

Minangkabau Women's Political Identity In Political Representation

Lusi Puspika Sari¹, Ilham Havifi²
{lusipuspikasari@gmail.com¹, ilhamhavifi@soc.unand.ac.id²}

Department of Political Science, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia¹
Department of Communications Science, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia²

Abstract. This study examines Minangkabau women in politics. The political identity of women in Minangkabau as Bundo Kandung places women in a high position. Their role is centered on the mother in the Rumah Gadang, playing the role as urang rumah [person of the house], induak bareh [mother of the rice], and decision-maker. Among these important roles is that Bundo Kandung plays a role in determining the success and failure of the implementation of decisions made by men in their positions as Mamak (mother's uncle) and Penghulu (tribal chief). This study uses a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth interviews with Minangkabau women who are directly involved in politics, in addition to observing the behavior of Minangkabau women directly involved in politics. In this paper, there are two factors faced by Minangkabau women in the political realm, namely external and internal barriers. External barriers come from the public, political, socio-cultural environments that do not support women's political empowerment or give women opportunities to gain political positions. These barriers are more dominant and are culturally bound. They are associated with the stigma embedded in Minang men that they are reluctant to be led by women and put women to do domestic works and services (in the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom). Added to this are the Islamic religious teachings, which some interpret that women should not lead. In addition to this external obstacle, the Minangkabau women's participation in politics is limited to the elite. Even in the modern era, it can be seen that the power of Bundo Kandung as a symbol of women in Minangkabau, playing the role as the control of the Nagari [village] government, has been much reduced. The internal barriers emerge from the Minangkabau women's self-factors, which involve personal decisions. Thus, this study found that Minangkabau women feel they do not have the ability to get involved in politics as an additional duty to the dual role that they play: a mother and a wife. The barriers generating from the women's self are very influential to the extent that such obstacles cause women to be less interested in politics and even reluctant to get themselves involved in the public sphere. As a result, they seem to demonstrate low fighting power.

Keywords: Identity Politics, Women's Representation, Minangkabau Women, Bundo Kandung

1 Introduction

The politics of women's identity in Minangkabau as Bundo Kandung places women in a high position. They are centered as the mother in the rumah gadang and play the role of urang rumah and as decision-makers. Prior to Indonesian independence in 1945, Nagari life in Minangkabau was full of traditional patterns. It is well-known as traditional customary

government, with the concept of Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah. Elements of government leadership use adat as the law that regulates the order of community life in a traditional way, which applies only to customary provisions as laws in the life of the Minang people at that time.

In making these customary law products, it is in accordance with the climate of the traditional Nagari government system. All policies in Nagari, especially those related to the formulation process of policy, each of the existing tribes must first consult with the Bundo Kandung through a customary meeting to determine whether or not a certain policy can be implemented in Nagari. This is because life in Nagari involves the life of all related tribes. Then, the estuary of all policies concerning each tribe is the Bundo Kandung policy which represents the function and role of the Bundo Kandung tribe at that time. Ideally, as described above, in relation to their representation in every activity of the political process in traditional Nagari, Bundo Kandung cannot be separated from other traditional elements. All of these political processes are connected to one another. Therefore, it is known that *urang nan ampek* (four types of people) consisting of (Ninik Mamak, Alim Ulama, Cerdik Pandai and Bundo Kandung).

It can be said that the role of Bundo Kandung in the public and political spheres in Nagari is central. This is confirmed by Tenner and AA Navis (AA Navis, 1986: 21), who state that Minangkabau women in the middle of a large Matrilineal family play a very important role in the customary process. In decision-making, women's voices are equal to men's, and every issue must be discussed together. This leads to the conclusion that the position between women and men in Minangkabau is equal in the political process in Nagari community.

When the New Order came to power, the Nagari administration in Minangkabau land was changed into the village administration through the implementation of Law No. 5 of 1979. This law prominently demanded modernization and bureaucratization of village administration, stateization (as the state entered the village), and marginalization of the diversity of customary law of the Minangkabau community. Many parties consider that Law No. 5 of 1979 is a form of Javanization by means of applying the Javanese village model for other communities outside Java. The law's implementation resulted in that Nagari, Huta, Sosor, Marga, Negeri, Binua, and others (all are village-level communities outside Java) no longer existed (Sutoro Eko, 2005: 26).

