

## The Political Dynamics of Women in the Democratic Party in Gowa Regency

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### Abstract

This study investigates the dynamics of women's political power within the Democratic Party in Gowa Regency, aiming to explore their evolving roles and the implications for leadership and policy-making. It highlights the growing political participation of women despite persistent structural and cultural barriers such as gender stereotypes and limited access to resources. Using a qualitative approach with triangulated data collection and inductive analysis, the research found that the Democratic Party actively fosters female engagement through initiatives like Garda Perempuan (Women's Guard), leadership training, and inclusive organizational structures. While women hold strategic importance as the majority of voters, their representation in parliament remains limited and often symbolic. The study concludes that increased participation has yet to significantly influence policy outcomes, which are still dominated by male perspectives. Challenges such as internalized stigma, lack of confidence, and tokenism persist. Nevertheless, female politicians in Gowa have demonstrated strong leadership in community empowerment, disaster response, and public education. The research underscores the need for structural party support, cultural transformation, and capacity-building strategies to move beyond quota-based representation toward substantive gender equality in political leadership.

**Keywords:** Political Dynamics, Women, Democratic Party

### Introduction

The role of women in Indonesia has existed since the colonial era, with prominent figures such as R.A. Kartini and Cut Nyak Dien. Despite the success of many women, they continue to face obstacles in the public sector, especially in politics within developing countries. Structural barriers such as education and social status, as well as cultural constraints that limit women's roles, still persist (Croft et al., 2015; Al-Asfour et al., 2017). Women's work is often considered "second class." The concept of gender equality has emerged as a solution to these issues and has evolved into a significant and influential mass movement.

Law No. 10 of 2008 on women's representation, specifically Article 53, states that political parties participating in general elections must nominate at least 30% female candidates for the DPR, provincial DPRD, and regency/municipal DPRD. The 30% quota indicates the government's encouragement for women to participate in politics. Therefore, systematic and well-planned efforts are required to enhance women's political capacity (Bade, 2024).

Women possess great potential that should be optimized, making it essential for them to be conscious of their role in practical politics. The 30% quota policy provides space for women to participate in political contests and play a significant role in formulating and making gender-sensitive policies something that cannot be adequately represented by men, especially concerning women's issues (Mandasari, 2023; Cahyowirawan et al., 2025).

This quota can have a concrete impact if supported by strategic political party measures to recruit and promote capable female cadres (Krook & Norris, 2014; O'Brien & Rickne, 2016; Kilimo, 2022). In this regard, political parties play a key role in promoting their members, especially women, as political leaders (O'Brien, 2015). Women's involvement in leadership is not an anomaly (Cohen, 2013). Gender equality can be defined as the creation of equal conditions and opportunities for men and women to obtain their rights as human beings.

This involves the ability to actively participate in various sectors such as politics, law, economy, socio-culture, education, national defense, and security, and to equally enjoy the benefits of development (Nidatya, 2023). Women's participation in the public sphere is still limited, which makes efforts to promote their presence essential. One major challenge is the persistence of patriarchal culture in society (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2023), which upholds the notion that women should not engage in the same way as men. This contrasts with modern perspectives, where many women's movements are actively voicing the importance of women's roles.

Empirically, women's representation in Indonesian political parties remains lacking, both at the local and national levels (Aspinall et al., 2021). The latest data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union shows that Indonesia ranks 92nd out of 190 countries in terms of female ministers, with women's political representation at only 20.7%, and just six female parliament members. The Democratic Party is among the few political parties providing opportunities for women's political participation.

Its commitment is evident in promoting women's involvement in party leadership, with strategic positions at the branch (DPC) and central (DPP) levels open to women. The Democratic Party is known for its special attention to gender issues and its efforts to build a more inclusive and gender-just society through supportive programs and policies. The Democratic Party has a strong support base in Gowa Regency. Upholding democratic values, it provides adequate space for women to be politically active. Democratic Party women are involved in raising political awareness, especially among other women, to increase political consciousness and participation. However, despite the importance of women's roles in Gowa, several challenges remain, including gender stereotypes, limited access to resources, and the perception that politics is a male domain.

The dynamics of women's political power have shown promising development in uncovering women's potential in politics. Despite challenges like stereotypes and resource limitations, concrete steps have been taken to strengthen women's roles within the Democratic Party in Gowa. Continued empowerment through training, advocacy, and policy reinforcement is key to enhancing these dynamics, contributing positively to society in Gowa. Another encouraging trend is the growing gender awareness among political parties and the general public. This awareness has led to greater space for women in politics, especially within the Democratic Party in Gowa, signifying broader recognition of women's contributions and potential in political life a positive step toward a more inclusive and representative political landscape.

In Gowa Regency, female politicians from the Democratic Party illustrate interesting political dynamics. Their success is not only due to individual capability but also party support and their ability to overcome structural barriers. While some have reached strategic positions, others are still struggling for recognition in male-dominated political structures. The Democratic Party offers opportunities for women to deepen their political understanding and play a stronger role in decision-making processes. Political socialization efforts help raise awareness and involvement, aiming to improve gender equality and women's empowerment in politics and other life spheres.

