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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beyond Symbolism: Women's Challenges for Substantive Representation in Budget Politics

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Abstract: The presence of women in legislative institutions represents a form of symbolic representation obtained through general elections. Generally, there is an expectation from the public, particularly voters, that through the presence of women in legislative institutions, female legislators will focus more on issues that impact women. This research is an extension of previous studies on women in politics, where the focus has often been on the process of women entering political institutions. This study examines women's involvement in the budgeting process in Batu City, East Java. The research method used is qualitative research. Data was collected from document analysis, observation, and interviews with female DPRD (Regional Representative Council) members and local government bureaucrats. The findings show that the executive uses a technocratic approach to control the regional budgeting process. The budgetary board discusses the budget draft with the attending legislative members in the legislative branch. The budgeting procedure limits the participation of women legislative members in the budget committee. The participation of female DPRD members in budgeting is hindered by the dominance of political parties and the patriarchal culture within political parties. Not all female DPRD members on the budgetary board can be involved in the budgeting process; only senior politicians can join the budget committee. Thus, at the regional level, the representation of women in the DPRD is still in the category of symbolic representation.

Keywords:

Women, Budgeting; Substantive Representation, Batu City

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1. Introduction

The proportion of women legislators and executive officeholders demonstrates the involvement of women in government. Second, this political perspective equalizes women's leadership and female symbolic representation with the roles of men. Since 1955, the proportion of women serving in government has increased. A policy of a 30% women's quota in the legislature is used as an affirmative action to try and increase the number of women participating in the legislative process. The number of female legislators in Indonesia from 1955 to 2019 is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. The Number of Indonesia Women Legislators by Time to Time

Election Year	Women Number	Percentage	Legislative Members in total
1955	16	5.88	272
1971	31	6.74	460
1977	37	8.04	460
1982	42	9.13	500
1987	59	11.8	500
1992	62	12.4	500
1997	58	11.6	500
1999	44	8.8	500
2004	65	11.82	550
2009	100	17.86	560
2014	97	17.32	560
2019	120	20.87	575

Source: bps.go.id, 2023

The number of women legislators varies, as Table 1 illustrates, although there has been no appreciable rise after ten years since the last election. It is simpler for women to hold legislative office at the local level. Table 2 demonstrates that since 2009, the proportion of female local legislators has surpassed that of female national legislators.

Table 2. Percentage of Women Legislative Members in Local and National

Legislative	Election Years				
	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
National	8.8	11.82	17.86	17.32	20.87
Local	-	-	26.52	25.76	30.88

Source: bps.go.id, 2023

Compared to legislative elections, the involvement of women in executive positions—particularly as head of the region—shows distinct outcomes. Women face more barriers and difficulties in becoming local representatives than regional leaders. Table 3 displays the percentage of women who won regional head elections in 2015, 2017, and 2018.

Table 3. The Percentage of Women Regional Heads in the election in 2015, 2017, and 2018

Election Year	Women Winning Percentage
2015	37.1
2017	26.67
2018	30.69

Source: Processed from various sources, 2023

In general, the difficulties faced by women candidates in legislative elections in Indonesia are related to the dominant patriarchal culture. Apart from that, these female candidates have difficulty winning elections because they experience structural disadvantages. First, the electoral system in Indonesia, which emphasizes personal campaigns, is caused by a lack of support from political parties. This results in female candidates having to create their success teams, resulting in a significant financial burden. Second, even though there is a 30% gender quota, many Indonesians are still biased in voting. Many female candidates do not have a vast network, so they have a low social profile. This creates the same problem as before, namely the need to create a successful team, which impacts the size of campaign funds.

Third, not many women candidates are equipped with sufficient campaign funds. This cannot be separated from the socio-economic conditions of society, where most of the financial resources are controlled by men (Aspinall et al., 2021). Women's participation in the head region and local representative elections indicates they are represented in government. Local legislative representatives and female head regions serve as symbolic representations of women in local government. It is expected that women in political positions will use their influence to further women's interests (Mansbridge, 2005). Although women are anticipated to have a more significant role in substantive representation, there is no assurance in practice.

