

EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN IN THE CHANGING POWER DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the role of women in political oligarchy and their potential to change power dynamics. Political oligarchy concentrates power in the hands of a few, often overlooking women's roles within this structure. Feminist intersectionality reveals that social class significantly influences women's involvement in oligarchy, with greater barriers for women from lower economic classes. Women's participation in politics, both as leaders and members of political parties, is crucial for representing their unique needs in policy-making. However, women in decision-making roles often face cultural and normative dilemmas, needing to overcome negative stereotypes. The feminist movement plays a vital role in addressing gender inequality by changing cultural norms and raising awareness of gender bias. Although the Constitution of Indonesia and international conventions affirm gender equality, implementation requires specific policies. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, collecting data from literature, official documents, and news sources. Findings indicate that women's roles in political oligarchy are often tied to kinship relations, political clans, and dynasties. Despite affirmative action policies promoting 30% female representation in legislative candidate lists, this representation often serves to validate the interests of certain groups. Nonetheless, women's involvement in politics is a positive step toward gender equality. Addressing gender inequality and increasing women's participation in decision-making requires robust efforts to support women's rights and dismantle social and political barriers. Further policy implementation to support women's political representation is essential for a more inclusive and gender-equal society.

Key words: Local Politics, Oligarchy, Women.

INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, the concept of oligarchy has become a significant issue in politics. Oligarchy refers to a state in which political power and influence are concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or small groups (Winters Jaffrey, 2011). Oligarchy in politics can be observed through several political families dominating the political world for decades. Strom builds arguments based on research conducted in America, that oligarchy is not inconsistent with democracy (Domhoff, 2018). They hold various influential positions in regions, such as mayors, city council members, and legislators, creating a power structure centered on a small group of people with significant control over decision-making. In the economic field, the oligarchic system can be seen through the ownership of land, properties, and plantations controlled by a handful of individuals or families, enabling them to determine market prices and influence the availability of goods.

Although oligarchy is often associated with power structures dominated by men, it is important to recognize the role of women in oligarchic networks. Women play significant roles and have impacts within these networks, either as members of the oligarchy or as individuals influenced by it. (Dewi et al., 2023) study on Local Oligarchic Networks examines the position of women in local politics after the reform. Women's electability in the legislature in homogeneous communities benefits from their economic conditions, both individually and within their families. Political factors also reveal the continued influence of family politics on women's (Magriasti et al., 2022). "In feminist theory with an intersectionality approach, it is stated that women's experiences and identities are influenced by factors such as race, social class, sexual orientation, and more (Clark, 1990). Social class is one of the determining

factors for women's involvement in oligarchy. Women who have access to education, economic resources, and family well-being find it easier to enter and engage in oligarchy compared to women from lower economic classes. These women face economic vulnerability and disempowerment, along with responsibilities to meet family needs and household chores.

Women's participation in oligarchy can be observed in their involvement in politics as leaders or members of political parties holding sway over political decisions and policies. There are women who can influence decision-making processes, such as Angela Merkel in Germany or Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand, where they serve as members of parliament or city councils, actively shaping policies.

At times, women involved in decision-making processes face dilemmas that contradict traditional values and norms, which expect women to be gentle, polite, beautiful, and demure. Women engaged in decision-making processes are often perceived as "ambitious" and tend to face negative stereotypes, including accusations of "sacrificing" their personal lives and families.

Society often holds different expectations for men and women in various contexts, from their roles in households to participation in political decision-making (Wahyudi, 2018). Addressing gender inequality and changing the political and social reality requires cultural change, awareness of gender biases, and strong efforts to support women's rights and their struggle for gender equality. The feminist movement has played a crucial role in reflecting women's identities and in efforts to overcome the social and political barriers they face, acknowledging women's experiences and identities.

Article 27, paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia asserts that the position of men and women

as citizens is equal. Similarly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 has affirmed the equality of rights between men and women.

However, the international community recognizes that realizing women's rights in daily life requires specific policies. This awareness is based on the fact that women worldwide still experience hardships: firstly, women are considered inferior to men; secondly, women face more significant barriers in accessing education, health, and employment opportunities compared to men.

