

Women's Involvement in Politics According to Islamic Law

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Abstract

The development of new media, particularly social media, has brought significant changes to modern human life, including in the political sphere. Social media serves not only as a means of communication but also as a strategic platform for women to enhance their political participation. In Indonesia, women's political rights have been guaranteed through various conventions and regulations; however, women's representation in political institutions continues to face structural, cultural, and historical obstacles. Women's political participation is essential to the decision-making process, both directly and indirectly, as gender bias in public policy remains prevalent. From an Islamic perspective, women's political participation has a strong foundation, although scholars differ regarding the limits of such involvement. This study examines the evolution of women's political participation, its inhibiting factors, and the Islamic legal arguments concerning women's involvement in politics. The findings indicate that increasing women's political participation requires affirmative policy support, the dissemination of political education, and the use of social media as an effective empowerment tool.

Keywords: women's engagement; politics; islamic law

Introduction

Almost all aspects of modern human life are influenced by new media, especially social media (Samsudin & Putri, 2023). It is therefore unsurprising that social media is regarded as one of the most significant media revolutions since the invention of the printing press. The extensive reach of social media makes it easy to use for various purposes, ranging from personal records and merchandise promotion to information dissemination, self-image building, and political communication (Nur Fitria, 2023). One of the pioneering examples of using social media for political communication is the successful election campaign of Barack Obama, who was elected President of the United States in 2008 (Thumim, 2015).

Politics is the process by which power is distributed and shared in society, including decision-making processes, particularly at the state level (Bölükbaş, 2025; Omodan, 2022). Indonesia has ratified the convention on civil and political rights, granting women two fundamental democratic rights: the right to vote and the right to run for office (Guterres & Dewi, 2025).

The absence of women's representation in the legislature constitutes a violation of women's basic democratic rights (Bölükbaş, 2025; Omodan, 2022). These rights include the right to express opinions, the right to be nominated for membership in representative bodies, the right to be nominated for president, and other rights to assemble and voice opinions on political issues (Ja'far, 1998).

Women's political participation refers to the voluntary activities of women who are members of the political women's caucus community (Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019). This caucus comprises various elements, including women activists, political observers, lecturers, women working in parliament, cadres of women's political parties, and others, all of whom take part in the process of electing rulers, either directly or indirectly,

and in shaping general policies. According to Myron Wiener, voluntary participation implies an absence of coercion; this principle applies to the political participation of women as carried out by the communities that support them. Fundamentally, this participation is an effort to explore and encourage women's potential (Das, 2024, 2025).

In general, women's participation is needed in all areas of life, especially in politics, because women have both the right and the obligation to participate actively. This is because gender-biased policies have created a gap between men and women, requiring a sustained and comprehensive struggle from all women across all fronts, particularly in the political domain.

As an independent and sovereign country, Indonesia has committed to providing equal rights for every citizen, both women and men, in national and international life without exception. Women's political rights have been established through law and ratified by various conventions. Thus, women's involvement in politics emphasizes that both genders, as members of society, influence and depend on each other.

In Islamic discourse, politics is simply defined as a way of regulating communal affairs to achieve prosperity in this world and the hereafter. Hence, politics in this sense is very broad, appearing in private and public environments, structural and cultural settings, and communal contexts. Today, however, the term politics has narrowed to practical or structural politics, where power is contested for the interests of individuals or specific groups, rather than for the interests of society as a whole and its long-term future. Religious reasons and rational thought form the basis of classical Islamic political discourse for electing leaders (Muhammad, 2007).

In Islam, women are not distinguished from men in political participation. Nevertheless, Islamic jurists hold two opinions on women's political participation: first, that women's political rights are prohibited; second, that women's political rights are permitted due to the importance of equalizing the rights of men and women in politics (Fauzi, 2002).

Method

The research method used in this study is an analytical method. The description of the method is presented in this section. Minor and non-essential tools commonly found in laboratories (e.g., scissors, measuring cups, pencils) do not need to be listed; only the main equipment or primary tools used for analysis and/or characterization should be mentioned, including their type and accuracy. The research location, number of respondents, methods for processing observations, interviews, or questionnaires, and measurement of performance indicators must be described completely. Common methods need not be described in detail; it is sufficient to refer to a reference book. The experimental procedure should be written in narrative sentence form, not as a series of commands.