This research aims to understand how women's political power within the Democratic Party in Gowa Regency evolves, and to identify the factors influencing their success or failure. A deeper understanding of these dynamics is expected to provide insight into women's roles in local politics and strategies to increase their participation and representation. Additionally, the study identifies internal and external factors affecting women's political power, including party support, leadership ability, individual strategy, public perception, media influence, and community support.

The findings are intended to contribute to strategies for empowering women politically, especially within the Democratic Party and Gowa in general. Finally, the study describes government efforts to increase women's representation in legislative bodies through affirmative policies requiring a minimum of 30% female parliamentarians. Understanding the local dynamics in Gowa provides a concrete view of how these policies are implemented and the challenges that remain. Thus, the research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of women's political power within the Democratic Party in Gowa Regency and to formulate recommendations for enhancing women's political roles and influence in the future.

## **Methods**

This study employs a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a method used to study natural conditions of the object (as opposed to experimental methods), where the researcher is the key instrument. Data collection techniques are conducted through triangulation (a combination of methods), data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. According to Lim (2025), qualitative research is a type of research that explores and understands the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social problem. The object of qualitative research is a natural object or a natural setting, which is why this method is often referred to as a naturalistic method. A natural object is one that exists as it is, without manipulation by the researcher, so that the condition when the researcher enters, during the study, and after leaving the object remains relatively unchanged. The criteria for data in qualitative research is definitive data that truly occurs as it is, not merely what is seen or spoken, but data that contains meaning behind what is seen and said (Sugiyono, 2014). According to Alam (2021), qualitative research is research that seeks to explore information in depth and is open to all responses, not just yes or no answers. This type of research invites individuals to express their thoughts on a topic without giving them much direction or guidelines on what to say. Qualitative research aims to explain phenomena as deeply as possible through extensive data collection. The research does not prioritize the size of the population or sample; in fact, the sample size may be very limited. If the collected data is in-depth and sufficient to explain the phenomenon under study, there is no need to seek additional samples. This study aims to understand the dynamics of women's political power within the Democratic Party in Gowa Regency. In the process of gathering information, the researcher must engage intensively and participate directly. The collected information must be carefully recorded and documented to strengthen the data obtained (Sugiyono, 2014). Data in qualitative research is descriptive in nature, derived from personal documents, field notes, statements and actions of respondents, and other sources (Sugiyono, 2014).

## **Results and Discussion**

This section presents the research findings focusing on two main aspects: the political role of women in the Democratic Party in Gowa Regency and the implications of that political role.

### **The Political Role of Women in the Democratic Party in Gowa Regency**

The findings of this research indicate that the role of women in Indonesian politics remains relatively limited, despite the socio-political changes brought about by modern developments.

Even with the growing number of women's organizations and political parties that accommodate female participation, women's voices are still frequently overshadowed by dominant male interests. A patriarchal social system and cultural constructs that confine women to the domestic sphere are the main obstacles preventing women from entering and thriving in the political arena.

Culturally ingrained beliefs in Indonesian society often equate women with domestic responsibilities, childcare, and supporting roles for their husbands. This perspective not only limits women physically and socially but also fosters a stigma that deems women unfit to be part of major public decision-making. When women pursue political careers, they often lack support even from other women, who believe that politics is not a “suitable” place for them. This shows that the challenge of female political involvement is not only external but also internal within the female community itself.

Nevertheless, amidst these challenges, there are real examples of women playing strategic and active roles in politics, such as in Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. Through the Democratic Party, women have been given significant opportunities to participate in political and social activities. Under the leadership of Rismawati Kadir Nyampa Chair of the Gowa Regency Democratic Party’s DPD and a member of the South Sulawesi Provincial DPRD female party members have actively responded to local social issues. During disasters such as floods and fires, female Democratic Party members have consistently been on the ground, ensuring the needs of affected residents are met. This responsiveness adds unique value to women’s involvement in politics.

Beyond disaster response, Democratic Party women in Gowa Regency also engage in community empowerment programs. One such activity includes training housewives in Je’netallasa to recycle plastic waste into handicrafts. This shows that women are not only concerned with social issues but also exhibit creativity and innovation in problem-solving. Moreover, their involvement in youth education and political socialization strengthens their role as agents of change. In many ways, women possess higher social sensitivity compared to men.

This becomes a powerful asset in understanding the needs of the community and translating them into more humane and responsive public policies. Therefore, women’s presence in political party structures and legislative bodies is not merely about numerical representation but also about the quality and impact of that presence. However, the study also found that many women are still unaware of their political potential. Many lack confidence or are influenced by the perception that politics is a dirty, harsh, and manipulative world. In reality, with current regulations and growing opportunities, women should be able to take on important roles in political decision-making processes.

At the national level, the success of female leaders such as Megawati Soekarnoputri Indonesia’s first female president and other female ministers, governors, mayors, and regional heads demonstrates that women can lead and drive change. As of 2021, there was one female governor, three female deputy governors, and dozens of other female regional heads across Indonesia. This proves that women are capable of holding major governmental responsibilities and delivering effective leadership.