Batu City is one of the cities in East Java that, in 2017, held regional head elections and won Dewanti Rumpoko as the first female mayor in this city. Even though her background is that of the wife of the previous mayor, as a woman mayor, she remains a symbolic representation of women in Batu City. Batu City has an area of 199.07 km². The population of Batu City in 2019 was 207,490 people. In 2019, the labor force participation rate was 71.01%, the unemployment rate was 2.48%, the percentage of poor people was 3.81%, and the Human Development Index was 75.88%. Economically, Batu City's GRDP per capita is 76,782 million rupiah (BPS Batu Municipality, 2020). Batu City has an average height of 897 meters above sea level; therefore, most of its area is hilly or sloped. Batu City is an area suitable for farming. For 24.10% of the population over the age of 15, their main job is in agriculture; the rest's main job is in manufacturing (16.72%) and services (59.18%). With the above geographical conditions, Batu City is also supported by the tourism industry. Thirty tourist attractions in Batu City display various types of tourism. This condition then led to the emergence of the hotel and food and beverage industries (BPS Batu Municipality, 2020).

Batu City has 3 sub-districts: Batu District, Junrejo District, and Bumiaji District. With a population growth rate of 0.83% in 2019, the number of DPRD members in the 2019 election increased from 25 seats to 30 seats. There are 4 electoral districts, which are the arena for political battles to win seats in the Batu City DPRD. From the 2019 election results, there were 4 female DPRD members and 26 male DPRD members. Later, there were five because one male member died and was replaced by a female. The presence of women in positions of political authority in the government, enlarging the opportunity for inclusive politics, has been successful. When women began to attain leadership positions in government, they began to advocate for themselves. Gender quotas in politics are designed to increase the representation of women in legislation, with the hope that policies that are more attentive to women's needs and interests will be produced. Research indicates that the presence of women elected through gender quotas tends to influence policy in ways that benefit female constituents, such as by allocating resources according to women's priorities or bypassing or enforcing policies that grant greater rights to women. Gender quotas can potentially influence policy in ways that support women's interests. However, their effectiveness in producing substantive policy change depends on various moderating factors and the specific context in which the quotas are applied (Clayton, 2021).

Affirmation quota fulfillment and political involvement in elections are frequently linked in studies on women and politics (Hendrarto, 2019; Kiftiyah, 2019; Priandi & Roisah, 2019; Wahyudi, 2018; Widiyaningrum, 2020). Pro-gender budgets and women's studies on budgeting are vigorously associated (Indraswari, 2008; Nurhaeni & Habsari, 2011; Saftiana et al., 2012). This study aims to determine how much women participate in municipal budgetary politics and the obstacles they face. The degree to which women are participating and battling for meaningful representation. Women in leadership roles within their

regions or as legislators face competition from men for political positions, particularly when formulating policies. This rivalry extends to the legislative branch as well. A further challenge confronting women in leadership positions who aspire to shape policy is the prevailing dominance of bureaucracy. Budgeting is the agreement reached by the legislative and executive branches to give a certain amount of funding (Wildavsky, 1988). Each player has a preference regarding budget formulation, so collaboration and compromise are necessary during the budget-making process. In addition to the executive and legislative branches, gender differences exist in the roles associated with budget formulation.

There are always winners and losers when working together and making compromises to create contracts and commitments. The conflict between men and women over the local government budget can also be seen as a conflict between men and women's interests. The differences between official regulations and informal practices can be explained by how power dynamics influence political incentives and budgeting procedures. Power dynamics and political relationships determine how policies are carried out, and budgetary decisions are made. Political incentives influence budgetary decisions and their implementation. Political discussions that mirror the underlying power struggle between opposing social forces result in budgets.

In a presidential system of government, the budget preparation process involves a significant separation between the executive and legislative branches, each playing distinct roles in the budgetary process. The executive drafts the initial budget proposal and submits it to the legislature for review, amendment, and approval the year before the fiscal year begins. Through its amendments, the legislature holds significant power to influence budget policies, including taxation and expenditures. It can strengthen its control by passing laws regulating budget preparation and approval procedures. Priorities and decision-making dynamics can be shaped by gender representation, potentially influencing budget allocation and political incentives. Overall, the budgetary process in presidential systems is characterized by a clear separation of powers, with the legislature playing a crucial role in shaping the final budget through its powers to amend the executive's proposal and its access to independent budgetary analyses (Lienert, 2005).

