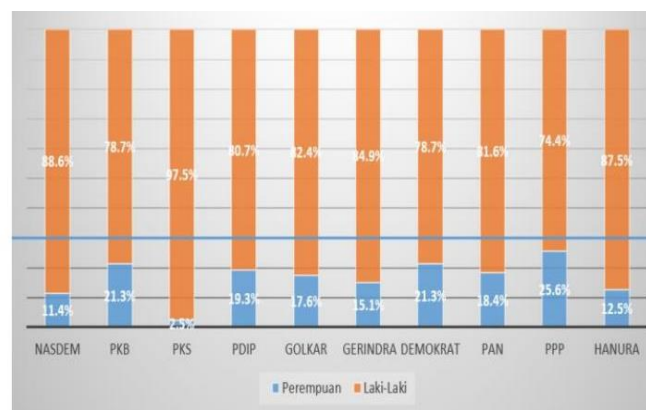


Figure 3: Percentage of political members per party by gender [27]

Of the 560 candidates elected, 79.1% were in the first and second positions on the Permanent Candidate List (DCT). Incumbent candidates received the most votes out of ten, based on the number of votes received by each candidate. Four candidates from the PDI-P Party received the most votes: Karolin Margret Natasa from West Kalimantan Electoral District with 397,481 votes; Puan Maharani from Central Java Electoral District V with 369,927 votes; I Wayan Koster from Bali Electoral District with 260,342 votes; and Rieke Diah Pitaloka from West Java Electoral District VII with 255,064 votes. The number of female candidates elected decreased compared to the previous election, although three of the four candidates with the most votes were

women. Even though three of the four candidates received the most votes, the number of elected female candidates dropped compared to the previous election's results. Only about 79 people, or 14 percent of the total 560 members of the House of Representatives, are women.

Then, based on the 2024 election data, the percentage of women's participation in the election rose to 20.9%; you can see the chart of the percentage of participation based on gender as follows (Figure 4):

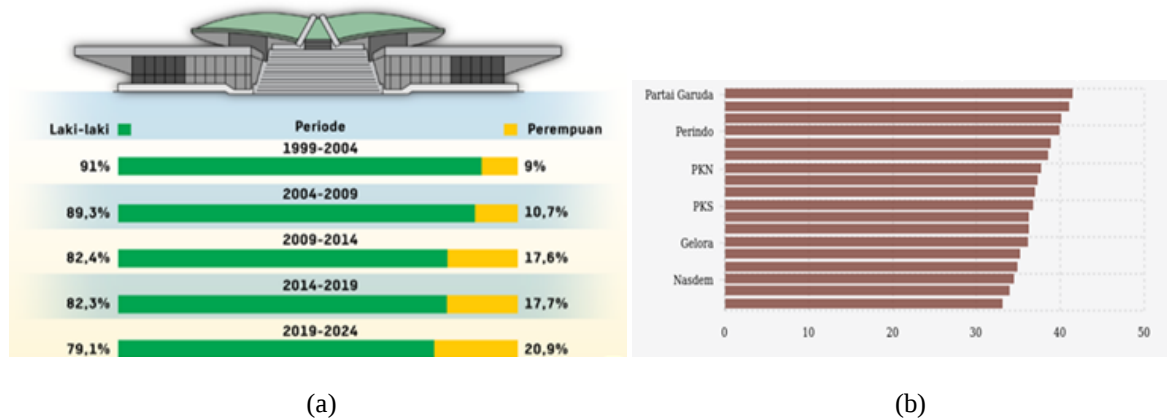


Figure 4: Percentage of women's representation in the 2024 election (a & b) [28]; [29]

Based on the percentage chart above the 2024 election data, women's participation rose to 20.9%, meaning that women's interest in politics is enough to be a concern that women can participate in politics and provide the same opportunities as men. The chart shows that each political party provides opportunities for women to advance and participate in elections. Women's participation in the election in 2024 is based on several supporting factors, and these factors are used as an important and main footing by women, as follows:

- More educated women realize how important it is for them to enter politics and contribute to Indonesia's development.
- In the Reform Order era, national political trends gave women a 30% quota to become legislative candidates.
- In some regions, many women have dared to serve as mayors or regents.

The three things above serve as the basic footing that encourages women to participate and be active in public office. The hope is to encourage women to be more involved in politics. In welcoming the 2024 elections, the government hopes for clean elections not contaminated by violations that harm democracy. One attractive and easy way for all women to increase women's participation is to build awareness, starting from home actively. It is important to remember that political participation plays an important role in developing communities, nations, and governments. By conducting socialization consistently, the above simple strategy can be realized. Consequently, this will increase women's awareness of engaging and actively participating in politics.

5. Conclusion

From time to time, Indonesian women have undergone several changes. The dichotomy between men and women shows that a culture is formed in a society that generally follows a patriarchal culture. Ultimately, this culture affects some of the functions and positions of women, such as the political attitudes and social lives of women in Indonesia. The same policy can lead to both an increase and a decrease in women's representation in parliament because policies that increase representation should encourage women's desire to participate in politics, as seen from using the same policy in the 2009 and 2014 elections. The fear of women's representation did not go away in 2019, although 40 percent of women were registered as legislative candidates in the 2019 general election. Internal limitations include the low quality of human resources of most women, the small number of women with sufficient political qualities and qualifications, and a lack of confidence to compete with men. External constraints include the patriarchal culture of Indonesian society and the lack of political will from party elites to open up space.

Indonesia has yet to achieve the minimum 30% quota for women in parliament. This lack of quota directly impacts women's involvement as policymakers in the political sphere. Political parties have a significant role in determining women's political representation. Although there are laws that regulate it, women's rights are still not fulfilled by the state, which should not

discriminate against women. Practically, the recommendation is that political parties must provide space for women to voice their rights in various policies by existing laws and regulations.

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