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Patriarchal Culture and the PKB Party's Strategy in Advocating for Female Candidates in the East Java Regional Election

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of patriarchal culture on the strategy of the National Awakening Party (PKB) in promoting women's involvement in political contestation, particularly in the Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in East Java Province. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this research provides an in-depth depiction of how patriarchal cultural structures affect the internal dynamics of the party and the strategies implemented to encourage women's participation. Data collection was conducted through literature studies, obtained from related research including journals, articles, and online news to support the analysis. The findings reveal that patriarchal culture has become both a cultural and structural barrier that limits women's political mobility, in both the nomination phase and the electoral process. PKB has responded to these challenges through various strategies, such as implementing gender quotas, conducting female cadre training, collaborating with women's religious organizations, and strengthening gender-inclusive political communication. However, the implementation of these strategies has not yet been fully effective due to persistent cultural resistance at the local level, limited internal structural support, and public perceptions biased against female leadership. Therefore, there is a need for more systematic and sustainable strategic efforts to ensure that women's political participation is not merely symbolic but genuinely reflects a transformative, inclusive, and equitable democracy at the local level

Keyword: Patriarchy, Political Strategy, Women's Involvement, Regional Elections

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh budaya patriarki terhadap strategi Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) dalam memperjuangkan keterlibatan perempuan dalam kontestasi politik, khususnya dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah (Pilkada) di Provinsi Jawa Timur.Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini menggambarkan secara mendalam bagaimana struktur budaya yang patriarkis memengaruhi dinamika internal partai serta strategi yang dijalankan untuk mendorong partisipasi perempuan. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi literatur, yang diperoleh dari penelitian-penelitian serupa berupa jurnal, artikel, maupun berita online guna menunjang penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa budaya patriarki telah menjadi hambatan kultural dan struktural yang membatasi ruang gerak perempuan dalam politik, baik dalam tahap pencalonan maupun proses pemenangan. PKB merespons tantangan ini melalui berbagai strategi, seperti penerapan kuota perempuan, pelatihan kaderisasi perempuan, kolaborasi dengan organisasi keagamaan perempuan, dan penguatan komunikasi politik yang pro-gender. Meski demikian, implementasi strategi tersebut belum sepenuhnya efektif karena masih terdapat resistensi budaya di level lokal, minimnya dukungan struktural internal, serta persepsi publik yang bias terhadap kepemimpinan perempuan. Oleh karena itu, dibutuhkan upaya penguatan strategi yang lebih sistemik dan berkelanjutan agar partisipasi politik perempuan tidak hanya bersifat simbolik, tetapi benar-benar mencerminkan transformasi demokrasi yang inklusif dan setara di tingkat lokal.

Kata Kunci: Patriarki, Strategi Politik, Keterlibatan Perempuan, Pilkada

1. Introduction

Many politicians and civil society activists have drawn attention to the role of women in politics. The representation of women in the political sphere is one of the key indicators for examining and assessing the implementation of democratic principles in Indonesia (Niron & Seda, 2020). Democracy is an essential tool for protecting the human rights of every citizen regardless of religion, race, class, or other legally protected identities. Democracy also provides everyone with space, access, control, and fair opportunities to participate actively and critically in government and political governance at both local and national levels. Political organizations worldwide have seen increased female participation in elections (Adriani & Maulia, 2024). The aim is to enhance women's electoral participation. The government has adopted laws to increase the role of women in politics, showing its commitment.

However, patriarchal culture remains a "barrier wall" for women to engage in the political realm, especially in Indonesia. This aligns with the view that women in Indonesia still have low political involvement, even though the government has issued special policies to help women become more politically active. The main factor behind this issue is the persistent patriarchal political culture, which hinders women from entering politics because they are associated with masculine roles and perceived as lacking leadership abilities. Nevertheless, patriarchal culture has begun to fade in the modern era, as women are no longer underestimated in politics, and many women are striving to become politicians (Sarinastiti & Fatimah, 2019).

