

**WOMEN AS A STRATEGIC GROUP:
WOMEN'S STRATEGY IN POLITICAL NETWORKS THROUGH THE
ECONOMIC AREA
(IWAPI NTB CASE STUDY)**

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Abstract

Women's participation in economic field and politic is often viewed in a dichotomous manner, where the economy is referred as "low politics." Women's participation in economic organization is also seen as non-strategic activism, which interpreted as activities that are distant or excluded from electoral politics and has less influence on the decision-making process. This research aims to challenge the argument and suggests that women's roles in the economy are indeed interconnected with the political sector. The study argues that women use their institutional capital as members of IWAPI to build relationships and political networks, where the appropriation of interests which means securing access to specific resources is the main goal. This research utilizes the Strategic Group theory from Evans Dieter-Evers and finds that women affiliated with IWAPI adopt personal and corporate appropriation modes in pursuing their interests. Personal appropriation is closely related to strengthening political networks through political parties to drive institutional change, while corporate appropriation is carried out by IWAPI members through expanding business networks and forming resource alliances. Furthermore, women can be categorized as a strategic group with business types and often employ cooperative strategies with other strategic groups. IWAPI is ultimately referred to as an organization formed by strategic groups of women for the appropriation of specific interests.

Keywords: *Women, strategic groups, agency, appropriation of interests*

A. Introduction

In patriarchal culture, women and politics are the antithesis; a manifestation of latent contradiction, and denying the nature of creation. In the context of patriarchal culture, men are placed as leaders and placed in a dominant position so that patriarchy is also referred to as the culture of the rule of the father, or the rule of men. This concept



of 'male rule' then leads to the consequences of upholding a social and cultural system based on the norm of male power, where the pattern of social relations is characterized by the acceptance of men as rulers. In patriarchal culture, men are considered to have a natural right to power so that naturally, men are considered superior or dominant in all aspects and social relations. Thus, men are accepted as parties who have control, as decision makers, and become the center of social and private activities where men are the focus and agents of social development and invention (male centeredness).

In the political context, patriarchal culture has serious consequences for the recognition of women's political rights. Politics that is built up from patriarchal culture creates politics that is biased against men and oriented towards men (male-stream). Rhodiyah (2013:60) mentioned that the consequence of patriarchal culture in political life is the recognition of society that relies on men as the root in politics. A logic that focuses on men as the root in politics thus does not recognize women and their agency capacity in politics. Women in politics are considered complementary, and are seen as passive and fatalist actors. In fact, although women are currently involved in politics, this involvement often does not come from the genuine will of women, but is born from a situation of conditioning and external encouragement. This external impulse is biased from the male side; Not because of the recognition of women's equality but as a result of, for example, the encouragement of the women's political affirmation policy, which requires a quota of 30 percent of women in the legislature. This is in line with what Rhodiyah (Ibid.,) revealed, the acceptance of men as the head of the family causes women's political aspirations to be often represented by men, be it fathers, brothers, husbands, uncles and so on; Even if they actively participate and occupy public positions or political parties, it is not seen as an achievement of women as political individuals but their participation in politics is seen as part of the power or position of their husbands or men (cf. Winarto, 2002:113).

Fitriyah (2018:39-52) describes the obstacles faced by women in the process of political candidacy by the party. Women's obstacles to participating in politics can be read from any woman who enters and obtains political office. Widaryanto and Pramono (Djojosoekarto and Sandjaja 2008: 189-190 in Fitriyah, 2018: 39-52) classify them into three groups, namely: (1) obtaining political office because they have a certain relationship with men (legislative/executive officials); as a wife or child; (2) they have been freed from the task of raising their children; and (3) the young age group, which is generally activists. From this classification, it can be seen that there are groups of women who achieve power or political positions because they have a relationship with men, be it as wives (marriage bonds), children or brothers (blood relations). A study conducted by Fitriyah (2018: 39-52) also shows that the relationship factor with men provides a better or higher probability for women to enter or even pass the candidacy process within the party. In the context of actual politics, the influence of charisma or male power as a determinant of women's political power can be seen from the phenomenon of dynastic politics in Indonesia, where women are considered as an extension of male power (detik.com, 2017). In the data presented by Fitriyah (2018) in



the Central Java regional elections, the wives of incumbents emerged as candidates for regional heads, as well as the 2014 DPRD election in Central Java which showed a recurring pattern of female candidates who have relationships or are part of political dynasties.