These social realities have made the United Nations (UN) highly concerned about women's issues. On July 7, 1954, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW). Subsequently, on December 18, 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Eveline & Binns, 2009)

The implementation of these two documents over several decades has not seen significant progress. As a result, the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing, China, issued the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) declaration. This declaration emphasizes that to raise awareness of women's rights, there is a need for education on women's rights and the establishment of bodies to protect women from violations of their rights. Furthermore, as we entered the 21st century, the UN General Assembly, attended by 189 countries worldwide, issued the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with the third goal being Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in various aspects of development.

The Indonesian government ratified the CPRW through Law Number 68 of 1958 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women and CEDAW through Law Number 7 of 1984 concerning the Ratification of the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Prior to ratifying CEDAW, the government established the State Ministry for Women's Affairs in 1978, specifically coordinating efforts to enhance women's well-being through education, economics, and health programs. The purpose of this article is to understand the role of women in oligarchy and how women explore their potential to change the dynamics of power.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach by analyzing the political oligarchy policy in Indonesia and gender inequality issues in politics. Initial data collection involved literature reviews from books, journals, papers, government documents, newspapers, and websites. The researcher started by reading 10 relevant books, 60 journals with keywords such as oligarchy and women, several unpublished papers, and policy documents related to keywords like Oligarchy; Women; Local Politics. The researcher manually categorized this information by creating case groups based on the literature. The researcher validated information from one source with another by comparing and discussing the sources. Each piece of information was grouped based on the role and involvement of women in politics and how it is influenced by political oligarchy. Media sources and journals discussing family connections among members of parliament and local political leaders showed that families or clans are involved. The collected data was compiled and sorted to answer the research questions. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative methods by grouping, comparing, and testing the validity of the data by comparing each document. This approach allowed the researcher to provide sharp analysis, addressing the research questions and objectives. From the literature study, key points were extracted to explain and

summarize representation and diversity in local power structures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Political Oligarchy

Oligarchy is a political system where the ruling elite consists of a group of individuals or a small group (elite group) (Winters Jaffrey, 2011). This elite group, in governing, always employs various means to control and dominate the people. Politics is synonymous with power, and power is the ability of an individual or a group to influence the behavior of other individuals or groups as desired by the actors. Politics, in simple terms, can be defined as a state's policy regarding the laws to be enacted or not enacted within the country, which can be in the form of creating new policies or the repeal and replacement of old policies to align with the needs of the society. From the general conception of oligarchy, power and legal politics substantially have closeness and mutual interaction with each other.

Table 1: Elite Categories and Their Influence in Indonesian Politics

Category	Description
Political Rulers	In Indonesia, individuals who hold high positions in government and major political parties include figures from prominent families such as the Cendana family and leaders from major parties like PDI-P, Golkar, and Gerindra .
Business and Industry Leaders	Major entrepreneurs in Indonesia, such as the Bakrie family, Jusuf Kalla, and Robert Budi Hartono, hold significant wealth and can influence public policy through their economic power.

Political Families or Dynasties	Political dynasties in Indonesia, including the Gus Dur family and the Jokowi family, have notable influence in politics and society.
Military or Police Leaders	Leaders of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) and the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) have substantial influence over security policies and law enforcement.
Cultural and Media Elites	Major media groups in Indonesia, such as Kompas Gramedia and MNC Group, along with cultural figures and celebrities, have significant influence in shaping public opinion.

Source: (Hadiz & Robinson, 2018; Johansson, 2019; Kingsbury, 2005; Pepinsky & Wihardja, 2011; Purdey & Purdey, 2016; Sen. K & Hill.D., 2007)

In analyzing the influence of different elite categories in Indonesian politics through the lens of Jeffrey A. Winters' theory of oligarchy, we observe how each group contributes to the maintenance of an oligarchic system. Political rulers, including prominent figures from influential families such as the Cendana family and leaders of major parties like PDI-P, Golkar, and Gerindra, consolidate power within a few elite groups. Their control over government positions and political decisions exemplifies the core oligarchic structure, where power remains concentrated among a select few.

Business and industry leaders, such as the Bakrie family, Jusuf Kalla, and Robert Budi Hartono, wield their economic power to influence public policy and secure advantageous positions, thus reinforcing their role within the oligarchic framework. Their substantial wealth enables them to

shape both economic and political landscapes, aligning with Winters' view of economic elites in oligarchies. **Political families or dynasties**, including the Gus Dur and Jokowi families, perpetuate their influence through inherited power, securing their dominance in political and economic spheres. This concentration of power within specific families underscores the role of political dynasties in sustaining oligarchic control.