The increasing representation of women in elections is a sign of a healthier democracy. Political parties also play a crucial role in reducing democratic shortcomings or male dominance in elections. Women's involvement in politics not only reflects gender equality principles but also ensures that public policies represent the interests of the entire population (Jorjiana, 2024). In Indonesia, the constitution has guaranteed women's political rights through various regulations, including quotas for women's representation in political parties and parliament.

A study written by Fredik Lambertus Kollo in his 2017 journal titled Patriarchal Culture and Women's Participation in Politics states that patriarchal culture still clings to society. Patriarchal traditions always prioritize or position men at the top compared to women. Because of this, women often feel less acknowledged and therefore lack the confidence to step into or advance in the political arena.

Another study by A. Maria et al., written in 2018 titled Women's Participation in Political Parties and Simultaneous Elections, explains that the General Elections for DPR, DPD, and DPRD affirm that women's representation must be at least 30 percent. A classic reason often blamed for the lag in women's political involvement is patriarchal culture, where women are considered more suitable for domestic (private) roles, while men handle public affairs.

According to Herinto Sidik, in his research titled Challenges and Opportunities for Women in Politics in a Patriarchal Society (Iriansyah, 2017), in countries like Indonesia that uphold patriarchal values, women's chances of becoming politicians are relatively limited due to public perceptions of gender role divisions, which tend to restrict women's roles to household matters. Article 28H, paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution states: "Every person shall have the right to receive facilities and special treatment to obtain equal opportunities and benefits to achieve equality and justice."

According to Suhenty (2022) study on The Relevance of Women's Political Participation and Their Electability in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Elections, she discusses the significance of increased female voter participation and its relevance to the electability of women in regional elections.

In this context, one of the responsibilities of political parties is to select candidates, determine how many women are nominated, and organize electoral districts that benefit women candidates such is the case with the National Awakening Party (PKB), an Islamic-based party with deep roots in the Nahdliyyin community (Gunawan et al., 2024). Born from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), PKB ideologically upholds nationalism, moderate Islam, and inclusive values.

To improve women's political representation in regional elections, PKB will implement gender quota policies in the electoral system. Women's political representation can increase through such quotas (Maria et al., 2018). The rise in the number of women participating in East Java's 2024 regional elections indicates a growing gender responsiveness among political parties. The 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election marked a historic moment with three prominent female figures running as gubernatorial candidates: Khofifah Indar Parawansa, Luluk Nur Hamidah, and Tri Rismaharini. Khofifah is making her fourth bid in this race, while Luluk and Risma are making their debut appearances in the East Java regional election (Khotimah, 2024).

Candidates in winning or losing districts are determined by the dominant political parties, and their ranking on the ballot significantly affects their chances. Political parties play a pivotal role in allowing candidates to emerge as leaders and are essential in including or excluding women and other underrepresented

groups. This research is crucial, especially as women's political representation has increased in East Java's regional elections. PKB's approach to supporting female contestants in the 2024 East Java election is one phenomenon that this study will investigate.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach, with data analyzed using descriptive analysis. This method is chosen because it aligns with the research objective, which is to describe and gain an in-depth understanding of the influence of patriarchal culture on the strategy of the National Awakening Party (PKB) in advocating for women's involvement in political contests, particularly in the Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in East Java Province. Qualitative research is naturalistic in nature, meaning it investigates the subject in its actual condition, without manipulation by the researcher, and aims to reveal meanings, processes, and social dynamics occurring within a specific context.

The data collection method is carried out through library research, such as journals, books, e-proceedings, and news articles that discuss deconstruction, identity politics, and nationalistic preaching. The information sources in this research are derived from secondary data. These secondary data include journals, articles, books, e-proceedings, online articles, and other written documents relevant to the study, which are needed to support the relevance of the research. The written documents, online articles, and other secondary sources will later be analyzed through data analysis and then synthesized into conclusions. Data from different sources will be compared to provide accurate data analysis for this research.