Women's political candidacy that is closely related to dynastic politics, in the author's opinion, is caused by several things. First, female political candidates can become vote getters among certain circles, second, the incumbent's ambition to perpetuate power; In this context, women are seen as tools or extensions of incumbents or oligarchs. The choice of incumbent often falls on women who have close kinship relationships, such as wives and children. Third, because of the pragmatic choice of women who use the capital they have to achieve power. On the third cause, although considered controversial, this view highlights the capacity of women's agencies.

In the context of this agency, women can break away or choose not to rely on the role of men when knitting their work in politics. Perempuan can choose to take advantage of solidarity relationships with fellow women, whether they are involved in the same organization, association, institution or group. With this, women can organize and mobilize support without involving male influence or power. Of course, achieving certain interests in the world of politics does not always start from politics. Political interests can be considered as the main goal, which is achieved through various channels, one of which is the economy. And this is what women who are members of IWAPI do.

Thus, a perspective that perpetuates a skeptical view of the capacity of women's agencies such as in a male-biased political view is actually inappropriate and misleading. In fact, women are active political actors and often do not even depend on male power. In the perspective of the difference argument, gender experiences and differences shape different needs and perspectives as individuals between men and women. Women often use their nurturing character in strategizing and achieving their interests. In the context of leadership, women's experiences of social exclusion and their fluency in the nurturing domain of work make women more sensitive and empathetic to minority groups and their vision of just politics. In fact, many times, women use their gender roles to achieve their interests. Thus, this view shows that political actors cannot be seen as a homogeneous group that has a typical character objectively. In the context of women, women's political strategies can be different from those usually taken by men, which often show ambitious, dominant, manipulative characters and so on. Politics, in the hands of women, can show a more empathetic face and be sensitive to different experiences.

IWAPI itself is a forum for women entrepreneurs consisting of approximately 4 thousand women entrepreneurs, be it small entrepreneurs (85%), medium entrepreneurs (12%) and large entrepreneurs (3%). With up to 256 branches spread across 30 provinces, IWAPI is the largest organization of women entrepreneurs in Indonesia and in Southeast Asia. IWAPI was even appointed as the Chair Country of the ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs' Network (AWEN). IWAPI itself positions itself as a

government partner to achieve and implement policies for women's economic empowerment while being a forum for the aspirations and interests of women entrepreneur groups.

IWAPI's actions and roles provide an overview or representation of the role of women, not only in strengthening the women's economy but also in the public sphere in general. Looking at the number of IWAPI memberships that are not small, at least at a glance it can be seen that women's economic contribution is not small. Especially when viewed from its membership, IWAPI should be seen not only as an organization of women entrepreneurs, but also as part of a big business network or women's business group. Although in the context of membership, IWAPI is dominated by small and medium entrepreneurs, the leaders or think-tanks of this organization are women entrepreneurs of the medium and upper scale. In this case, the author wants to emphasize the strategic potential of this group of women entrepreneurs beyond their advocacy potential for the development of women's MSME businesses.

This study wants to see how women who are members of IWAPI use their institutional capital as members of IWAPI to build political relationships and networks, which of course their main goal is to achieve political interests; namely the appropriation of interests through policy changes. Thus, this research is expected to break the dichotomous view between the realm of economics and politics, where the economy is often referred to as an arena and an issue of low politics. So far, women's self-organizing in the economic, social and other non-political sectors has often been seen as a problem or non-strategic activism. This non-strategic problem is simply defined as activities that are confined or distant and do not have an impact on the decision-making process.