Results and Discussion

Women's Empowerment through the Media

Women's empowerment through mass media is a process that focuses on strengthening women's political participation and encouraging their involvement in political life. Mass media plays an important role in creating an inclusive environment and encouraging women to enter the political arena. This section discusses how mass media can help strengthen women's political participation by promoting women's aspirations, facilitating political engagement, and providing positive representations of women in the public sphere, namely:

1. Mass media can promote women's aspirations and elevate their stories. In many cases, women face obstacles or stereotypes that can hinder their political participation. Through mass media, the stories of successful women in politics can be promoted to inspire other women and provide positive examples. Coverage of women's success in politics can also encourage women to take active roles, feel valued, and believe that they too can achieve similar success.
2. Mass media can encourage women's political involvement by providing relevant information and easy access to political participation. Mass media can provide information about women's political rights, the electoral process, and political issues that affect women's lives. Careful coverage of training programs or opportunities to participate in politics can also inspire women to get involved and take advantage of these opportunities.
3. Mass media can provide positive representations of women in the public sphere, including politics. This is important because positive representation can help change public perceptions of women in politics. Through balanced coverage, mass media can encourage recognition of women's contributions to politics and accelerate more inclusive social change.

Challenges in Using Mass Media

The challenges women face in using mass media to participate in politics can be significant obstacles in their struggle to achieve greater gender equality and social justice. One such challenge is online harassment, where women are often subjected to harassment, threats, and sexual oppression in online spaces. Online harassment can intimidate women and hinder their participation in political discussions in the mass media. As a result, women may feel prevented from expressing their views and actively participating in political debates. Another challenge faced by women is the persistence of gender stereotypes in mass media. Mass media often reinforces male-dominated views of women's roles in politics, for example, portraying women as incompetent, emotional, or unfit to be political leaders. These stereotypes can affect perceptions and expectations of women in politics and discourage women from entering politics and participating actively.

In addition, barriers to access to technology are an important challenge for women in using mass media to participate in politics. Although technology continues to evolve, there is still a digital divide that affects women. Some women may not have adequate access to devices such as smartphones or computers, or may not have stable or affordable internet access. This gap can prevent women from leveraging mass media and actively participating in online political discussions. A concrete example of this challenge can be found in a journal titled *Women's Political Participation and Challenges in Media Technology Era: An Analysis* by Singh (2018). The journal presents findings from research conducted in India, highlighting the specific challenges faced by women in using mass media for political participation. The study shows that online harassment targeting women seriously hinders their political participation and affects their courage to voice their opinions.

In the face of these challenges, it is important to take actions aimed at reducing online harassment, changing gender-stereotypical narratives in mass media, and ensuring fairer access to technology. Measures such as strengthening legal protections against online harassment, developing awareness campaigns to counter gender stereotypes, and expanding access and digital literacy for women can help create a more inclusive and empowering mass media environment for women.

It is important to remember that the role of women in politics is essential for achieving gender justice and equality. Therefore, it is important to continue to advocate for women's political participation and create an environment where they can freely use mass media and feel supported to actively participate in political debates.

The Development of Women's Role in Politics

The development of women's role in politics cannot be separated from Indonesia's ratification of the convention on civil and political rights, which guarantees two fundamental democratic rights for women: the right to vote and the right to stand for election. One indicator of this development is the increasing number of women in the legislature. The low level of women's representation in the legislature is a violation of women's fundamental democratic rights.

Furthermore, Ja'far (1998) stated that women's political rights are individual participation in the formation of public opinion. These rights, especially in the political field, include the right to express opinions, the right to be nominated as a member of representative bodies, and the right to be nominated for president and other matters concerning fellowship and the expression of opinions related to politics. However, there are restrictions on women's political rights, as men control the entire life of women (including political decision-making about reproduction, the economy, and women's employment). Men also exercise individual control over women's economic value in marriage (Kymlicka, 2002). Such restrictions arise as a result of gender-biased interpretations of religious texts.

