



## Beyond Quota: Quo Vadis Women's Representation in Indonesia?

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### Abstrak

Tulisan ini mengkaji pengaruh kuota gender terhadap keterwakilan perempuan dalam lanskap politik Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis institusional, logika di balik kelesuan peningkatan, meski kuota tersebut gagal dipenuhi di Indonesia, disorot dalam makalah ini. Kajian ini lebih jauh membahas tentang kompleksnya peran berbagai aktor politik dan non-politik yang kemudian mempengaruhi keterwakilan perempuan, antara lain partai politik, pemerintah dan legislatif terpilih, serta Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU). Pergeseran kelembagaan implementasi kuota gender dalam politik Indonesia menimbulkan kecenderungan disorientasi tujuan utama penciptaan kuota gender. Studi ini mengkaji perjalanan kuota dan keterwakilan perempuan di Indonesia yang meliputi kasus rendahnya representasi perempuan dalam politik dan kontroversi kebijakan perempuan, sebagai bagian dari kebijakan awal penerapan kuota gender

**Kata kunci:** Bengkulu, corona, COVID-19, jarak fisik, jarak sosial, pemetaan pemangku kepentingan

### Abstract

*This paper scrutinizes the effect of gender quota on women's representation in the political landscape of Indonesia. By using the institutional analysis approach, the logic behind lethargic increases, even though such quota has failed to meet in Indonesia, is highlighted in the paper. This study further discusses the complex roles of various political and non-political actors that later affect the representation of women, including the political party, elected government and legislatures, and Commission for General Election (KPU). The institutional shift of gender quota implementation in Indonesian politics creates a tendency of disorientation of the main purpose of creating gender quota. As regulatory changes on the gender quota since its first implementation, this study examines the journey of quota and women representation in Indonesia which include the case of underrepresentation of women in politics and the controversy of women policy, as part of the initial virtue of implementing gender quota.*

**Keywords:** gender quota; gender; Indonesia, politics; regulation; women's representation

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## INTRODUCTION

Since introduced in Indonesia, the 30% gender quota in a political party to run for parliamentary has been quibbled by various criticism due to the floundering results of under 30%. The majority of logic behind



the critique is in regards to either the sluggishness of the regulation (the loose stick and guaranteed carrots) or the women representation that does not get support with the cultural and social appropriation. Alas, since 2008 the government imposed such pressure on the previous regulation with another electoral regulation that states the majority win system; resulting in double standards. Furthermore, the heated debates between various overlapping regulations are possibly the contributing factor of what might have gone wrong. The affirmative policy of women quota are regulated in the Electoral Legislature Law number 12/2003 and number 10/2008, as well as the Political Party Law number 31/2002, number 2/2008, and number 2/2011, and yet considered as inadequate to progressively achieve the basic reconstructed idea of gender equity in the parliament (Kurniawan, 2016). Regardless, the writer holds credence that such quota policy is not only precipitated by the obscurity of regulations but also determined by the institutional culture, as has been argued by Lovenduski (2015, 52-53); to cause such culture throughout the organization and create gender bias as the aftermath result.

### **Same Quota, Same Organizational Problems**

The question of who represents who in Indonesia has ever been an interchanging debate and this question is not limited to who represents women in Indonesia. Direct general election does not only show the real enthusiasm for Indonesian voters, but it also shows people's willingness to be represented as voting is not compulsory. What makes 2019 General Election is different compared to the previous General Election is the legislature election that was held on the same date as the Presidential Election. Last year, out of 192,866,254 listed voters (KPU, 2018) cast their votes in a day out of the 810,329 ballot stations (Carina, 2019), and 96,557,044 voters are women (KPU, 2018). Indonesia has adopted the open-list representation system since 1955 and is an electoral system that enables listed candidates to be elected by the voters (Dettman, Pepinsky, and Pierskalla, 2017). In this electoral system, the candidates are the main players and the parties are the gatekeeper. Hence, the parties are expected to provide incentives for the candidates to personalize their profiles, as they are the ones who will finally be voted by the voters. In other words, there will be the possibility of intra-competition within the same party between different candidates (Blumenau, Eggers, Hangartner, & Hix, 2017). To endorse such an idea, the party will not take the risk to show the main values of their policy approach, instead, the policy focus will be promoted by the candidates.