In this perspective, women are seen as a strategic group that has a certain appropriation goal with the aim of perpetuating or changing the scheme of resource appropriation, then women as a strategic group will be seen as an active group of individuals who have certain strategies and visions or missions that are not only related to efforts to maintain or increase access and control over economic resources. but also related to political influence and access to the process of policy-making and institutional change. Based on the presentation in the introduction, there are several questions asked, namely what is the strategy of women in building political networks through the economic area, namely as members of IWAPI and second, what is the strategy of interest exploitation used?

B. Method

This research uses a critical research paradigm. The foundation of the critical paradigm is the emancipatory Marxist theory, which includes neo-Marxism (new left), and feminism. The development of critical theory as a paradigm cannot be separated from the role of the Frankfurt School fronted by Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and so on. The view of the critical paradigm is to emphasize that science is not based on standard laws and procedures, but to dismantle the ideologies that already exist in liberating human beings from all the shackles of

exploitation and oppression (Muslim, 2016: 80). This type of research is a descriptive-qualitative research that uses two types of data sources needed, namely: first, primary data and second, secondary data. Primary data were taken from interviews (in depth interviews) using the purposive sampling method.

C. Result and Discussion

IWAPI and Women's Economic Empowerment Goals

The Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs Association, abbreviated as IWAPI, one of the unifying forums for women entrepreneurs in Indonesia, was originally named IPWI (Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs Association), officially formed on February 10, 1975, in Jakarta on the initiative of two women entrepreneurs, namely Kemala Motik Amongpradja and Dewi Motik Pramono along with several other entrepreneurs. The establishment of IWAPI basically started from concerns about the lack of solidarity of women entrepreneurs. Although they are both active in the economic field, they run separately and separately from each other. This is due to the lack of a forum that gathers women entrepreneurs, even though if the women entrepreneurs are gathered in a forum, it will allow for coordinated cooperation in all fields, and ultimately create better synergy.

The idea of gathering Indonesian women entrepreneurs was also expressed to several other women entrepreneurs such as Mirta Kartohadiprodjo, Dotty Ibnu Sutowo, Linda Spiro, Linda Latief, Astari Harun Alrasyid, Astrid Soerjantono Soerjo, Ratih Dardo, and Niniek Soerjo Adiwsita which was then realized through the establishment of the Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs Association (IPWI) on February 10, 1975. At the 1st National Conference of IPWI which was held in 1978 and officially the name of IPWI was changed to IWAPI. The purpose of the establishment of this organization is, first, to foster the unity and cooperation of Indonesian women entrepreneurs in the field of economics and business or business. Second, increasing knowledge and skills as entrepreneurs, and third, increasing the participation of Indonesian women in development.

In the next stage, IWAPI moved quickly and expanded its work in empowering women's economy. In addition to expanding its scope through the establishment of branches throughout the archipelago, IWAPI also plays a role as a government partner in various women's economic development and empowerment programs, including collaborating with the Nusantara Export Development Agency (BPEN), as well as fostering relationships with government and private banks, as well as holding various trainings and cooperation with coaching institutions and even establishing the IWAPI Education Center (1979) to increase knowledge and skills of its members. Now IWAPI members have reached 30,000 spread across 36 provinces.

IWAPI realizes that despite having a significant contribution to national economic development, women entrepreneurs in fact face various obstacles and challenges, both in terms of access to capital, knowledge capacity for efforts to improve the quality of human resources and products, weak management capacity and market access.

Therefore, IWAPI not only gathers, fosters, facilitates, provides solutions and motivates its members but also actively provides input and becomes a partner of the government in efforts to strengthen capacity and equal economic access for women entrepreneurs.