So far, men have created situations and norms and defined the role of women as responsible for raising children and other domestic duties. This has led to inequality

between men and women, where women hold no position in society and some important positions in society are occupied by men. Women are also economically dependent on men and on the resources that men have, so women do not have autonomy over themselves. As part of the citizenry, women have the right to gain access to and participate in (political) power and decision-making, including the right to vote and be elected, or hold important positions at all levels of government. This right is guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Articles 27 and 28; Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, with a special chapter on Women's Rights; and is reinforced by the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women (ratified by Law No. 68 of 1958 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on Political Rights for Women), and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (ratified by Law Number 7 of 1984 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women).

Women need to actualize themselves by participating in political institutions (legislative) as well as in public life. Women need to occupy positions in political institutions to be directly involved in the decision-making process, because the policies and programs that are prepared will also apply to women. All public policies issued by political institutions will eventually affect all aspects of the lives of all citizens, both men and women. In addition, women, who make up more than half of Indonesia's population, also have the right to have their voices heard and benefit from the development process. Women have the same rights as men, but women's participation in political activities and their opportunities and ability to participate in decision-making are increasing very slowly. This can be seen from the number of women sitting in legislative, executive, and judicial institutions.

Nationally, women's representation in parliament ranks 89th out of 189 countries (Guidelines for Action Plan for Increasing Women's Political Participation, 2006). The results of the 2004 election placed 65 women (11.82%) in the House of Representatives, only a slight increase compared to the previous election (the 1999 election resulted in 44 women sitting in the House of Representatives, or around 8.9%) (Guidelines for Action Plan for Increasing Women's Political Participation, 2006). Meanwhile, in the Regional Representative Council (DPD), the number of women is somewhat larger, reaching 29 people (21.09%) (Wicaksono, 2004). At the regional level, women's political participation has also not shown significant progress, even though juridically women have the same political rights as men. Article 58 of Law Number 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government provides equal opportunities for men and women to become candidates for regional heads and deputy regional heads. However, to date, out of 33 provinces in Indonesia, only one province (Banten) is led by a woman. Another province, Central Java, recently appointed a woman as its deputy governor. Meanwhile, in various other provinces, women have only been able to reach the highest position as regents or deputy regents. The same applies to women's representation in regional people's representative institutions (DPRD), both at the

provincial and regency/city levels. At the provincial level, out of 1,850 DPRD members, 188 are women (10%) and 1,662 are men (90%); while at the regency/city level, out of 13,125 DPRD members, 1,090 are women (8%) and 12,046 are men (92%).

Based on this data, only two provinces have a fairly high number of female representation in the DPRD, namely Gorontalo and North Sulawesi. In several provinces, women's representation in the Provincial DPRD is even less than 4%, including Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, Bali, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, and East Kalimantan. Although not directly related, the lack of women in the legislature will in turn affect every decision-making process carried out by the institution and its outcomes. Indirectly, women have been harmed by this condition. Moreover, women have special needs that differ from men's, so women's involvement in the legislature with adequate numbers is expected to be more accommodating to women's needs.

Efforts to Optimize the Role of Women in the Political Arena

To increase women's participation in politics, certain steps must be taken to achieve specific goals (Triwanto, 2009). To increase their representation in politics and overcome the various traditions that stand in their way, women must take educational measures, among which are the following:

1. Women must network together, both inside and outside political parties. Through self-organizing activities, women will have a stronger bargaining position. Furthermore, women in these organizations raise awareness of women's rights in their communities, such as in the East Java political women's caucus.
2. Women should intensively lobby political parties to issue clear rules of the game in the candidate selection process, so as to remove all obstacles that directly or indirectly discriminate against women's participation. In addition, women need to urge the state or government to take affirmative action to increase women's representation in the political field, for example through special political education for women, the implementation of a quota election system, amending gender-biased political laws, and so on.
3. Use mass media effectively to campaign on women's issues, needs, and to balance the participation and representation of women and men. Mass media is also very effective in educating and mobilizing voters, and can be used as a means of political education for women, because it can reach remote villages.
4. There is a need to rally the support, commitment, and trust of men and all parties for women who will run for political party, legislative, or executive positions; and e) There is a need for political training methods for female candidates that can truly improve their knowledge and ability to lead, organize, and implement their political strategies, as well as increase women's confidence.

An Analysis of Islamic Law on Women's Political Participation

Islam places women in a high position. Some discriminatory social institutions of the Jahiliyyah Arabs, which tended to disrespect women, have been successfully corrected. Originally, women were not entitled to inheritance; in fact, women in the Jahiliyyah era were seen as items that could be inherited. This tradition disappeared after Islam was revealed, and women gained an equal position with men.