Two perspectives exist regarding budgets: those of a process and an arena. The process of budgeting is dynamic. Public budgeting is the institutions and practices used to make choices and carry them out by the administration and distribution of public resources. Usually, a whole budget cycle spans three years. Three budget processes are going on at any given time: planning for the upcoming year, carrying out the current year's budget, and reporting and auditing the year prior. Budgets are intricate systems. The budgeting process involves actors in interconnected sub-systems at various stages (formulation, adoption, implementation, audit, and monitoring). Planning, programming, treasury, cash management, public procurement, central oversight, internal control, government accounting, external audit, and legislative supervision are all included in the budget sub-system. The budget serves as a platform for political conflict between divergent interests. This conflict primarily determines whether and how budget priority is allocated to poverty reduction (Santiso, 2007).

Women mayors allocate a more significant proportion of spending to issues traditionally considered feminine and a smaller proportion to issues considered masculine than male mayors. Allocations to feminine issues increase as the percentage of female board members increases. Female mayors also tend to allocate more spending to women's issues, such as education, health care, and social assistance, while reducing spending in masculine areas, such as urban development and transportation (Funk & Philips, 2019). In presidential systems, the legislature plays a crucial role as an agenda-setter and decision-maker, with the ability to significantly amend the executive's draft annual budget. The legislative branch in such systems can also reinforce its budgetary control over the executive through laws related to budget processes (Lienert, 2005). In the case of Austria, female politicians and the gender equality committee, through their speeches in parliamentary sessions, have succeeded in increasing parliamentarians' attention to gender budgeting. This indicates widespread acceptance and positive attitudes towards gender budgeting in the budget debate. Information related to gender budgeting is often mentioned in budget debates and influences resource allocation (Moser & Korac, 2021).

The same is true in the Ugandan context, where more significant numbers of women in the legislature further influence the extent to which legislators address issues that disproportionately affect women in plenary debates (Clayton et al., 2017). The findings of an election-related poll by LSI in 2019 included a question about the community's aptitude for managing finances and the public budget. When the results were broken down by gender, it was found that up to 31.7% of participants believed that women should manage government finances and financial matters. Up to 19.6% of respondents said that men should handle financial and budgetary matters for the government. Most respondents, 46.8%, said that whether a woman or a male handled it did not matter.

One percent of the respondents did not respond. However, regional budgets include every aspect of life, including development, health, education, etc. Just 6% of respondents trusted women to manage the economy and growth. Of those surveyed, only 12% said they trusted women in the field of education. Nonetheless, 48.5% of participants believed that men and women could manage economic and development issues. Sixty-one percent of the respondents believe that women and men can work in the education sector.

Gender stereotypes originating from other nations impact how differently people see women's competence in managing matters related to government. Women are portrayed in Western literature as being more adept at resolving difficulties related to education, racial minorities' rights, the aged and disabled, child care, poverty, health, women's issues, and the environment. Gender stereotypes originating from other nations shape how differently people see women's competence in managing matters related to government. According to Western literature, women are more qualified than men to handle issues related to education, racial minorities' rights, the aged and disabled, child care, poverty, health, and women's and environmental issues (Dolan, 2010; Rosenwasser et al., 1987). Men enjoy hierarchy and are energetic, autonomous, assertive, pragmatic, diligent, and pragmatic policymakers (Winter, 2010). Men who possess these qualities will be better able to manage matters about terrorism, the military, defense and security, trade, taxes, and agriculture (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Dolan, 2010; Rosenwasser et al., 1987). However, female candidates started to criticize terrorism and military matters after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center buildings in America (Lawless, 2004).