As a consequence, all local wisdom was vaguely maintained and became a customary culture in many areas area. Minangkabau customs changed drastically from generation to generation. The structure of community governance that was originally based on local indigenous communities (self-governing communities) later disappeared and was replaced by a more bureaucratic government structure. Traditional values, and the basic functions of indigenous peoples' leadership, disappeared. This included Bundo Kandung's role as one of the actors in the Nagari government system. It follows from this that traditional interests in Minangkabau-ness were marginalized. Institutionalizing all traditional instruments, including Bundo Kandung, into an institution at the time, of course, was inseparable as an alternative interest in the midst of the solutions brought about by the New Order regime. Bundo Kandung then officially joined the Minangkabau Customary Institution (LKAAM).

The transition from the New Order era to the Reformation era had a huge impact on Bundo Kandung's identity politics in the Nagari. Within the framework and space of autonomy, Bundo Kandung's role is extended in the Nagari administration in the contemporary context. In this, Bundo Kandung is asked not only to be an institution that merely deals with the preservation of customs but also directly penetrates the political sector, especially as a partner of the Nagari functionaries in overseeing the performance of the existing government. The institution also aims to carry out various consolidations between the government officials and the local community, especially those related to improving women's empowerment programs based in

the Nagari in question. All this reinstate the duties and roles of the Bundo Kandung as practiced before.

Minangkabau women's identity politics as Bundo Kandung provides more opportunities for Minang women to participate in the political sphere. Given such an important position, plenty of Minang women should be involved in politics and winning seats in the parliament. However, the facts show the opposite. The number of female politicians in DPRD (local parliament) at the level of province, regency, and municipality remains insignificant.

The implementation of Presidential Instruction number 9 of 2000 concerning Gender Mainstreaming indicates that the ongoing gender issue has not received special attention in various fields of development. In this, the government has established a political foothold that opens up opportunities for Indonesian women to actively participate in the development, including political development with a gender perspective. The fact is that more and more Indonesian women have increasingly occupied various important positions, although the percentage is not yet as high as those of men do.

In the political field, a target for representativeness as much as 30% for women either in the national or local parliament was set for the 2004 general election. At the time, all political parties participating in the general election were obliged to meet this number. While this demand was fulfilled, the women's attention and political orientation, especially in the local areas, is still considered lacking.

The issue regarding the low percentage of women on the political stage in West Sumatra has been openly debated. The majority of political activists, female figures in political parties, academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) activists agree on the need to increase the political participation of Minangkabau women. There are many reasons this issue has been a topic of hot debate in West Sumatra. The political representation of Minang women both at the national and local levels is still very low. Historically, women in parliament have never exceeded 18 percent in the DPR (national parliament). In West Sumatra, female representatives in the 2014 election only reached 7.38%. This figure is still far from the expected quota of 30% mandated by the law/ The following table shows the number of elected female representatives in the 2009, 2014, and 2019 general election for DPD (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah [Regional Representatives Council]) and provincial DPRD:

Comparisons of parliament seats won by Minangkabau Women's in 2019, 2014, 2009 general election :

Legislative Level	2009	2014	2019
DPD	1 participant	1 participant	1 participant
DPRD Provinsi	6 participants	7 participants	4 participants

The number of representatives of Minang women in the legislature is still quite low and is still far from the expected target. It is an unfortunate situation that one legislative region in West Sumatra has no female representative at all. This occurs in South Solok. The low representation of women in the legislative body raises questions. In fact, it seems to be a paradox: while Women are culturally respected in West Sumatra, they are underrepresented in the parliament.

2 Methodology

The research method is the whole way of thinking used by researchers to find answers to the research questions, including the approach used, scientific procedures (methods applied), data collection, data analysis, and concluding statements (Pawito, 2008;83). The method used is qualitative, which does not prioritize the population or sample size. However, the data that can be extracted in-depth from the informants despite the number of samples is limited. This study uses a qualitative approach to describe social events or realities that cannot be achieved using statistical procedures or other quantitative methods.