As pointed by Bjarnegard and Zetterberg (2016, 10), one of the successful contributions of quota is relevant to the shifting process of the intraparty power structure. Since the intraparty organization is not monitored by the state or other pressure groups, hence there is no guarantee that the organizational change has been done at all. Instead, the party will only qualify according to the candidate's persona or candidates' financial contribution to the party. There is no indication that party has been majorly led by women, except for the case of Partai Demokrasi Perjuangan (PDI-P) or Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, whereby the leader, Megawati Soekarnoputri was the President of Republic of Indonesia one period before the quota was introduced (2001-2004). The inauguration was done in silence and controversial because her party won the election, but she did not win the approvals from several conservative parties (Lanti, 2002). She later interestingly expressed her disagreement on the quota program as she believes such quota will create further burdens for the women who seek to be in politics, despite the new demands from transnational movements in 2001 (Parawansa, 2002). And, yet until today her influence is prominent in Indonesia's political landscape due to her nomination of the current President, Joko Widodo (Coles, 2018). Unfortunately, her incumbent leadership of the party has been accused due to gaining favors due to patrimony case, as her father is the first president of the country (Lanti, 2002).

Despite Megawati's controversial attempt to become the President, the moderate escalation of women quota in parliament has been depicted since the General Election of 2004, especially in 2019, surpassing 20% out of the total. But, only to be followed by the main discovery that the women who participate in candidacy "have familial relations to male power holders" (Mietzner, 2019). In 2019 alone, 41% of women



who won the parliamentary seats demonstrated ‘dynastic connection’ to the male politicians. Such financial privilege is afterward coherent to the party’s interest, the case of these women candidates as a contribution to the political parties’ budgetary funding. These cases can be mitigated by compliance enforcement if the goal is to reach the threshold (Ohman, 2018). However, it might not be the case, as there is no earmarking public funding proportion in the field. In the very beginning year of quota introduction (2004), the implementation was even weak. Many parties nominated their candidates regardless of the percentage and permissiveness level of government, especially the Commission for General Election (KPU) was unfortunately high. It became the elephant in the room kind of problem.

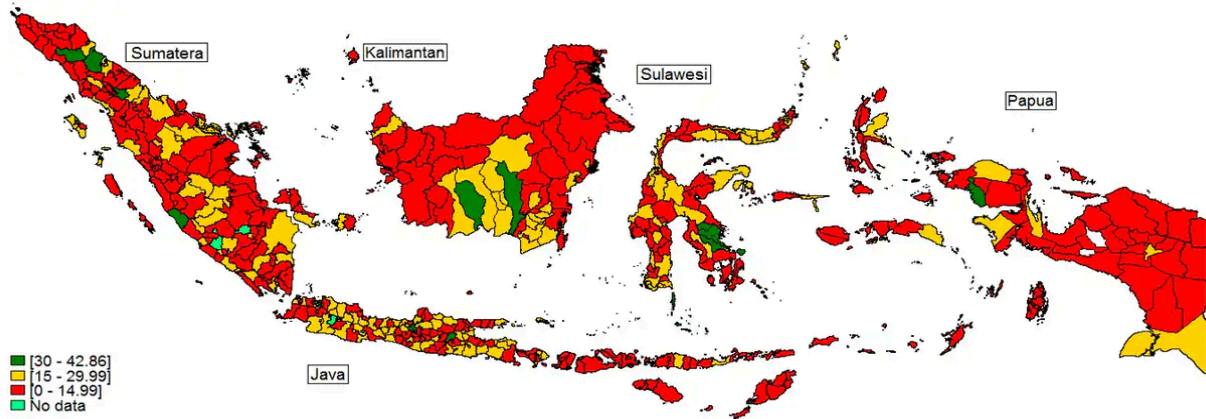
Over the years, the decision of the political party to nominate women under the percentage of 30% has been just a pragmatic one, without any change the intra-institution due to the fact that after the political party aims to reserve the seats and the funding. Not to mention, the existence of clientelism of political party (Katz & Mair, 1994) and electoral system culture in Indonesia, where the political parties that are heavily affiliated with both parliament and government even if it is not directly conspicuous. In other words, the financial support source for political parties in Indonesia is aligned with the idea of cartelization of a political party to just focus on the rent-seeking activities to gain their financial needs (Ambardi, 2008). And, this means a direct routing of securing the seats for women in the parliament – to gain their financial needs.