Research from 155 nations reveals that regions headed by women exhibit signs of higher health budget allocations (Mechkova, 2021). More funds have been allocated to health, education, and social issues in Brazil due to the election of female mayors and female regional legislators compared to male mayors (Funk & Philips, 2019). As a result of their experience, women are more likely than males to pay attention to women's interests (Phillips, 1998). Growing the number of women in parliaments has influenced anti-discrimination regulations, inheritance laws, and the pursuit of harsher punishments for rape offenders in several African nations, particularly in Rwanda and Botswana (Asiedu et al., 2018; Devlin & Elgie, 2008). Therefore, it is critical to raise the proportion of women in positions of authority to improve the representation of women's interests (Mansbridge, 2005).

Women's representation in parliament affects advocacy, transparency, and collaboration in budget governance. Women legislators are more likely to raise issues related to resource allocation for gender interests. This means that advocacy for gender equality in the budgeting process will increase as women's representation increases. Gender-related aspects are still discussed in budget debates. This happens when gender-based budgeting is not officially implemented (Mueller, 2024). More excellent representation of women has been shown to increase budget transparency, reduce information asymmetry, and strengthen government legitimacy. This is particularly true in local councils. Gender-balanced representation can positively affect fiscal transparency and governance practices (Stanić, 2023).

Women legislators face structural and social challenges in the budget-making process. Regarding structural challenges, women legislators often face limited access to key legislative roles and senior positions. This can hinder them from influencing budget policy and the available resources needed for their efforts (Smrek, 2022). In addition, the parliament's internal culture and leadership structure is dominated by men, hindering female legislators' influence and priorities (O'Brien & Piscopo, 2019). Socially, women

legislators face several problems. First, they struggle to balance work and personal responsibilities (household). This is often a burden due to social expectations regarding childcare and housework (Silbermann, 2015). Second, there are gender stereotypes where women are less able to handle critical issues such as security and foreign affairs, which can reduce their credibility and influence in budget discussions. This bias makes women legislators work harder to prove their competence in these issues (Atkinson & Windett, 2019). Third, women legislators must often work harder to achieve the same influence as their male colleagues. This will be tiring and reduce their focus on budget formulation (Melusky, 2020).

2. Methods

The object of this research is the activities of actors involved in budgeting, especially women legislative members. Qualitative research methodology has been employed in this study. A descriptive study of this kind focuses on how women leaders in the legislative participate in creating local budgets. This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze women legislators' role in competing with males to create and approve regional budgets. Because they aim to comprehend methodologies comprehensively, researchers employ qualitative research methods to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena (Earl Babbie, 2008).

One factor influencing the success of research is data collection. The methodical process of gathering the necessary data is known as data collection. (Nazir, 1988). In this study, interviews and observation were employed as data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews were carried out thoroughly utilizing focus groups. Women legislators and representatives from the council secretariat and Bappeda were invited to participate in the focus group discussion. In this study, we did documentary analysis by analyzing laws, news, government websites, etc.

Processing data and preparing things for analysis are among the steps in the data analysis process. This process entails: 1. Transcribing interviews, scanning documents, entering field data, and choosing and organizing data according to information sources; 2. Please read the entire document, consider its significance, and annotate briefly on the main concepts you learned; 3. Use data coding to conduct a more thorough analysis. 4. Utilize the coding procedure to provide context for the individuals, places, categories, and themes. These will be written in a report that is either narrative or qualitative; and 5. Analyze the information (Creswell, W.J. and Creswell, 2018; Gay, L.R., Mills, G.E. and Airasian, 2006).

3. Result and Discussion

One hundred forty female candidates for legislative office from Batu City's four electoral districts participated in the election on April 17, 2019. Consequently, four women legislative candidates were elected as DPRD members for the 2019–2024 term out of the thirty available seats. Three of these are in their current positions: Kenanga Dewi Nurina and Amalia Letisia from the first electoral district. Next is Dina Kurniawati, the incumbent from electoral district two. Meanwhile, Asiha Ghani Diandra, who is running in electoral district 3, which includes the Bumiaji District region, has been elected as a women legislator and is not an incumbent. Due to the October 2019 death of Sutikno, a male member of the DPRD, the Inter-Time Official (PAW) was established in December 2019. Sintia Laura, a woman, took Sutikno's post. The status of the Batu City Women's DPRD members for the 2019–2024 timeframe is shown in Table 4. All the names in Table 4 are aliases.