This type of research will capture various detailed and nuanced descriptive qualitative information, which is more valuable than just a statement of the number or frequency in the form of numbers (Sutopo, 2002). Furthermore, this research seeks to understand the meaning of events and phenomena that arise in everyday life and interpret their experiences and knowledge with others. This type of research is descriptive, and this study uses a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth interviews with Minangkabau women who are directly involved in politics, in addition to observing the behavior of Minangkabau women directly involved in politics.

3 Result and Discussion

Bundo Kandung – women, mothers, or senior women –are similar to the main pole or *limpapeh* of the *rumah gadang*. In the past, the *rumah gadang* was the residence of three or four generations of matrilineal descendants. The center of the social ties in which the *rumah gadang* resides is formed by women: sisters, cousins, and their respective mothers. Every grown woman has a room where she receives her husband at night. The place of a married man is not at his wife's house; he only stays at his wife's house at night, and, during the day, he returns to the house of his parents or sister. The image of Bundo Kandung is opposite to a husband; Bundo Kandung refers to a stable element in the circle of family, relatives, and society. The old customary saying says the husband's position is on the outskirts of: "A husband is like ashes on a stump: when the wind blows him, he will leave" (Joke van Reenen, 1996: 2).

Women have the power not only as of the successor of the lineage. According to Sanday social relations in the Nagari women are the same as "the center point of a net." Senior women are associated with the main pillar of the *rumah gadang*. They are considered to be the most important pillar because it is the first part to be erected. Sanday explains that matriarchy in Minangkabau society is about women as the center, origin, and basis of life and social order. Furthermore, Sanday said that the power of Minangkabau women extends to the economic and social fields.

Women have control of their inheritance and their husbands who come to settle into their wives' family environment. Unlike in many other societies where anthropologists say that, in marriage, what happens is the exchange of women between relatives. In Minangkabau society, what happens is the exchange of men. After marriage, a wife takes her husband from the husband's family to live in her family environment. In the event of a divorce, a husband only has the right to collect his clothes and leaves the *rumah gadang*.

In relation to this, Dt. Rajo Penghulu (1986: 74) explains that in the traditional concept, women are respected and, therefore, they have a high status. The ideal expression of Minangkabau women is expressed by the title Bundo Kandung, which literally means a biological mother, but it does not actually mean so. Bundo Kandung was first known as the

name of a wise, intelligent, and just Queen in the famous Minangkabau myth Cindua Mato. The term Bundo Kandung has since been given to senior women in a clan (matrilineal subclan). A senior woman is expected to be wise and strong; she holds key positions and authority in the house and is the paruik or the clan. Therefore, the ideal Bundo Kandung is equated with a woman who has a motherly character and leadership ability (Dt. Rajo Penghulu 1986: 75).

The position of women in the Nagari is the existence of a special institution for women, namely Bundo Kandung. Apart from Bundo Kandung, women also serve in the Nagari legislative body called BPRN (Nagari Legislative Body). The existence of women in this institution is important because BPRN is a representative of social institutions in the Nagari, one of which is Bundo Kandung. The Bundo Kandung Institute is one of the structural efforts to increase the role of women in socio-cultural life.

Provincial and district regulations do not regulate the duties and roles that Bundo Kandung must carry out. Bundo Kandung institutions in the Nagari, based on our interviews, in principle, and KAN (a body at the Nagari level) play a similar role. KAN, whose members are all men, functions mainly to maintain the preservation of customs and settle disputes between adat and inheritance in the Nagari. Meanwhile, Bundo Kandung maintains the preservation of customs, preserves heirlooms, and supervises the behavior of teenagers or young people, who often fall into a lifestyle that is not in accordance with cultural and religious values.

However, the strong position and position of Minangkabau women as Bundo Kandung does not have a major influence on the representation of Minangkabau women in parliament. This can be seen from the number of seats won by Minang women. Based on the collected data, it can be concluded that women find it very difficult to enter political institutions in Indonesia, such as the legislative body. This is also the case for women in West Sumatra. In reality, the women have to go through various challenges and obstacles in order to win.

