

The Feminization Of Local Politics: Practices, Representation, And Resistance In The Masculine Arena Of Village Government

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the practice of political feminization in village government, focusing on the role of women in male-dominated local politics and the challenges they face in confronting patriarchal structures. Although women's participation in village governance is increasing, entrenched patriarchal structures remain limited space for women to make significant political decisions. In this context, political feminization contributes to a shift in policy priorities and a more inclusive and collaborative leadership style. However, the main challenge women face are the cultural and systemic barriers that limit their access to power. Although gender quotas and affirmative policies provide opportunities for women, their effectiveness is highly dependent on women's ability to leverage their positions in local political structures. The study concludes that to achieve deeper gender equality, structural changes in social norms are needed, as well as increased educational and economic access for women. The feminization of local politics is not only about numerical representation, but also about empowering women in the process of making policies that are more responsive to their needs.

Keywords: *Political Feminization, Village Government, Gender Equality, Patriarchal Resistance, Women's Empowerment*

1. Introduction

The dominance of men in local politics, especially in village government, is rooted in a patriarchal structure that marginalizes women's roles, where men dominate positions of leadership and power. Traditional village governments are almost entirely led by men, with cultural norms reinforcing the belief that they are the primary decision-makers ("The Patriarchal Political Order", 2023). Although there is no formal prohibition on women's leadership, women rarely hold positions of power, reflecting a deep-rooted societal view (Nkala et al., 2018; Purbanegara et al., 2022). Village political networks are often gender-homophilic, with men occupying a central role while women remain on the fringes ("The Patriarchal Political Order", 2023). In development initiatives, masculine issues take precedence, with large allocations of funds for infrastructure rather than social issues affecting women (Damayanti et al., 2020). Despite facing systemic barriers, women leaders are beginning to strengthen their influence through inclusive leadership and community engagement (Mandasari & Septiani, 2024). However, despite the opportunities for women in local politics, the prevailing patriarchal norms continue to challenge their full participation, demanding structural change and ongoing advocacy to achieve gender equality in village governance.

The feminization of local politics is increasingly important with the increasing participation of women in government, which has a major impact on village dynamics and a more inclusive decision-making process. The increase in women's representation, as seen in Spanish municipalities where women's associations play an active role in decision-making



(Jesús et al., 2012), as well as the implementation of the 73rd amendment in India mandating 33% reservation for women in local government (Karajagi & Yariswamy, 2019), have increased women's political involvement and empowerment. The presence of women in local politics also brings more diverse perspectives, enriching policies and increasing community engagement, as is the case in Belgium, although local parties still face challenges in recruiting female candidates (Devroe et al., 2020). Despite this, entrenched male dominance and cultural barriers remain major challenges, which can hinder women's full contribution in local government. This duality illustrates the ongoing struggle for gender equality in the village political space, which demands structural and social changes in order for equality to be truly achieved.

This study aims to analyze the practice of political feminization in village government, focusing on how women are involved in male-dominated local politics, as well as how their representation and resistance to patriarchal structures are still strong in the arena. In addition, this study also aims to identify various factors that affect women's participation in village politics, such as social norms, structural barriers, and entrenched cultural factors, as well as the challenges they face in fighting for equality and overcoming existing gender discrimination. By analyzing these dynamics, this research is expected to provide insight into women's struggles in changing the traditional and more masculine village political landscape towards greater inclusivity.

This research contributes significantly to the study of feminism and local politics by highlighting how political feminization at the village level can change power dynamics and gender representation. In the context of feminism, this study focuses on women's political empowerment as a key element in the struggle towards gender equality, particularly in local government. This empowerment allows women to influence policies and decisions that are more responsive to their needs, thereby strengthening women's position in previously masculine and patriarchal political structures (Yıldırım, 2019). The study also explores how entrenched gender norms, such as stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, shape political opportunities for women. This study explores how local perceptions of the roles of women and men in village government limit or allow women's participation in the political realm ("How Women's Roles In Local Politics Are Understood At The Commune Level: Beoung Preah Commune, Cambodia", 2022). With this, this research is expected to provide deeper insight into the challenges of women in entering the local political world, as well as provide an overview of how political feminization can change traditional patterns of power.