Out of the thirty members of the Batu City DPRD, just five are women, according to the voting results. As a result, although a 30 percent quota has been set aside for women, only 16 percent of it may be filled. This demonstrates that men continue to be the primary choice for representation among Batu City residents. Patriarchal culture, a lack of social and economic capital, and other issues hinder women's election to the Batu City DPRD (Aspinall et al., 2021). Two of the five DPRD members listed in Table 4 above are former. Not the candidate with the most votes, but the inter-time official result is one of them. Three female candidates are incumbents; thus, this is not their first election. These three individuals have more DPRD experience and community relations experience than the two who were starting office.

Table 4 Women's Legislative Members in Batu City 2019-2024

No	Name	Status	Position
1	Kenanga Dewi Nurina	Incumbent	Members of budgetary board
2	Amalia Leticia	Incumbent	Members of commission
3	Dina Kurniawati	Incumbent	Chairman of the commission and members of the budgetary board
4	Aisha Ghani Diandra	Incumbent	Members of commission
5	Sintia Laura	Inter-time official	Members of commission

Source: KPU Batu City, 2023

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Dina Kurniawati is the only individual with the Chair of the Commission status based on her position within the DPRD. The budgetary board comprises two individuals: Dina Kurniawati and Kenanga Dewi Nurina. The remaining three do not hold the position of chairman of the DPRD apparatus; instead, they are only commission members. There are institutionally located permanent DPRD equipment within the DPRD. The DPRD leadership, commissions, deliberative bodies, budgetary bodies, honorary bodies, and other essential organs are the supporting organs of the DPRD and are established through plenary meetings. The legislative institution has three functions: budgetary, supervisory, and legislative. This is especially true for the Batu City DPRD. The DPRD's legislative function is to ratify regional regulations. The DPRD's role in overseeing government operations is supervisory. The DPRD's function is responsible for creating, approving, and overseeing the budget, known as the budget function. In actuality, these three roles are connected, particularly in the framework of government budgeting.

The DPRD's responsibility throughout the budget planning phase is to collaborate with the executive Budget Team to discuss the KUA and identify the PPAS. The APBD General Policy is a document that includes information on regional macroeconomic conditions, both current and previous year, as well as basic assumptions used to prepare the RAPBD, such as the growth rate of the gross domestic product (GRDP) and inflation rate, among other assumptions about regional macroeconomic indicators. It also includes regional income policy information, which estimates planned sources and amounts. Regional financing policies that outline the regional surplus and deficit side in advance of regional financing conditions in the context of meeting regional development demands and regional income; and regional expenditure policies that reflect the main program or development priorities and policy steps to increase regional development, which is synchronization of central policy and actual conditions in the region. Temporary Budget Priorities and Ceilings, or PPAS for short, are benchmarked for maximum budget limitations and draft priority programs provided to each program (Regional Work Unit (SKPD)). These are used as a guide to preparing the RKA-SKPD before the agreement with the DPRD.

For the DPRD, the KUA and PPAS debate stage is critical. Unfortunately, A claims that the role of female DPRD members is extremely little in her capacity as an executive representative of the budget team (based on an interview with A, a member of the budgeting team). The budget team's numbers are the primary emphasis of the women DPRD members in the budgetary board. Concentrating on the quantity of program objectives or scheduled activities is one example. However, health-related initiatives, such as lowering the proportion of stunted children, will pique the interest of female DPRD members more (based on an interview

with DK, a senior member and member of the budgetary board). The budget preparation process is dominated by a technocratic process where the regional budget preparation process must comply with applicable regulations. It is not legally permissible to violate these regulations. Every year, preparing the regional budget starts with the executive, where the budget for each sector is outlined in the RPJMD. Determining budget priorities each year has been outlined in the RPJMD so that even when preparing it, the DPRD must comply with the applicable RPJMD. This means that the battle arena to adopt gender budgeting will have more impact if implemented in the RPJMD preparation process because the APBD is only a derivative of the RPJMD. When not all members of the DPRD can serve on the budgetary board, the number of women in parliament becomes more important because the more women who join the DPRD, the more issues related to women will be discussed (Clayton, 2021).