In the field of politics, many Muslim women participate in practical political activities. During battles, Ummu Aiman and Aisyah were recorded as members of squads helping the wounded and preparing food and drink for the troops. In fact, Aisyah once led troops in the Battle of Jamal.

In later times, when Islamic rule was held by dynastic states, several women were appointed as heads of state, such as Syajarah al-Dur (Egypt), Padisyah Khatun (Mongol dynasty), and Sulthanah Taj al-Alam Safiataddin Shah (Aceh) (Sukri, 2002).

Islam provides opportunities for women involved in political activities; this can be seen in the many verses in the Qur'an that command *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding wrong). This applies to all kinds of activities, including in the political and state fields. Women are also responsible for this (Yanggo, 2001)

Based on this, women in Islam also have the right to participate in politics. The right to engage in politics means the right to be a member of a representative body, and to gain power, such as leading a formal institution, organization, party, or presidency. Women's political rights are certainly related to human rights in general (Janvierna Lusie Putri et al., 2024; Oktaviana, 2022). These human rights are possessed without distinction as to nation, race, religion, or gender, because the basis of these human rights is that human beings have the opportunity to develop according to their talents and ideals (Subhan, 2006).

The political role of women in formal institutions for the Muslim community remains a strongly debated theme. The discussion of women's political rights in Islamic discourse has given rise to two major schools of thought: one that holds that Islam does not recognize women's political rights, and another that recognizes women's political rights as equal to those given to men (Marboe, 2021; Saeed, 2018; Subhan, 2006).

Among the reasons given by the first opinion, which rejects women's political participation, is that political tasks are very heavy and women will not be able to bear them due to their intellect and energy being considered weak. For judicial positions, the majority of scholars give fatwas that women are prohibited from holding such positions, while others impose restrictions (Muhammad, 2007).

The first view is dominated by the views of classical scholars. The views of the classical scholars are now confronted by wide-open aspects of modernity. The openness of space for women to pursue education to the highest level has given rise to their abilities in all matters that were previously claimed to belong only to men. The tendentious perception that women are less rational, more emotional, and less competent in handling domestic and public affairs than men has fallen out of favor and is no longer popular

(Muhammad, 2007). Based on this, today the majority of Muslim scholars tend toward the second opinion, which allows women to participate in politics.

So far, the perception that limits women's political rights cannot be separated from the influence of value systems and norms, political stereotypes, and discourses developed by the rulers. Therefore, the government, which has the authority to empower women, must try to eliminate the stigma of their harassment. Furthermore, this power relationship should not be supported by gender-biased interpretations of religion, especially if religion is used as a tool of legitimacy in state policy-making (Muhammad, 2007).

For Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim, the equal status of women and their opportunities in political activities has actually received a juridical basis in the 1945 Constitution. The political decision to provide them with 30% of parliamentary seats is one of the opportunities that must be made the best use of. In this case, religion does legitimize a wide political space for women (Kaaria et al., 2016).

The presence of women on the structural political stage in a more massive form is expected to be able to formulate immediate policies that empower millions of their kind, eliminate discriminatory cultures, and stop violence against them that continues to escalate, both in the family and in public spaces (Muhammad, 2007).

Conclusion

Women's involvement in politics is an essential aspect of realizing a just and gender-equitable democratic life. Although various national and international regulations have provided a strong legal basis for women to participate in the political process, women's representation still faces structural, cultural, and social obstacles. Mass media and social media play a strategic role in encouraging women's empowerment, providing access to political information, and fostering more positive representations of women's roles in the public sphere. From the perspective of Islamic law, women's political participation has a strong foundation, despite differing opinions among scholars regarding its limits. Substantively, Islam views men and women as partners in building a beneficial socio-political life.

Efforts to optimize women's political participation require multiple strategies, including strengthening political education, improving digital literacy, implementing affirmative policies, and providing structural support from the state, political parties, and the community. Additionally, women need to build networks, advocate for their rights, and use media as an empowerment tool to counter entrenched gender stereotypes. With support from various stakeholders, it is hoped that women's political participation in Indonesia will continue to increase, enabling them to make significant contributions to national progress and civilization.

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