The existence of an affirmative action policy should assist the position of Minang women's representativeness in the legislative body. Affirmative action is a policy of the government that is temporary and is aimed at disadvantaged groups in the country. In this case, the groups include women, people with disabilities, elderly people, children, and other marginalized groups. This policy was enacted from the demands of various groups who experience injustice in their country. They feel that they are treated so unjustly that they can no longer be silenced. Therefore, the government, as the elite with high power over the wheels of government immediately becomes the target party.

Affirmative action against women is related to women's political status, but it is not intended to dominate, take over, or tackle each other. The main goal is to provide opportunities for women to be fairly integrated into public life, having been treated as a marginal group. We can use such an affirmative action here as an important tool to keep at least 30% of women at the decision-making level. In this way, we can minimize illegal rules and achieve gender equality.

However, the representation of Minang women remains far from the expected target. This study reveals several factors that influence the low representation of Minang women in the legislature. These factors are divided into two parts: the first is the external factor, and the second is the internal factor. External factors come from the political, public, and socio-cultural environments that do not support women's empowerment in the political field. Moreover, these external factors present several obstacles. Firstly, there is the marginalization of women from the public sphere. This marginalization process has even existed since the days of Dutch colonialism, in which the freedom of Minangkabau women is restricted.

The second is from political parties. This manifests in the form of party rules and recruitment systems. The political parties' system can be discordant for women; political parties

are reluctant or fail to implement affirmative action requiring them to allocate at least 30% seats for female legislative candidates. The situation is worsened by the low interest of women in political parties. When political parties meet this 30% allocation, the competence of these female candidates' casts doubt. With this in mind, political parties as institutions that are trusted in recruiting candidates must be more careful in playing these roles and functions. The damage to the order of political parties is likely to have an influence on the existing political system. Suppose that, from the beginning, a political party has had problems in its recruitment task, it will remain problematic as to when the recruited party manages to occupy an important position in the system.

The third factor is the economy and education barriers. It is undeniable that one of the factors in the defeat of women candidates results from the financial aspect. Although money does not seem to be the main factor in the defeat of female candidates, this economic problem poses as one of the factors that are quite influential. In addition to the issue of the fund, based on the results of research in the field, it was also found that there are still many female legislative candidates who are actually immature in politics. For example, one of them still lacks experience in social organizations and political organizations. Of course, this lack of experience is unreasonable as it is widely known that political position is one of the toughest areas. One cannot only capitalize on recklessness in subjugating this field.

The internal factors come from Minangkabau women themselves. This includes personal decisions about whether or not to take part in politics. Thus, it was found that the self-factors of Minangkabau women are very influential, causing women to be less interested in politics and stutter to enter the public world, demonstrating the Minang women's low fighting spirit. Assumptions and attitudes towards politics also influence the self-factor. The women think who the elected leader is is not so important and that politics is just a power game, often followed by dirty acts such as money politics and so on. On the other hand, men consider politics important, and they trust political institutions. However, men also assume that women should stay at home, playing their dual roles as a mother and a wife.

4 Conclusion

In this paper, there are two factors faced by Minangkabau women in the political realm, namely the external and internal barriers. External barriers come from the public, political, and socio-cultural environments that do not support women's empowerment in politics or give women opportunities to gain political positions. These barriers are more dominant and are culturally bound. They are associated with the stigma embedded in Minang men that they are reluctant to be led by women and put women to do domestic works and services (in the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom). Religion also partially inhibits women's participation in the public or political sphere in that they should not be elected as leaders.

As a result, women's participation in politics is limited to the elite. Even in the modern era, the power of *Bundo Kandung* as a symbol of women in Minangkabau who has the power to control the *Nagari* [village] administration has been much reduced. On the other hand, the internal barriers arise from the Minangkabau women's personality, which involves personal decisions. Thus, this study concludes that Minangkabau women share the feeling that they do not have the competence to get involved in politics as an additional duty to their domestic roles as a mother and a wife. The barriers generating from the women's self are very influential to the extent that such obstacles cause women to be less interested in politics and even reluctant to get

themselves involved in the public sphere. As a result, they seem to demonstrate a low fighting attitude.

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