The independent government body, namely the Commission of Corruption Eradication (KPK) provides supports in the state funding allocations, including electoral fund. Hence, there is a greater rate of transparency in Indonesia. Ironically, it does not hinder the problem of financial resources of the political party. Instead, there is a tendency of opening up a Pandora box of keeping the most financially equipped within the competition, because it is not cheap to be a part of a political party and even if the candidate is self – nominated candidate they have to bear all of the funding (Mietzner, 2019). In short, as pointed out by Hillman (2017) out of his interview with former Bali Provincial Elections Commissioner, Luh Riniti Rahayu, “the Indonesian political parties do not want talented women; they want women with money.” The marginalized candidates or women candidates, who are not able to fund themselves might encounter financial issues to run in the electoral candidacy. Or in summary, the system has bred the ‘quid pro quo’ culture.

### **Under-representation of Women in Indonesian Politics: Between Meager Regulations and Androcentric Culture**

As we now understand that the targeted funding in Indonesia on the quota program is classified as based on allocation where parties only can access the budget where the quota is met. The hindrance does not stop on whether the mechanism on the field has shown any lacking. Instead, such a mechanism is vague since the Commission for General Election (KPU) only put 30% in the general requirement for entering the election. Even worse, the existing flaw of law that regulates such quota does not specify until today what kind of sanction will be imposed other than ‘not allowing the political party to compete in an election in their respective regions’. Supposedly, in House of Representative and Senate at the national level (DPR & DPD), the threshold is completed at 30%, but it does not indicate a similar percentage at the regional level, then the party still have the right to be represented at a national level. Such a system is fragile because, in the smaller and even rural areas, women representation in politics is underrepresented, based on the House of Representatives at the regional level or House Regional of Representatives (DPRD). As presented by Prihatini (2019) in the map of women representatives in cities and regencies parliamentary level across Indonesia below, the percentage of women candidacy and elected representatives in the 2014 election is way lower in the smaller/lower level areas (provinces, cities/regencies). The smaller level of the region, the lower rate of women representation in the local parliament system. Figure 1 demonstrates that more than half of the cities or regencies have 15% or less of women representations in politics.

**Figure 1 Map of the Women Members of Regional House of Representatives & Senates (DPRD & DPD) Based on General Election 2014**



The under-representation motive is not merely correlated to the intra-institutional condition and the regulation instead it also shows the lack of information that can outreach to the voters. It is worth acknowledging that the political party system, from recruitment, leadership building, and finally candidacy, may lead to the portraits of women who are chosen to represent their parties. In the recent survey conducted by White & Aspinall (2019) together with Lingkar Survey Indonesia (LSI) for instance, the data shows that 61,5% of respondents did not vote for women candidates because they barely know the women candidates. In contrast, as presented in the figure 2, the majority of the respondents also agree that “a woman’s place is the home (60,2%), and that according to the religious teachings, women may not become leaders” (White & Aspinall, 2019).