Military and police leaders of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) and the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) continue to exert significant influence over security policies and law enforcement, contributing to the oligarchic nature of the political system. Despite the reduction of direct military rule, their control over security forces provides substantial leverage in political decision-making. Finally.

Cultural and media elites including major media groups like Kompas Gramedia and MNC Group, as well as influential cultural figures, play a crucial role in shaping public opinion. By influencing the political discourse and public perception, they help maintain the status quo and support the interests of political and economic elites, reinforcing the oligarchic structure. Together, these elite categories illustrate how oligarchic control operates in Indonesia, with each group playing a specific role in preserving the concentration of power.

The New Order served as the historical foundation for political oligarchy in Indonesia. There are three main stages in the emergence and development of sultanistic oligarchy in Indonesia: (Winters Jaffrey, 2011)

Military-Chinese Phase (1965): The phase when Soeharto took over military command and subdued many military competitors and politicians. This phase was followed by an accommodation of Chinese

descent entrepreneurs as a source of cash funds for Soeharto.

Native Phase (1974): In this phase, Soeharto expanded economic accommodation not only for Chinese entrepreneurs but also for native entrepreneurs.

Family Phase (1980s): A phase where Soeharto began to concentrate his political defense around his family figures. Soeharto's children rapidly and forcefully entered the Indonesian oligarchy, becoming the dominant oligarchic force in an instant.

Even after the New Order collapsed, political oligarchy did not completely disappear. Oligarchy continued to persist despite the end of Soeharto's rule with the political changes post the 1998 reformation. Oligarchy experiences in Indonesia post-reformation are evidence of Winter's argument that the political oligarchy's resilience lies in Indonesia's democratic system's failure to restrict the oligarchy's maneuvering space. Although Soeharto had fallen, there was no legal mechanism or institution strong enough to counterbalance the power of the oligarchy. This is what has made Indonesian politics remain fertile ground for oligarchic practices (Winters Jaffrey, 2011)

Oligarchy also occurs within political parties, such as Nasdem with the financial strength of Surya Paloh and Perindo with Hary Tanoesoedibjo's influence. Furthermore, the Democratic Party, under the leadership of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Gerindra led by Prabowo Subianto, and of course, PDIP with the central role of Megawati Soekarno Putri. These party leaders not only possess strong financial resources but also play central and strategic roles in decision-making and policy direction for their respective parties (Sihombing, 2018).

The Role of Women in Oligarchy The political participation of women faces many challenges and limitations. In general, they

find it difficult to enter the political arena, often due to financial constraints and the perception of their social base as weak. This situation creates a social bias that The author does not explain how the data exacerbates gender inequality in the public sphere (Nurchahyo, 2016). Consequently, women's aspirations in the formulation of gender-sensitive public policies receive inadequate attention.

Women's involvement in politics is crucial because women have different needs compared to men. These needs encompass reproductive health, access to reproductive health, especially for pregnant and birthing mothers. This difference arises from the distinct reproductive experiences between men and women, with women experiencing menstruation and childbirth, which men do not go through (Agus Riswanto, 2020). As a result, these issues can only be adequately addressed by women, making their participation in policy-making processes crucial.

Deeply rooted patriarchal values in Indonesia lead to various conditions that make women vulnerable. Child marriage is still prevalent in Indonesia, and cases of sexual violence often end in mediation. Victims sometimes end up behind bars. The more complex the problems women face, the more essential it is for women to assume strategic positions in the legislature, particularly if they can lead in strategic parliamentary positions (Juniar, 2021).

In the period of 2014-2019, the representation of women in the Indonesian political scene was perceived as failing to provide positive contributions to legislation benefiting women and marginalized groups. The 2014-2019 legislative period failed to pass several significant bills, including those addressing sexual violence, domestic workers' rights, and gender equality and justice. These bills have a direct impact on women, particularly regarding sexual violence and domestic workers' rights. Many female victims of these issues believed that these problems were not prioritized by female parliament members.