Women DPRD members who are plenary session members must be present at the budget ratification stage of the meeting. All DPRD members are required by regulation to provide a compelling explanation for any absences from plenary sessions. Every female member of DPRD participates in the budget ratification process in this way. There is no chance for individual women DPRD members to voice their opinions over the RAPBD, which will be ratified at the plenary session, as opinions are communicated through the perspectives of the factions (based on interviews with AGD and new members). For instance, women DPRD members had virtually little involvement in budget control during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) when the Batu City APBD was implemented. The topic of refocusing the APBD for managing COVID-19 encountered very few challenges. Women members of the DPRD do not undertake plans to manage or revive Batu City's women-only economy. The crisis has led to an absence of oversight, resulting in a lack of fiscal transparency in local governments.

Regarding the advocacy function, this function is complex for inexperienced women legislators to perform. AGD, as a new member, said, "You must respect the regulations above your gender if you join the DPRD. The role of the DPRD member in this situation is to serve as a mediator and clarify the regulations that apply to these women, even though there is a group of female employees who are disadvantaged" (in situations of hotels firing employees without cause). The data above shows that women legislators cannot advocate for women's interests. The advocacy role that should have been carried out could not be carried out because the women legislators were first-time legislators and did not have advocacy experience. Instead of helping fellow women, the role of women legislators is only as mediators, not advocates. According to the regulations, during the budget preparation process, the DPRD is placed in the final stage, namely ratifying the budget into a legal product. The draft budget proposed by the executive, in this case for the regional government, can be said to have reached almost 100%. This makes the DPRD's authority, especially women's, hampered by regulations. These DPRD members also carry the aspirations of their constituents, where women DPRD members in Batu City campaign to the women's community. The aspirations of these constituents are vulnerable to not being accommodated due to the technocratic process that has previously been implemented.

In the 2019 Batu City legislative election, female DPRD members prevailed despite challenges. They had a successful men's squad but ran campaigns for women's organizations. Individually, as women, they felt more at ease conversing with other women. After passing, they put the faction's interests and rules (the law) above all else. Therefore, regardless of party, women's constituents are still viewed primarily as voting blocs rather than as a community group whose interests must be represented. The influence of factions is much more significant than identity as a woman. This means that when working, female DPRD members will abandon their identity as women. They work following procedures according to their respective fields. Aside from that, a female regional leader has a far more prominent budgetary position than a member of the DPRD. A female regional head can suggest pro-women projects as regional head; in this scenario, the programs would be supported by the APBD. As long as the budget is consistent with the RPJMD, the influence of women regional heads on it is more significant. In contrast, female members of the DPRD have little authority when it comes to considering government-proposed activity programs.

4. Conclusion

In the political trials, women legislators serve in regional legislation and are responsible for budgeting and passing legislation, such as local laws about the APBD. The budgetary board specifically handles the budget function within the regional legislative body. Each group proposes the selection of budgetary board members while considering commission membership. If a woman serves on the budget body, her position as a legislator will be more powerful because they play a crucial role in budgeting and passing local laws. The rigidity of the budgeting process means that women DPRD members' role is limited to simply increasing or reducing the budget, as stated in the General Budget Policy. Because they are imprisoned under the budgetary board's jurisdiction and hindered by the technocratic government budget system, women DPRD members' roles cannot be maximized.

Consequently, two barriers prevent women legislators from fulfilling their roles. First, for them to contribute more to the budgetary process, they need to be appointed by their party to the budgetary board. Only senior legislative members—those who have served as members of the DPRD for multiple terms—are eligible for this opportunity. In this instance, it will be challenging for a woman joining the DPRD for the first time to compete against other members of the same party. The second barrier is that the budget body's jurisdiction severely constrains the DPRD's power in budget preparation. The budgetary board may alter the regional government's plans but can only do so by adjusting the amount, timing, and location of programs and activities. The previously generated planning documents (included in the RPJMD) are already comprehensive.

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