**Figure 2 Explanations for Women’s Under-Representation (From the Voters’ Perspectives). Q: Do You Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree with the Following Statements?**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A woman's place is in the home	60.2	14.6	22.3	2.9
Compared to men, women in politics have to work harder to prove their capabilities.	60.1	16.0	17.5	6.5
According to religious teachings, women are not allowed to be leaders.	56.1	17.1	23.4	3.4
Fewer women have the necessary experience for political office.	49.6	17.7	23.2	9.4
Not many women are interested in holding political office.	48.3	18.3	24.8	8.5
Family responsibilities make it difficult for women to hold political office.	47.0	17.2	28.1	7.8
Generally, Indonesian society isn't prepared to elect a woman to political office.	46.4	19.0	27.7	6.9
Being a leader violates a woman's essential nature (kodrat).	41.6	19.0	34.5	4.9
Women aren't strong enough to engage in politics.	40.7	15.6	38.3	5.4
Women don't get enough support from party leaders.	40.3	19.4	27.4	12.8
Women in politics experience gender discrimination.	32.3	20.5	35.1	12.1
Women aren't good at showcasing their achievements and experience.	28.9	18.7	43.5	8.9

The finding undoubtedly shows the embodiment of patriarchy culture from societal perceptions, as the majority still conform to the role of women in the society not to be in politics (White & Aspinall, 2019). On the other hand, it also shows the opportunity where from the data above, some voters might support the





women candidate even if they are patriarchal. In further interpretation, the survey indicates that women candidates may lack resources (financial or access) to do political campaigns and promotions. But, the fact remains that more than 60% did not vote for women, (White & Aspinall, 2019). By recalling the powerful relation between the hurdle of women candidates' promotion and patriarchal background, the under-representation of women in the political sphere in Indonesia is rather complex.

The complexity is suggested by the influence on the historical context of Indonesia before the 30% quota was introduced and it is highly relevant to the socio-political tenets constructed in the society. Historically, the election system as open list proportional representatives in Indonesia have been still adopted and favored by the Indonesian people mainly due to the euphoria of the first open election after its independence in 1945; which gave the opportunity to cast everyone's vote (Ambardi, 2008). But, in 2004 and 2009, the election system was partially open list proportional representatives system and it was also followed by the 'zipper system' where one out of three candidates, must be a woman candidate (IFES, 2019). The difference was the partially open list system was revoked in 2009; making Indonesia adopted the open list with the same zipper system until today (Mulyono, 2016). The change afterward affected the quota; women have not prioritized anymore in the set-list, instead, the one in three candidates became non-binding and revolving around what the party decides (Mietzner, 2019).

Dismantling the parallel paradigm of the historical context of Indonesia in gender quota, specifically in the election system cannot be separated from the autocratic era before democracy was adopted in 1998. Indonesia was led by the authoritarian government where the open election for President was no longer held after the New Order in 1966 until 1998. All the years Indonesian spent without being able to express their choice of the country's leader was precipitously shifted in the General Election during the new democratic era of 1999 where first-past-the-post (FPTP) or simple plurality method was adopted with 48 political parties verified in the election. In the post-dictatorship era, democracy was such a new national dogma was introduced to the country in the post-crisis, in both national politics as well as the economy. It became the horsepower as well as the cornerstone of reconstructing the national mindset to the more liberalistic ways. According to Dahlerup (2013), such a trend to introduce quota in post-conflict societies will be an empirical epitome for including the part of society that was not as much to be included in the decision-making process before. It was a starting point for Indonesia to take into account the importance of women in politics. But, perhaps it was also challenged by the arduous election system and not to mention the societal system that still values androcentric values.

### **Agent of Changes**

Interestingly, the 30% quota is not only applicable for the parliament candidates, but also implemented on the Commission of General Election (KPU) as the main appointed organizer of the General Election (Margret, Panjaitan, Novitasari, and Iksarana, 2018). Even though it is regulated in the Election Law number 22/ 2007, the results have not been satisfying. The women commissioner was only able to reach 30% at the national level, during the years 2007-2012 and 2008 – 2012. Besides those years, the representation is rather low. Despite the continuous succumbing number of women commissioners, the intervention to the recruitment system has been done in 2017. But, only a small number was qualified and only one out of 7 commissioners is a woman in the period of 2017-2022. It indicates that the recruitment system for women was also lacking in the commission. Even if it is already supported and intervened, the qualification system apparently shows either selection mechanism is not supporting women to pass or the quality of women who apply for the commission is not high enough for the standard. Either way, the selection process is not transparent to be scrutinized.