Thus, the question arises: What is the use of female legislators in parliament (Gusmansyah, 2019)?

In 2019, it was considered a historic year for women's representation in politics, with an increase in the percentage of women participating in policy-making. Women accounted for 18.03% of the provincial legislative councils (DPRD), 15.25% in district/city DPRDs, and 30.88% in the Regional Representative Council (DPD), marking the highest achievement since the reformation. However, the focus should not solely be on the 30% gender quota, but also on the quality of the human resources in parliament. It is essential to evaluate their capabilities in leadership and understanding their parliamentary tasks and responsibilities, instead of merely relying on the 30% quota.

Most of the women who became members of the DPR in 2019 were affiliated with political clans, such as children, wives, siblings, and relatives, which can be seen in the following Table 2:

Table 2: List of Female DPR Members from Political Dynasties

DPR Member	Region	Relationship
Lisdawati Hendrajoni	West Sumatera	Wife of Regent of South Pesisir Hendrajoni
Nevi Zuairina	West Sumatera	Wife of West Sumatera Governor Irwan Prayitno
Athari Gauthi Ardi	West Sumatera	Daughter of Regency of Solok Epyardi Asda
Percha Leanpuri	South Sumatra	Daughter of South Sumatra Governor Herman Deru
Adde Rosi Khoerunnisa	Banten	Daughter-in-law of Banten Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah
Netty Prasetyani	West Java	Wife of West Java Governor Ahmad Heryawan

Paramitha Widya Kusuma	Central Java	Daughter of Regent of Brebes Indra Kusuma
Hillary Brigitta Lasut	North Sulawesi	Daughter of Talaud Regent Elly Lasut
Vanda Sarundajang	North Sulawesi	Daughter of North Sulawesi Governor Sinyo Harry Sarundajang
Adriana Dondokambey	North Sulawesi	Sister of North Sulawesi Governor Olly Dondokambey
Ratu Ngadu Bonnu Wulla	East Nusa Tenggara	Wife of Regent of Southwest Sumba Markus Dairo Talu

Source: (Winters Jaffrey, 2011)

In the Indonesian context, democracy tends to lead to patronage relations and clientelistic strategies at both local and national levels (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). Political kinship, political clans, and political dynasties significantly affect the election of women as legislative members at the local level, while clientelism assists in material transactions and support mobilization. Consequently, representation for women without access, social capital, and economic capital becomes expensive and increasingly difficult to achieve in becoming legislative members.

The 30% affirmative action policy for women's representation in the list of legislative candidate members only serves as a means for women from political dynasties to validate their group's interests, even though they have various reasons for running as legislative members.

The typology of the political paths that women take involves seizing power "through the medium" of male relatives. Women who have political careers "formed from the beginning by their choices, attributes, and efforts, based on their strong sense of political efficacy." Women politicians who seize power through familial ties belong to the elite path, where their presence and participation rely on the

rooted power. The second group comprises grassroots women politicians who often bring specific local issues into each campaign and socialization (Effendi, 2018). Lastly, the third group, which is slowly forming, diverse, residual, and, in some ways, reflective of novelty, is the middle path. These individuals intentionally or inadvertently entered politics for various reasons (Choi, 2019).

Indonesia's political system does not solely depend on conglomerates or elites having significant wealth. Instead, it is the social relationships and, more importantly, the dominant social capital relationships that support the political system. This situation allows conglomerates to have a more extensive space to sustain and expand their economic networks by using political instruments. Legislative members who own the most prominent wealth, such as land, plantations, properties, and companies, easily accommodate support and mobilize voters. (Winters Jaffrey, 2011) explains that oligarchy is an actor empowered by wealth, the most versatile resource among other forms of power. Wealth is the most versatile in the sense that it can be easily converted into other forms of power. Oligarchy differs from the elite, which uses their influence as a minority based on non-material power resources. The oligarchy and elite categories can sometimes overlap in power.

Political oligarchy has a significant impact on women in the system, often disadvantaging and weakening women's position in society. Oligarchy tends to maintain the existing gender hierarchy and reduce women's opportunities for active participation in politics and influential roles in decision-making (Sihombing, 2018).

Firstly, oligarchy limits women's access to political power, with power centralized in elite groups typically dominated by men. As a result, women have limited access to strategic decision-making positions, and they are often excluded from the circles of power.