3. Result and Discussion

Political parties are the main actors in efforts to increase women's political representation in regional elections (Pilkada), as they are responsible for the appointment, selection, and nomination of candidates. Political parties play a crucial role in promoting women's political representation in Pilkada. If women are unable to be elected, political parties can either include or exclude women and other underrepresented groups. Political party organizations manage the recruitment, selection, and nomination of female candidates through centralized or decentralized nomination processes (Marlina, 2018). Political parties can control male dominance among election candidates through this power. The National Awakening Party (PKB) must use various approaches to improve women's political representation in elections.

PKB's Political Strategy in Promoting Women's Participation in East Java's Regional Election

In Indonesia's political landscape, the involvement of women in politics has become a central issue that has garnered widespread attention. Although there has been an increase in women's political participation, structural and cultural challenges remain significant barriers. The National Awakening Party (PKB), a political party with a strong base in East Java, has demonstrated its commitment to promoting women's involvement in politics, particularly in the context of the Regional Head Election (Pilkada). Women's participation in East Java's Pilkada shows significant progress.

Table 1. DPR Candidates from East Java Electoral Districts – PKB 2024

Electoral District	Male	Female
East Java I	6	4
East Java II	5	2
East Java III	4	3
East Java IV	6	2
East Java V	6	2
East Java VI	5	4
East Java VII	6	2
East Java VIII	7	3
East Java IX	2	4
East Java X	3	3
East Java XI	6	2
Total	**56 (64.4%)**	**31 (35.6%)**

Source: *https://infopemilu.kpu.go.id/Pemilu/dcs_dpr* (2024)

Based on Table 1 regarding DPR candidates from East Java electoral districts in 2024, out of 87 total candidates, 31 are women (35.6%), while 56 are men (64.4%). Although women are still outnumbered, their significant presence indicates that more women are stepping forward and competing in the political arena, even though they are often still underestimated. This phenomenon signifies progress in gender representation and a renewed spirit and awareness among women to actively engage as decision-makers at the legislative level, particularly in East Java.

The significant involvement of women in East Java's Pilkada is undoubtedly the result of political strategies, especially those of PKB, in promoting female participation in the 2024 regional elections. PKB's political strategy in encouraging women's participation reflects the party's efforts to respond to the persistent patriarchal culture in society. The role of female elites within political parties is crucial, as it influences party policies related to nominating female candidates under the proportional representation system (Deviani & Subono, 2022).

The nomination of female cadres in Pilkada clearly shows the importance of women's participation in political parties (Ikhsan, 2023). The National Awakening Party (PKB) demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing women's political participation by nominating Luluk Nur Hamidah as a gubernatorial candidate in the 2024 East Java Pilkada (Masrafi, 2024). This decision reflects PKB's progressive step to break the dominance of patriarchal culture that has long hindered women's political participation. Luluk, known as a vocal legislator who champions the people's aspirations in the Indonesian House of Representatives, was chosen for her ability to represent a spirit of change and fresh leadership in East Java.

Table 2. Luluk's Nomination in the Context of East Java Pilkada 2024

Aspect	Description
Context of East Java Pilkada 2024	Dominated by female candidates such as Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Tri Rismaharini
PKB's Candidate	Luluk – a vocal, experienced, and high-integrity legislator
Strategic Consideration	Utilizing the political momentum of female dominance in the election
PKB's Political Goal	To reaffirm the party's commitment to female leadership
Symbolic Meaning	Supporting gender equality and breaking patriarchal dominance in local politics
Added Value for PKB	Portraying the party as progressive and responsive to socio-political dynamics
Expected Impact	Increasing electability, strengthening support from women and young voters

Source: Compiled by the author

Luluk's nomination is also based on the consideration that the 2024 East Java Pilkada is dominated by female candidates, such as Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Tri Rismaharini. PKB sees this momentum as an opportunity to assert its stance in supporting female leadership that is both experienced and full of integrity. This step is not only strategic but also symbolic in the effort to promote gender equality in local politics (Tim RPK, 2024).