Thus, women’s political participation is not a choice it is a necessity. Without active female involvement in politics, public policies will likely remain biased toward male interests and overlook women’s needs. Political parties and all segments of society must therefore continue to encourage and support women’s political engagement not just symbolically but as key players in social transformation and national development.

## **Implications of the Political Role of Democratic Party Women in Gowa Regency**

This study stems from the concern that, although women make up the majority of voters in every election, they have not yet become a decisive force in shaping national political policies. Female representation in parliament often remains a matter of numbers used for campaign purposes rather than a substantive force for policy change favoring women's interests. This reflects the fact that women's voices have not become a mechanism of control over state power, but are instead mobilized as tools to garner votes.

The issue of women's representation in politics particularly in decision-making is now a global concern. This is driven by fundamental reasons, such as the understanding that political rights for women are inseparable from human rights. In an ideal democratic system, the perspectives of all societal groups, including women, must be considered in public policy formulation. As half the world's population, women deserve active participation in the democratic process. Interviews with local female figures such as Rismawati Kadir Nyampa, Chair of the Democratic Party's Gowa Regency DPD, illustrate that women's involvement in politics has had a positive impact.

According to her, public policies have long been dominated by male perspectives that may not understand women's specific needs. Although the number of women in parliament is still limited, their presence ensures that there is at least a voice advocating for women's interests. However, because policy-making in the DPRD operates on a collegial collective basis, women's positions are not yet strong enough to influence decisions, especially if their numbers remain small.

Testimonies from the Chair of DPC Somba Opu support this finding. She emphasized that women's representation is crucial in strengthening women's roles in the public sphere. Many women are still reluctant to enter politics due to the perception that it is dirty and hostile. In fact, women's sensitivity to social issues is a major asset that can enrich public policy quality. Nevertheless, although female political participation is growing, its impact on public policy remains below expectations.

The Deputy Chair for Health, Women, and Children from the same party noted that most government policies directly affect women's lives such as fuel price hikes that strain household economies. Therefore, female presence in legislative bodies is not merely formal it is a strategic necessity to ensure gender-just and responsive policymaking. The 30% quota system, as stipulated in Article 29 paragraph (1) of Law No. 2 of 2011, has indeed created more space for women in politics. However, in practice, this quota is often fulfilled administratively without genuine political will from parties. Political parties still tend to include women merely to complete the candidate list, not as strategic figures fully supported to win and play real roles in parliament.

Structural barriers such as low education levels, limited access to political training, and lack of financial support are also key obstacles. These factors result in many potential female candidates being sidelined or reduced to mere spectators in a patriarchal political system. Women's involvement in politics should not only be about numbers but about how their voices genuinely influence policy directions. Currently, many policies are symbolic, trend-following, and lack clear follow-through. Even when policies exist, their impact has not been significant in changing women's lives broadly.

This indicates that the struggle for women's rights is far from over and that political awareness among women still needs to be fostered and strengthened. Ultimately, the political struggle of women is part of the broader democratic struggle itself. Just as Kartini's vision emphasized the importance of education and the liberation of women from oppression, today's political

struggle must also serve as a tool for emancipation and social transformation. Women's representation in politics is not merely about meeting quotas but about achieving balance in decision-making. Active female participation not just in numbers, but also in role quality is the path to justice and social equity.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that the role of women in Indonesian politics remains limited due to the influence of a patriarchal system and cultural norms that confine women to domestic roles, thereby restricting their participation in the public sphere. In addition to external pressures, obstacles also arise from within the women's community itself, where doubts about their role in politics persist. However, the example from Gowa Regency demonstrates that women are capable of playing active and strategic roles, particularly through social activities, community empowerment, and disaster management, which enhance their social sensitivity in politics. Although many women still lack confidence in entering the political arena, the success of female figures at the national level proves the immense capability and potential of women as leaders. Therefore, women's involvement in politics is not merely a matter of representation, but a crucial necessity to produce more inclusive and responsive policies. Support from political parties and society is essential to enable women to actively serve as agents of change in national development. Although women hold a strategic position as the majority of voters in every election, this has not directly contributed to strengthening the political position and interests of women in parliament.

Women's political representation in Indonesia, particularly in Gowa Regency through the Democratic Party, still faces various challenges structural, cultural, and political. The 30% quota system for female legislative candidates does offer broader participation opportunities, but it has yet to drive significant changes in policymaking that are responsive to women's needs. Policies produced by the parliament tend to be collective in nature and are still dominated by male perspectives, causing women's voices to often be drowned in the flow of pragmatic politics. Furthermore, women's involvement in politics continues to be overshadowed by social stigma that perceives politics as unsuitable for women. In fact, women's presence is essential for crafting fairer policies that address the real issues faced by society, especially those affecting women and children. Therefore, women's political representation must not stop at fulfilling quota numbers alone, but should be followed by capacity building, structural support from political parties, and a transformation toward a more inclusive political culture. The political struggle of women is part of the broader struggle for true democracy, where the voices and interests of all citizens, without exception, are equally represented and advocated.

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