Secondly, the lack of women's representation in political institutions means that women's interests are not accommodated, such as gender equality issues and discrimination that hinder women's political participation. Consequently, women's interests are neglected in the decision-making process.

Thirdly, gender stereotypes and discrimination act as barriers to women's political participation within male-dominated environments. Women are often labeled as incompetent and unsuitable for political roles, resulting in gender discrimination (Haliim, 2020).

Fourthly, women often lack the financial resources to participate in political activities, and fifthly, imbalances in women's roles within families and society hinder their participation.

Oligarchy is highly detrimental to women, reducing their opportunities to raise important issues for women. Efforts to increase gender awareness in politics and participate in policy-making processes are essential.

Women play a crucial role in changing the dynamics of political oligarchy in various ways that promote gender equality, inclusivity, and active participation in political decision-making (Munggaran, 2023).

First, women can create strong political networks and alliances. In the context of oligarchy, dominant elite groups often maintain their control through existing networks. Women can initiate the formation of political alliances that encourage women's participation in politics. In this way, they can challenge the oligarchy's hegemony by supporting competent women candidates who are committed to advocating for gender-related issues.

Second, women can act as change agents from within the political system. By being part of political parties or legislative bodies, women can advocate for policies that support women's rights and gender

equality. They can also take on influential policymaking roles, change public perception, and encourage political parties to recognize the importance of women's participation in politics.

Third, women can leverage social media and information technology to raise awareness about gender issues and expose existing gender inequalities in politics. By using online platforms, women can highlight their roles and contributions in politics and mobilize public support for a more inclusive agenda.

Fourth, women can be inspirational and integrity-driven leaders. In the context of political oligarchy, where ethics and morals are often sidelined, women who uphold values of honesty and the public interest can bring about positive change. They can serve as role models and encourage a cleaner and more ethical political culture.

Fifth, women can advocate for policies that support women's and family welfare, such as better access to reproductive health services, education, and employment. By promoting the implementation of such policies, women can help create an environment that is more supportive of women's political participation.

Sixth, political education and training can help women develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in politics. These training programs can help overcome the barriers that women often face, such as limited access to political and financial resources.

Seventh, women can mobilize voters and raise political awareness among the public. They can become change agents who rally public support for female candidates and gender-related issues.

In changing the dynamics of political oligarchy, women can play a crucial role as change agents who promote inclusivity, gender equality, and integrity in politics. Through collaborative and persistent efforts, women can be key players in creating a more just and equitable political

environment that reflects the diversity and interests of the entire society.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Oligarchy has played a significant role in politics. The concentration of political power in the hands of a few individuals or small groups affects the role of women in politics. Some political families have dominated the political scene for decades, holding important positions such as regents, mayors, or legislative members, creating a center of power limited to a small group that influences decision-making. In the economic context, cases of land, property, and plantation ownership by a few individuals or families allow them to control market prices and the availability of goods.

Oligarchy is often associated with male dominance, making the role of women in oligarchy an important aspect to understand. Using a feminist theory framework with an intersectionality approach, the role and influence of women in oligarchy are affected by various factors, including social class, race, sexual orientation, and more. Women from higher social classes often find it easier to engage in oligarchy due to their access to education, economy, and family welfare. Meanwhile, women from lower economic classes face economic inequality and family responsibilities that limit their participation.

Women's participation in politics is crucial for changing the dynamics of oligarchy. Figures like Angela Merkel (Gidengil & Everitt, 2019) and Jacinda Ardern (Hayward, 2021) have played key roles in political decision-making in their countries, both as parliamentarians and leaders. However, women involved in politics often face dilemmas and negative stereotypes, such as the perception that they 'sacrifice' their personal and family lives.

Society holds different expectations for men and women, both in households and in political decision-making. To address gender inequality and achieve gender equality, cultural change, awareness of gender bias, and strong support for women's rights are necessary. Feminist movements play a critical role in this effort. Patronage and clientelism relations influence the electability of women as legislators. Sometimes, elected women come from political dynasties, relying on family connections, or from political paths focusing on local issues. Women's success in politics depends not only on the 30% quota but also on their ability and commitment to lead and represent their communities. This forms a crucial foundation for further studies on the role of women in decision-making.

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