The commitment and determination to help women entrepreneurs is also realized, among others, seeking structured, effective, creative and aggressive cooperation with third parties, including: the Government, banks, fellow Associations and the private sector both domestically and abroad. This is also in line with IWAPI's mission, namely 1) IWAPI empowers and strengthens women in SMEs through increasing the ability of members to manage member businesses, gain access to new technologies, marketing and financing. 2) IWAPI champions its membership in various ways, including advocacy, training (technical skills, management and human resources), and networking.

Women's Strategies for Building Political Networks through Business

IWAPI as a forum for women entrepreneurs can be a target for politicians to gain support, but at the same time, IWAPI members who are involved in politics can use their membership to get support from politicians and members of other organizations outside IWAPI. Organizationally, IWAPI is a non-profit institution that has a mission to accommodate women entrepreneurs. IWAPI's main focus is advocacy and empowerment of women in the economic sector. Thus, organizationally, IWAPI has a firm attitude towards its relationship with politics or politicians.

IWAPI provides significant access to the expansion of its member network, both politically and in the context of individual business interests. However, the openness of this access is highly dependent on each individual, how he can use the network for his own interests.

Personally, IWAPI members are often approached by politicians, but in this context, relations with politicians, senators, and so on are limited to the context of strengthening cooperation in encouraging policies related to women's empowerment. In the context of formal communication, IWAPI talks as a forum for raising votes and support for other politicians are not carried out.

On the other hand, IWAPI members who are members of politics do not rely on IWAPI as a forum for gaining votes. This is because the political affiliation of IWAPI members is very diverse with different party choices. Thus, there are concerns that if the support is expressed in real form through the mobilization of IWAPI members, it will certainly cause injustice to IWAPI members, who may be affiliated with a different political party from the IWAPI members supported. As a result, IWAPI members who follow the political path rely on networks from outside IWAPI itself, such as family networks, or networks that are pursued through political activism independently.

However, IWAPI has not forgotten its role in the advocacy aspect. Several officials of the IWAPI DPC consider it necessary to create a forum for its members, where the forum focuses on the aspect of political education for its members. This forum is actually not part of the formal organizational structure of IWAPI, but rather a personal

initiative of several IWAPI members who have the view that women's work is not limited to the economic sector alone. Political education for women is not only related to political regeneration, but rather to the aspect of women's awareness or advocacy in overseeing state policies. Having political awareness is not always implemented in political contestation activism such as becoming a legislative candidate, but rather in the aspect of fostering a women's awareness base on political events and the policy-making process, which then fosters authentic, generic awareness to supervise the administration of the state and the decision-making process.

In the formal organizational context, IWAPI places itself neutrally in the midst of pluralism and political activism of its members. Thus, IWAPI cannot be said to be a formal voice and support machine, but in the personal context of IWAPI members can use their membership to form a support base from women's groups. In addition, IWAPI's efforts to complete its role in the aspect of political advocacy show the transformation of IWAPI's commitment, which previously only focused on economic empowerment, now also provides a political education platform that can be a space for exchanging ideas, or even socializing a political candidate's candidacy. In addition, although the political choices of IWAPI members are still influenced by their families' political choices, in certain contexts, IWAPI can build a fortress of solidarity and (political) support for women.

Exploitation of Women's Interests

Evers and Gerke (2009: 5-9) state that the appropriation of interests by strategic groups is not always in the form of short-term gains or immediate benefits, but strategic groups track long-term strategies, such as changing or shaping a social, economic and political structure or institutional change to increase opportunities or access to certain resources. After all, these strategic groups are not elite groups or social classes, they are groups that cross hierarchies, are not formally affiliated with a particular organization, but they are bound by common values, ideologies, and interests. The non-attachment of members of a strategic group to a certain institution or organization causes a strategic group to be essentially a fragile group, but Evans and Gerke (2009:8) emphasized that the same values, ideologies and interests are actually a powerful binding force for the sustainability of this group.