To also acknowledge the importance of women within the KPU as one of the agents of changes in the quota monitoring process means to also analyze the power relations within the organization. This relation is somehow overlooked in many analysis because rather many researches have focused on the power



relations within the legislative body. Instead, the nurturing process of deconstructing and reconstructing gender equality is happening in the organization, any organization including political party, election body, and transnational movement organizations, as all of them, are the agent of changes. Unfortunately, the promotion underneath the bureaucratic system of a government body (even if it is declared as an independent), like KPU, is rather difficult for women (Margret et al. 2018). Women and their acceptable roles nevertheless have to juggle between keeping up with a promotion, domestic roles (as men working for government body are not eligible for maternal leaves) and finally the conservative environment to impede such process to gain powerful position. An exception might be found in the National Women Commission (Komnas Perempuan) and yet it must be noted that the possible reasoning of the majority members of the organization is women because of the topic interest (Komnas Perempuan, 2017). In further real scenarios and from the institutional perspective, there is an intensified quota discrepancy between what is mainstreamed on the quota in KPU at the national level and at the regional level. A similar issue is also found in the case of the legislature.

Such an issue is even exacerbated with the non-persistent communicated message to the voters as one of the goals of mainstreaming gender equality (Verge, 2018). Aligned with the previous part of this essay, political parties in Indonesia, on the contrary, do not seem to attract women as important in their voters, they tend to just aim to gain popular votes and bring the pragmatic assurance of what they will deliver after the candidate is being chosen. From the organizational perspectives, this challenge will need to be addressed with a shift of political communication by various agents of changes. KPU needs to manifest the quota in their institution and communicate it to the public, or in other words to befriend the media. A similar strategy is also necessary to be done by political parties and transnational groups; to even trigger the power imbalance between women and men in the organization. Because the gap between one region or another may affect the level of understanding of quota. And, quite often, some women do not realize what kind of gender imbalance is occurring due to the deeply rooted parochial perspectives that are affected by patriarchal culture. Sooner or later, the agent of changes needs to be the enduring drive of the quota and how it will impact the policy. If not, otherwise the quota will not seem to be effective at all. Such a message is what one of the recent notorious political party, Partai Solidaritas Indonesia/Solidarity Party of Indonesia (PSI), has been trying to highlight during their campaigns. Even if the message of women empowerment is articulate and the female activists are in the focal point of their campaigns; they still lack votes and only make 1,85% of national votes out of the threshold of 4% to make it to the national legislature (White & Aspinall, 2019). In the smaller rate, such a problem might be about popularity, but if the case happens all over the country, then it can be influenced by a systemic problem.

After having the seat in the national legislative arena, the women legislatures might still need to face another challenge of the policymaking process. Taking into account factors to increase the integration within organization provided by Schalkwyk & Woroniuk, and later was disseminated by OECD (1998), the writer realizes that the House of Representatives and Senate (DPR & DPD) of Indonesia might still lack on some of them, such as: “flexibility and openness to new ideas in general; willingness to change and incorporate input from diverse constituencies; accountability structures that ensure staff to comply with policy directions; and recognition and values gave the wide-range of professional skills.”