Promoting equality refers to a set of actions and activities that help women compete in political recruitment processes. To ensure equality, two things may be necessary: increasing the number or proportion of female parliamentarians, or enhancing the social attributes women need to become legislators (Lestari et al., 2019). Thanks to equality guarantees, demand for female representation has indirectly increased as political parties respond to new expectations.

Strengthening female political education and cadre development is also a key long-term strategy for PKB. Through training and political education programs, PKB aims to equip its female cadres with the knowledge and skills needed for active participation in politics. This includes understanding the political system, campaign strategies, and relevant public policy issues.

This female cadre development strategy aims to create an environment that supports women's political participation and ensures they have equal access to leadership opportunities within the party. Thus, PKB is working to build a strong base of female cadres who are ready to take on strategic roles in both local and national politics.

Gender-responsive campaign strategies are also recognized as crucial in facing competitive political contests. For example, the campaign by the Luluk–Lukmanul ticket emphasized inclusive approaches and addressed the needs and aspirations of women in East Java (Masrafi, 2024). Issues such as violence against women, child marriage, and women's economic empowerment were central to their campaign. By raising these

issues, PKB aims to attract female voters and demonstrate its commitment to gender equality. This strategy also reflects the party's effort to respond to patriarchal cultural challenges in a constructive and progressive way.

Collaboration with women's organizations and civil society is another key strategy. PKB has built partnerships with women's groups and civil society organizations to strengthen support for women's political involvement. Through this collaboration, PKB can receive input and backing in formulating more effective policies and strategies to encourage female participation. This cooperation also allows PKB to expand its campaign reach and raise public awareness about the importance of women's involvement in politics. By integrating diverse perspectives and experiences, PKB can develop a more holistic and inclusive approach. It also shows that tackling patriarchal culture requires cross-sector cooperation and active participation from all elements of society.

Evaluating and reinforcing the party's commitment to gender equality is part of PKB's broader political strategy. The party evaluates its internal policies and practices to ensure that gender equality principles are consistently implemented. This includes reviewing recruitment processes, cadre placement, and decision-making within the party structure. Through such evaluations, PKB aims to identify and overcome barriers that may hinder women's political participation. The party's commitment is also evident through public statements and actions by party leaders. For example, PKB Chairman Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar has emphasized that women are a vital factor in politics and development, stressing the importance of equal participation between men and women in political processes.

Through these strategies, PKB demonstrates a systematic and sustained effort to promote women's involvement in politics. Although patriarchal culture remains a challenge, the steps taken by PKB reflect its commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable political environment. The success of this strategy depends not only on the party's internal efforts but also on the support and active participation of the wider society in achieving gender equality in politics.

Forms of Cultural Resistance Faced by Women in the Political Arena

In the ongoing journey of Indonesia's democratic development, women's involvement in politics continues to face numerous challenges. Although laws and electoral regulations have promoted female representation, the reality on the ground shows that women still encounter various cultural barriers rooted in a deeply entrenched patriarchal culture. Patriarchy is a social system that places men at the center of power—within families, communities, and formal institutions such as political parties and government. This system has shaped public perceptions of women's roles and capacities, including in politics. In this context, women not only face structural challenges but must also deal with various forms of cultural resistance, which are often invisible but have a significant impact on their participation and roles in the political arena.

Gender stereotypes and social stigma, One of the most fundamental forms of cultural resistance faced by women in politics is gender stereotyping, which reduces women's roles to the domestic sphere. Women are often perceived as unfit or unsuitable to lead due to the belief that they are emotional, weak, and irrational. These perceptions are reinforced by rigid social norms and gender constructions that position men as natural leaders and women as followers or supporters. In many cases, women who dare to run for office or take public leadership roles face social stigma, are considered to be "going against their nature," and are even pressured by their families and communities. These stereotypes not only undermine women's confidence to enter politics but also lead voters to doubt their ability to lead effectively.