From this definition, women can generally be said to be a strategic group, and women have a common interest; namely ensuring that the economic and political system provides space for the fulfillment of women's rights and interests in general. However, it needs to be emphasized that women are not a monopartisan group, which can be grouped under one identity and interests only; It is also necessary to recognize that women can join and be affiliated with other groups with different goals and interests. Evans and Gerke (2009:8) assert that this strategic group transcends social boundaries, class and social stratification, but sometimes, kinship can also be the binding force of this group. Evans (1990) also mentioned that there are several types of strategic groups, namely bureaucrats; military, professional, intellectual and business

groups. With this type of division, IWAPI can be grouped as a women's strategic group that comes from the business group (women). As an organization of women entrepreneurs, of course, their main interest is to ensure and encourage policies that are in favor of strengthening and empowering women's economy. However, from the studies conducted, researchers are of the view that it is good to distinguish between the interests of women as IWAPI organizations and the interests of women as political individuals.

In the organizational context, it has been mentioned that IWAPI can be said to be politically distant and does not show straightforward political affiliation with a particular political party. However, it does not mean that IWAPI is not political. First, if politics is interpreted as advocacy and not only as electoral work, then IWAPI's economic advocacy efforts are also interpreted as IWAPI's political work. On the other hand, IWAPI places its position as a government partner in the implementation of women's economic empowerment policies, which is basically an appropriation of the interests of IWAPI itself. As a government partner, IWAPI can access funding allocations for programs related to women's economic empowerment, or access information on government policies or programs. For example, in the New Order era (ahead of reform), it became the government's main partner in women's economic empowerment. The resource person stated that at that time, IWAPI had a basic food truck program, whose commodities were provided by the state. IWAPI is given access to cheaper commodity prices, and various allocations of funding and assistance for programs initiated by IWAPI.

Second, in an effort to achieve the exploitation of these interests or secure access to certain resources, the question of who or the main actors play a role is irrelevant; However, strategic groups do not hesitate to support certain actors; Whether it is an interest group or an elite that is considered to support or fight for the interests of this group. This means, as Evans has mentioned, that strategic groups can carry out strategies of cooperation, hybridization, competition or even rebellion with or against other strategic groups or even individuals. In this context, the interests of individuals or actors or other strategic groups can go hand in hand with the strategic group and form a mutually beneficial relationship.

IWAPI's connection with the government through partnership relationships not only provides IWAPI—as an organization—with access to resources; but also provides opportunities for individual members or IWAPI members to build a personal network with government members or government bureaucratic groups; This network can contribute to the business expansion of the members of the strategic group. It is basically connected to modes of appropriation consisting of the personal, corporate and collective (Evans & Gerke, 2009:9).

In the mode of personal appropriation, where a group earns its income through personal appropriation (e.g., lawyers or small traders), strategic groups tend to choose the path of the political system in which political parties play a role in achieving their interests. This means that this group could form a political party or be affiliated with a certain political party, in addition to forming other specific organizations. While the

mode of corporate exploitation (e.g. industrial groups, entrepreneurs or businessmen), one of their goals is to expand ownership and control over the means of production by means of organizational expansion (corporations) or even they can obtain political support through the patronage system, kinship, or resource network (resource network). In the mode of collective exploitation (usually a group of bureaucrats and the military), the exploitation of their interests tends to be power-base by maintaining or expanding their organization (state) to access control over resources.

From the explanation of the mode of interest apropiaction, IWAPI can be categorized as a strategic group that adheres to the strategy of personal and corporate mode of apropiaction. The author argues that the adoption of this mode of adaptation could be different, depending on the position and scale of the IWAPI member industry itself.

From the presentation of data, fighting through political channels, whether it is joining a political party and participating in electoral politics, becoming a legislative member is a pattern of personal fashion application. For information, the Chairperson of IWAPI NTB (Mrs. Baiq Diyah Ratu Ganefi) and the Chairperson of IWAPI (Mrs. Nita Yudhi or Dyah Anita Prihapsari) are running for candidates for DPD members and DPRD members, as well as other IWAPI members. Through political parties and becoming legislative members, women in IWAPI can fight for change or urge policies that ensure the fulfillment of women's rights and economic access.