The parliament (DPR & DPD) have been criticized to be inflexible and even obsolete in discussing and realizing the Law on Gender Equality that has been discussed since 2011. Gender mainstreaming is rather equivocal within the DPR & DPD and the importance is non-persistent (BAPPENAS & Kementerian PPA, 2010), (Anastasia, Noerdin, Anindhita, Aripurnami, & Rahayuningtyas, 2014). The conservative parts of the DPR & DPD make it even more difficult for introducing the gender mainstreaming, let alone such policy. Even, throughout the years of policymaking development, discussion, and debates; the drafted law seems to always face an impasse. Such pessimism is not without a solid premise. It is correlated with the evidence that despite Indonesia ratifying the CEDAW (Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of



Discriminations against Women) in 1984, Indonesia has not yet legalized the proposed Drafted Law on Sexual Violence Elimination (BAPPENAS & Kementerian PPA, 2010). The House of Representatives has a plethora of access to the policymaking, still, many of the women related policies are not discussed properly. And, yet they still have the inherent responsibility of gender quota - not limited to the implementation phase only.

In 2019, the existing particular disproportion character of DPR & DPD as an organization does not only adhere to the inadequacy only. There is a prospect of a new gambit, based on the newly inaugurated Speaker of the House of Representatives at the national level, Puan Maharani, the daughter of Megawati Soekarnoputri. On one hand, she is a woman, but in another hand, there is no concrete guarantee that she will make any difference in the gender mainstreaming effort, especially within the House of Representatives. This notion is supported by Grey, et al (2006) in stating that women as female politicians are somehow trapped in the conundrum that expects them to be just like male politicians who will make difference. Not to mention, her pinnacle political position is associated with the mother, just like her mother who gained political party top position due to her father as the first president. Once again, dynastic privilege is used to outreach the political access. Yet, the positivism still exists, as the second day of her duty, Puan declared her commitment of recalling the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill is one of the 8 top priorities in her leadership (The Jakarta Post, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Indonesia's position is at the unique part of the history where massive inevitable transformation is happening, including the way people support an issue, such as the gender equality issue. From the existing 300 million internet and social media users (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2019), today, more gender issues are prevalent in media and more petitions are omnipresent in regards to Bill on Gender Equality or Bill on Sexual Violence Elimination (Komnas Perempuan, 2019). This paper has discussed how there has been a yearly moderate increase in the presence of women in political candidacy since the 30% quota was adopted. But, it does not ensure the constant presence of the elected women. Such an issue is no anomaly for adopting quota. In other countries, there have been some cases that show the same evidence.

Such challenges in realizing 30% quota in the case of Indonesia are caused by different variables, which mainly include the lack of institutional change, weak and yet overlapping regulations and finally the systemic culture of women with privilege who can access the national politics. Without a doubt, the democratic reformation in 1998 opened up a pathway for the country to endorse the liberal idea in the political system and it demonstrates considerably immense influence on the gender quota in parliament. Before the reformation, transnational movements did not play a vital role in politics until 1999 (Parawansa, 2002). Although, such reformation is not enough to balance the uprising of political ideologies based on diversity. Indonesia is blessed with diverse cultures and different beliefs in its 16,000 islands-archipelagic country landscape. But, on top of this diversity, such sensitivity relies on and might trigger the problem. The same rationale is applied for the efforts to introduce a quota of gender balance in the various organizations. Many political parties in Indonesia today take eminently into account the religious factors that may have or will have to affect the women's leadership (Ambardi, 2008). Today, women's potentials might have been unleashed and become more tangible than ever, but only limited to the fact that the parties need the quota to enter the democratic battle, namely General Election.

The affirmative action taken by various actors must be followed after the quota is introduced. It is not just the formality of 30% if such effect is expected in balancing the proportion. From the institutional perspectives, the regulation has been incapable to put clarity and boundary of which, what, and how. Furthermore, it has been argued in this paper that the role of a political party is important. What is more important for them is directing the biggest player of the parties to demonstrate; and it will eventually affect the other parties' attitude towards women's representation (Caul, 1999). Finally, the writer must embed the



prominence of the agent of change as the main momentum to crucially provide ground supports toward a 30% women quota idea. They were the dynamic force of gender equality all along and they always can cause such a major shift in political organizations.

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