Symbolic violence and political sexism, another form of cultural resistance that hinders women's political participation is symbolic violence and subtle forms of sexism. This includes the use of language, jokes, or narratives that demean women and associate leadership with masculinity. In political meetings or party discussions, women are often not given equal speaking opportunities, and their opinions are considered less valuable than those of men. Even in the nomination process, women are sometimes included merely to fulfill the 30% quota without being given real chances to win. Such sexist practices create an unwelcoming political environment for women and foster feelings of insecurity and discomfort in political engagement.

Social pressure and the double burden, women entering politics also face social pressures due to the double burden they carry. On one hand, they are expected to perform public duties as politicians or officials, while on the other, they are still expected to fulfill domestic responsibilities as wives, mothers, and homemakers. These dual expectations often leave women caught between personal and public responsibilities. Many female politicians eventually resign or cannot fully carry out their political roles due to family demands that do not support their political careers. The cultural notion that a woman's primary duty lies in the home is a form of resistance that greatly affects the sustainability of women's political careers.

Lack of internal party support, cultural resistance against women is also evident within the structure and organizational culture of political parties. Many political parties, including those in East Java, still lack gender-inclusive recruitment and cadre development systems. Women often struggle to access political information, campaign funding, and support networks necessary to run for office. Even within parties, many political elites view women's participation as a mere formality to meet quotas. This demonstrates that resistance to women comes not only from broader society but also from within the political structures that should be empowering them. Yet internal party support is critical in building women's confidence and political capacity.

Mass media plays an important role in shaping public opinion and the image of politicians. Unfortunately, the media often becomes a channel for reproducing cultural resistance against women. In many reports, female politicians are more often covered for their appearance, fashion choices, or personal lives rather than their achievements or political ideas. Such coverage not only trivializes the role of women in politics but also reinforces the perception that female politicians are "exceptions" or "outliers" in a male-dominated political world. This media bias narrows the space for women to demonstrate their competencies objectively and professionally.

In some regions, including parts of East Java, resistance to women in politics is strengthened by conservative religious interpretations. Women are considered unfit to be public leaders based on narrowly interpreted religious doctrines. In such contexts, cultural resistance takes the form of religious legitimacy used to oppose the candidacy of women as regional leaders. Although not all communities or religious leaders hold these views, the social influence of conservative groups can shape public perceptions and harm women's chances in political contests. In such situations, female politicians must not only prove their leadership capabilities but also confront religious narratives that can stigmatize and limit their political movements.

The Effectiveness and Limitations of PKB's Strategies in Responding to Patriarchal Challenges

In the complex dynamics of Indonesian politics, filled with social and cultural challenges, women's participation in political contests continues to face various obstacles stemming from deeply rooted patriarchal structures. Patriarchal culture is not only present in the form of unwritten rules but also manifests in mindsets, values, and social systems that limit women's space, including in the political sphere. Amidst these challenges, the National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa/PKB), as an Islamic-based political party with a strong mass base in East Java, has attempted to formulate and implement several strategies to encourage women's political participation, particularly in regional elections (Pilkada). However, the effectiveness of these strategies is not without limitations, both structurally and culturally. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis is needed to assess how effective these strategies are in confronting patriarchal challenges, as well as to identify their limitations to inform future evaluation and improvement.

Implementation of female quotas in candidacy, one of PKB's main strategies is the application of a 30 percent quota for women in the list of legislative candidates and the promotion of female candidacy in Pilkada. Normatively, this reflects the party's commitment to responding to patriarchal challenges by providing formal space for women. This strategy has been fairly effective in encouraging women's initial participation in the political arena by opening access that was previously very limited. However, its effectiveness is still mostly limited to the level of quantitative representation. Many of the women nominated do not receive equal support in terms of political funding, leadership training, or campaign networks. As a result, representation often remains symbolic and does not translate into actual political influence. In many cases, women are included merely to fill the list, not as main candidates the party actively supports to win.