The research also offers valuable insights into local politics, particularly in terms of increasing women's participation. Data shows a positive trend in women's representation in local consultative bodies, with women now accounting for around 36% of local councillors globally, compared to 25% in national parliaments (Barnett & Shalaby, 2023). This increase in representation was also seen in the case of the Philippines, where the number of women elected in barangay elections increased from 19% to 22% (Valente & Moreno, 2014). However, despite the increase in the number of women in local politics, the study also reminds that inclusion alone is not enough to achieve deep gender equality. This research challenges the traditional binary view between public and private spaces, and shows that women's political representation should be understood more deeply through diverse cultural lenses, as well as urging the importance of gender equality in democracy and effective governance (Yıldırım, 2019; Hlynisdóttir, 2023).

This research is particularly important in the social and political context both locally and globally, as it focuses on efforts to strengthen women's positions in politics and village government, which are areas that have historically been dominated by men. At the local level, women's representation in political decision-making has a direct impact on more inclusive and gender-equitable public policies. The presence of women in village government structures not only creates space for more diverse perspectives, but also allows for policy-making that is more

responsive to the needs of women and other marginalized groups. Globally, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for other countries seeking to achieve gender equality in local government, as well as contribute to international discussions on the importance of women's roles in local democracy. This research shows how political feminization can open up opportunities for policies that are more sensitive to gender issues and promote more equitable and equitable development.

In addition, this research can have a significant impact on government policies and practices at the local level. By demonstrating the importance of women's representation in political decision-making, the study encourages the development of more equitable and inclusive governance practices, as well as ensuring that the resulting policies reflect the needs of all levels of society. This research is also expected to increase public understanding of the role and contribution of women in local politics. This understanding is important to reduce gender stereotypes that hinder women's participation and support women's empowerment efforts at various levels of government. Thus, this research has the potential to change people's perceptions of local politics and provide impetus for structural reforms that support gender equality in village government.

2. Method

This research uses the library research method developed by Nazir (2014) in his book "Research Method". This method was chosen because it is in accordance with the characteristics of the research which aims to analyze the feminization of local politics through a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual study of women's practices, representation, and resistance in the masculine arena of village government. Literature study is research that is carried out by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting secondary data from various literature sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, research reports, theses, dissertations, and other academic publications relevant to the research topic. In the context of this research, the literature used includes theories of political feminism, literature on women's leadership, previous research on women's political participation at the local level, gender and power studies, and empirical data that have been published on the phenomenon of political feminization in various regions and countries, especially related to village governance and grassroots politics.

The data collection process was carried out through a systematic search of relevant literature using keywords such as "feminization of politics", "women in local government", "village politics", "gender and political representation", "women leadership", and "political resistance" in various academic databases such as SAGE, Taylor & Francis, Springer, ProQuest, as well as university repositories and gender research institutes. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques to identify patterns, key themes, and relationships between concepts that emerged from the literature studied, focusing on three main dimensions: women's political practice, representation in power structures, and forms of resistance to masculine domination. This research also uses a descriptive-analytical approach with the theoretical framework of feminism to comprehensively describe the phenomenon of feminization of local politics and analyze it from various perspectives of gender studies, political science, and sociology of power. The validity of the research is ensured through source triangulation and cross-referencing to obtain an objective and in-depth understanding of gender dynamics in local politics.

3. Results and Discussion

1. Political Feminization Practices in Village Government

The results of the literature analysis show that the practice of political feminization in village government has undergone a significant transformation in the last two decades, although it still faces various structural and cultural challenges. Based on a review of various literature sources, it was found that the increase in women's participation in local politics occurred gradually but consistently in various parts of the world (Barnett & Shalaby, 2023; Valente & Moreno, 2014). Global data shows that women's representation in local consultative bodies now stands at around 36%, far exceeding their representation in national parliaments of only 25% (Barnett & Shalaby, 2023). This phenomenon indicates that local politics, especially at the village level, is a more accessible entrance for women to be involved in the formal political process.