However, on the other hand, this political space also provides personal interests to each IWAPI member, related to their role as political actors. The political path can open or strengthen the resource alliance of the actor with various other strategic groups, either with fellow businessmen or bureaucratic groups which ultimately paves the way for corporate fashion exhibition. However, on the one hand, corporate fashion application is also pursued by IWAPI members who have a large rank position and industrial scale. As large business owners, these strategic groups can rely on access to certain resources through the formation of alliances and resource networks. The formation of this alliance can be seen how IWAPI members are also part or members of other organizations such as HIPMI, although not all. However, the awareness of interests as a group of entrepreneurs provides space for the formation of an alliance of interests, it's just that the strategy carried out does not come to the form of hybridization, but only in the form of cooperation. On the other hand, establishing alliances with business groups also aims to expand the corporate of IWAPI members themselves. In this context, IWAPI is not a strategic group, but an organization formed by a strategic group, namely women, to achieve their interests.

D. Conlussion

Basically, the awareness of IWAPI women members regarding active participation in politics has been well built. This awareness is not only conditioned or transferred by IWAPI to its members, but IWAPI members who individually have a view of the importance of women's active role or participation in politics. However, it needs

to be emphasized that IWAPI members who have this awareness can be categorized into two groups, namely first, the group of members who have awareness and active political activities in politics. This member is not only a member of IWAPI but also a member of a certain political party. Second, the group of members who admit that politics is a strategic effort to encourage policies that favor women, but this group does not actively participate and even refuses to be actively involved in politics. The reluctance of IWAPI members to get involved in politics is caused, especially by cultural limitations, namely the role of domestic housewives. Guilt, or not getting permission from her husband is the reason that limits women's active participation in politics.

From the aspect of the strategy of building networks, as an organization, IWAPI focuses on building networks with social organizations engaged in the same field. However, IWAPI does not specifically target politicians, on the grounds that they do not have political goals. Closeness or relationships with several groups of politicians are considered as a forum for strengthening cooperation in the aspect of women's economic empowerment. Meanwhile, from the context of individual IWAPI members, taking advantage of the privilege of being a member of IWAPI to build a network to political groups is still not widely done. In addition, IWAPI members who are politically active basically have the opportunity to use IWAPI as a vote base by mobilizing their members, but IWAPI's policy that is strictly oriented towards non-profit institutions prevents this. Formally, IWAPI itself is not affiliated or formally connected with certain politicians or political parties; In fact, in IWAPI, its members are affiliated with various parties. Therefore, the mobilization of votes in IWAPI is ethically not allowed, to maintain a sense of justice and solidarity among its members.

In the discussion of strategic groups, IWAPI can be categorized as an organization formed by strategic groups to ensure access to certain resources, which can be said to be a strategic group here are women. As a strategic group, women through IWAPI seek to build alliances and resource networks. There are two modes of appropriation, namely personal and corporate appropriation modes. In the context of personal appropriation, IWAPI members choose the political path to secure access to resources. IWAPI as an organization can provide institutional legitimacy to IWAPI members, as well as provide access to information to IWAPI members as well as opportunities to build business and political networks. On the other hand, political access can provide space for the formation of alliances with strategic groups and other political groups. Meanwhile, the corporate exploitation mode is carried out through business expansion and network resources, be it through alliances with fellow women entrepreneurs or with other entrepreneurs by expanding the company to control access to production tools; Or by relying on kinship-based network resources or the closeness of identity and family.

However, utilizing kinship, building alliances and networking in the midst of the limitations of formal political affiliation of IWAPI actually shows the capacity of women's agencies independently in building political networks and determining strategies to achieve their interests. In this regard, it is necessary to remind that women's political participation and activism do not have to be limited in the context of electoral politics,

but advocacy efforts are also part of political work that builds awareness, partiality and control over women's own autonomy.

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