Training and capacity building for female cadres, PKB also seeks to provide political training and capacity building for female cadres through autonomous organizations such as Muslimat NU and Fatayat NU, which serve as strategic partners. These training programs include political education, campaign management, and gender awareness. This strategy has been relatively successful in building confidence and knowledge among female cadres, equipping them to compete in politics. However, its effectiveness is often limited by narrow coverage and inconsistent continuity. The training only reaches a small portion of women and does not always continue with sustained mentoring or guidance. Additionally, disparities in access to information and technology hinder women in remote areas from fully participating in these capacity-building efforts.

Coalitions with women's religious organizations, as a party ideologically rooted in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), PKB has significant potential to collaborate with women's religious organizations like Muslimat NU and Fatayat NU to promote progressive religious narratives that support women's roles in politics. This coalition strategy is effective in reducing resistance from conservative groups as it is carried out through cultural and religious approaches that are more socially acceptable. It also offers a way to challenge patriarchal religious interpretations and replace them with inclusive Islamic perspectives on women's leadership.

However, limitations include internal fragmentation within these religious organizations and the continued presence of clerics or religious leaders who do not fully support women's political involvement. This suggests that such collaboration requires continuous dialogue and inclusive religious education.

Political communication strategies and media framing, PKB also employs political communication strategies by featuring female cadres in mainstream and social media to reshape the image of women in politics as competent and worthy leaders. Some female PKB politicians such as Ida Fauziah and Hanif Dhakiri have been highlighted as examples of successful female political cadre development. This strategy has been moderately effective in shaping more positive public opinion about women's leadership. However, a significant limitation lies in the dominance of gender-biased mainstream media, which tends to focus more on personal aspects than women's political substance. Sexist and unfair media framing remains a major obstacle to PKB's communication efforts. Moreover, not all female cadres receive equal communication support, so the positive image remains concentrated among a few elite women rather than being spread across the broader female cadre base.

Uneven internal party commitment at the institutional level, PKB has demonstrated formal commitment to gender issues by establishing a women's wing and drafting internal regulations supporting women's representation. However, the implementation of this commitment remains elitist and uneven across all levels of the party, particularly at the branch and grassroots levels. Resistance is still found among local party leaders who see gender issues as a political burden or a short-term interest. This inconsistency poses a serious challenge because strategies cannot be effectively executed without full support from the party structure. This means that the success of strategies to address patriarchy depends greatly on internal consistency, active involvement of all party components, and robust monitoring of pro-women policy implementation.

4. Conclusion

Patriarchal culture has a significant influence on the strategy of the National Awakening Party (PKB) in promoting women's involvement in political contests, particularly in the Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in East Java. Deeply rooted in society through social values, gender constructions, and conservative religious interpretations, patriarchal culture has created structural and cultural challenges that hinder women from emerging as key political actors. In response to this reality, PKB has formulated various strategies, such as implementing gender quotas, conducting female cadre training, collaborating with women's religious organizations, and launching gender-friendly public communication campaigns. These strategies have shown effectiveness in opening up spaces for participation and increasing women's formal representation.

However, the implementation of these strategies still faces several limitations, such as weak structural support within the party, persistent cultural resistance at the local level, and media dominance that does not fully support the representation of women. Therefore, to realize more substantive female involvement in local politics, PKB must strengthen its strategies holistically starting from continuous cadre development, strengthening women's networks, to fostering cultural awareness within the party and the broader society. In this way, women's political participation will not merely serve as a symbolic fulfillment of quotas, but will truly become part of an inclusive and equitable democratic transformation.

5. Acknowledgements

6. Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest. This research was conducted independently and objectively, with no financial, political, or personal relationships that could have inappropriately influenced the findings or interpretation presented in this study.

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