The practice of political feminization in village government is not only limited to increasing the number of women occupying formal positions, but also includes changes in decision-making and policy priorities. Case studies in Spanish municipalities show that women's associations play an active role in decision-making, bringing a more inclusive perspective to public policy formulation (Jesús et al., 2012). A similar thing happened in India, where the implementation of the 73rd amendment mandating 33% reservation for women in local government has significantly increased women's political involvement and empowerment (Karajagi & Yariswamy, 2019). This practice shows that political feminization is not just a matter of quotas or numerical representation, but a substantive transformation in the dynamics of power and governance processes at the local level.

However, the practice of political feminization in village government also faces strong resistance from entrenched patriarchal structures. Literature analysis shows that although there is no formal prohibition on women's leadership, women rarely hold positions of strategic power due to the conservative views of society (Nkala et al., 2018; Purbanegara et al., 2022). The gender-homophilic network of village politics, in which men occupy a central role while women remain on the margins, becomes a systemic obstacle that is difficult to penetrate ("The Patriarchal Political Order", 2023). In the Indonesian context, although women village heads face patriarchal cultural barriers and resistance from local authorities, they still play an important role in decision-making and community empowerment through inclusive leadership strategies and social capital enhancement (Mandasari & Septiani, 2024).

2. Women's Representation in Village Power Structures

Analysis of women's representation in village power structures shows a paradox between quantitative improvement and substantive quality of representation. Findings from various studies show that despite the increase in the number of women in local political positions, this representation is not necessarily directly correlated with actual political influence and power (Yıldırım, 2019; Hlynisdóttir, 2023). Political representation theory in the context of feminization highlights that descriptive representation (the presence of women in political positions) must be balanced with substantive representation (advocacy for women's interests) in order to have a significant impact (Childs, 2024).

Systemic barriers to women's representation in village power structures are reflected in various aspects, ranging from the nomination process to access to political resources. Political parties and local interest groups often prioritize male candidates, limiting women's opportunities to be elected in strategic positions (Dahlerup, 2016). This situation is exacerbated by cultural and sociological factors that limit women's political power, reflecting broader social inequalities in society (Itzkovitch-Malka, 2018). In the context of the Global South, such as in Senegal, India, and Nepal, gender inequality in local government is especially evident in

natural resource conservation and management efforts, where women often do not have an adequate voice in decision-making (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021).

Despite this, some significant progress has been made in improving women's representation in village power structures. The case in the Philippines shows an increase in the number of women elected in barangay elections from 19% to 22%, indicating a positive trend although still limited (Valente & Moreno, 2014). In Indonesia, women village heads use adaptive strategies and inclusive leadership to overcome structural barriers, proving that women's representation can have a positive impact on the quality of governance and community empowerment (Mandasari & Septiani, 2024). This is in line with the findings that the presence of women in power structures can bring more diverse perspectives and increase community involvement in local political processes (Devroe et al., 2020).

3. Forms of Resistance to Masculine Domination

Women's resistance to masculine dominance in village governance takes many forms, ranging from open resistance to more subtle but effective adaptive strategies. Based on the framework of the everyday forms of resistance theory developed by James C. Scott, women in village government use the concepts of "infrapolitics" and "hidden transcript" to counter the structure of masculine dominance (Scott, 1985). These strategies include the formation of informal alliances, behind-the-scenes negotiations, and the creation of alternative spaces that allow women to influence decision-making processes even if they do not have adequate formal power.

Michel Foucault's power-knowledge theory provides an additional perspective in understanding the form of women's resistance, where "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1998). In the context of village government, women not only conduct a direct confrontation with the patriarchal system, but also form counter-discourses and alternative practices that gradually change existing norms and power structures. This resistance is seen in various forms, such as the formation of women's groups active in policy advocacy, the use of social media and digital platforms to mobilize support, as well as involvement in community empowerment programs that give them legitimacy and social recognition.

Women's resistance also takes the form of a transformation from within the system, where they use their formal positions to gradually change village government practices and policies. This strategy has proven effective in a variety of contexts, as seen in the case of women village heads in Indonesia who used inclusive leadership to overcome resistance from local authorities and communities (Mandasari & Septiani, 2024). They build social capital through active involvement in community activities, demonstrate competence in the management of development programs, and create cross-gender coalitions to support a more inclusive reform agenda.

Factors Influencing the Feminization of Local Politics

The literature analysis identified various factors that influence the process of local political feminization, ranging from structural to cultural factors that interact with each other in forming opportunities and barriers to women's participation. Structural factors include the formal political system, affirmative policies, and election mechanisms that exist in village government. The implementation of the gender quota policy, as implemented in India through the 73rd amendment, has been shown to have a significant impact on increasing women's representation in local government (Karajagi & Yariswamy, 2019). However, the effectiveness of these policies also depends on the local political context and women's ability to take advantage of available opportunities.

Cultural factors are very important determinants in the process of political feminization, especially related to gender norms, stereotypes, and social expectations of women's roles in society. Gender stereotypes entrenched in patriarchal cultures form political structures that

limit women's participation in leadership, as found in various studies in Southeast Asian countries (Mandasari & Septiani, 2024). Local perceptions of the roles of women and men in village government also limit or allow women's participation in the political sphere, creating invisible but very strong barriers in limiting women's access to positions of power ("How Women's Roles In Local Politics Are Understood At The Commune Level: Beoung Preah Commune, Cambodia", 2022).

Economic and social class factors also have a significant influence on the feminization of local politics. Research shows that women from lower economic classes face greater barriers to local political engagement, despite affirmative policies in favor of women's representation (Meldianto et al., 2024). Access to economic resources, education, and social networks are key factors that determine women's ability to participate effectively in local politics. In the context of village government, where politics is often personal and based on social relationships, social and economic capital is an important prerequisite to be able to compete in a male-dominated political arena.

Implications of Political Feminization on Village Policy and Governance

The feminization of local politics has far-reaching implications for governance policies and practices at the village level, changing development priorities and approaches to solving community problems. The presence of women in village power structures has been proven to bring a more inclusive and responsive perspective to the needs of various groups in society, especially marginalized groups that are often overlooked in the decision-making process (Yildirim, 2019). Research shows that village governments with high representation of women tend to allocate greater resources to social, educational, and health programs, in contrast to the traditional pattern of prioritizing physical infrastructure (Damayanti et al., 2020).

Changes in governance approaches are also seen in leadership styles and more participatory and collaborative decision-making processes. Women leaders in village government often adopt a more inclusive leadership approach, involving various stakeholders in the decision-making process and creating more open participation mechanisms for communities (Mandasari & Septiani, 2024). This is in line with the findings that political feminization can lead to more inclusive and equitable policy outcomes, reflecting a broader spectrum of societal needs (Childs, 2024).

However, the effectiveness of these changes often depends on the local political context and women's ability to navigate existing power structures. In some cases, women's representation in village government is still symbolic or tokenistic, where they do not have real power to influence policy substantially (Itzkovitch-Malka, 2018). Therefore, effective political feminization requires not only increasing numerical representation, but also strengthening women's substantive capacity and power in governance processes, as well as changes in political norms and practices that support women's meaningful participation in decision-making at the village level (Dahlerup, 2016; Yıldırım, 2019).

4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study highlights the importance of political feminization in village government as a progressive step in creating a more inclusive and responsive government system to the needs of the community. Despite a significant increase in the number of women involved in local politics, major challenges remain, both in terms of entrenched patriarchal structures and cultural barriers that limit women's role in decision-making. The practice of political feminization has brought positive changes in the dynamics of village governance, such as increased representation of women that create more inclusive policies, as well as a more participatory and collaborative leadership style. However, to achieve a more substantial impact, women's representation must be more than just a quota, but must be balanced with the strengthening of women's substantive capacity and power in policymaking. The feminization of local politics suggests that the biggest challenge is not only on women's involvement in

formal positions, but on their ability to access power and influence policy directly. Structural, cultural, and economic factors influence women's participation rates, especially in more conservative and patriarchal regions. Therefore, to achieve more real gender equality in village governance, it requires the support of affirmative policies, changes in social norms, and women's empowerment through improved education, social networks, and access to better economic resources.

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